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For local media

PRESS RELEASE

National award for nurse's learning disability work

A Dudley hospital team has won a national award for its work to improve the experience of people with learning disabilities when they visit hospital.

The innovative project has grabbed the attention of NHS England which is interested in replicating it across the country.

Jacqui Howells of The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, and her colleague Katie O'Connor, picked up the Learning Disabilities Nursing gong at the prestigious Nursing Times Awards 2018 at The Grosvenor House Hotel in London on 31st October.

They won for their 18-month project to improve the training of student nurses and doctors in how to treat patients with learning disabilities. Jacqui, the learning disabilities liaison nurse, employed twins Diane and Susan Baker – who themselves have a learning disability - to be involved in the training, rather than using actors and mannequins.

They worked with the Trust's simulation lead Katie O'Connor to improve student nurse clinical and communication skills by giving them a real understanding of the needs of people with a learning disability when they use hospital services.

Jacqui said: "We are absolutely delighted to have won. The judges have talked about it being an innovative way of working and very patient-focused because we have patients teaching with us.

"We called the twins to tell them we have won and they were over the moon – they cried with joy.

"There is a big drive nationally for learning disability awareness so this project has come at the right time. There is a lot of interest now from NHS England, who sponsored our award category, and they are keen to look into taking this out nationally."

Editor of Nursing Times, Steve Ford, said: "As ever, our awards entrants set a very high bar and demonstrated what great care and innovation can be achieved by nurses, often with few resources other than a really good idea and the determination to see it through.

“The expert panels that I spoke to during the judging process in September consistently told me about the high quality and inspirational nature of the entries they were given.”

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