

<p>Name</p>	<p>Ellen Ballantyne</p> 
<p><i>How long have you been a nurse?</i></p>	<p>I worked as a Healthcare Assistant from 1991, and then started my nurse training in 1993.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 years nursing, 30 since starting training • Started in Sexual Health in 2003
<p><i>What inspired you to be a nurse?</i></p>	<p>I always loved science and biology at school and was intrigued by medicine and hospitals. Nursing seemed a natural choice, helping me follow my interests. I loved working on the wards, caring for those who were unwell and needed support, being an advocate when people needed it most.</p>
<p><i>How did you get into this career? What steps did it take since leaving school?</i></p>	<p>After A Levels (which I didn't work hard enough at!), I visited various schools of nursing and universities and applied to Brighton University, which was close enough to home, but also far enough to move out! I also loved the thought of living by the sea!</p>
<p><i>Can you tell us a bit about the training you undertook for your role?</i></p>	<p>During my training, as a third year pre-reg RGN student nurse, I chose my elective placement on the HIV and AIDS acute inpatient ward in Hove. Seemingly a world away, before the effective anti-retroviral treatments we have easy access to now had really taken off. The young men I helped care for were so sick, so ill, so near end of life. Although a ghastly and shocking experience, it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. I was truly humbled by wonderful patients, who suffered the most awful stigma and shame,</p>

	<p>whilst coping with the physical toll of such horrendous illnesses, often without family and loved ones due to the stigma. I was hooked, my interest in and passion for nursing in sexual health began.</p> <p>My nursing career has been varied, working in the acute surgical unit of the recovery wards of vascular and gut surgery as a newly qualified staff nurse, progressing to running the ward and managing complex post-operative patients who nowadays would be cared for in HDU rather than on the ward; on the medical emergency assessment units in Brighton and Norwich, and then onto Genito-Urinary Medicine. In 2015 I moved to iCaSH and CCS as the Service Manager for the Norfolk Sexual Health Service, and then had the amazing opportunity to be seconded to the Head of iCaSH Services in Norfolk and Suffolk, as part of CCS's Covid response. In April 2023 I was appointed to the Head of Clinical Services (iCaSH) post and am starting the next stage in my nursing career.</p> <p>Leadership and specific clinical training have supported me through my career and enabled me to develop and progress to more senior clinical and then leadership roles, within the speciality I am so passionate and committed too.</p>
<p><i>What's been the highlight of your career so far?</i></p>	<p>I am immensely proud of the career journey I have made, how my confidence and skills have developed and grateful for the opportunities I have been given. I feel very lucky and privileged to have led iCaSH, through some of the most challenging times the NHS has recently faced.</p> <p>I am also incredibly proud to have had a small part in the National Covid-19 vaccination programme. The pride and commitment I felt when delivering vaccines was a real highlight of my career. I admit to shedding a few tears on my first shift – the pride at being part of and the enormity of the programme and the commitment and skills of my colleagues who had designed and implemented it, were overwhelming!</p>
<p><i>What do you like most about being a nurse?</i></p>	<p>I enjoy the varied aspects of my role, the different challenges and opportunities being a nurse provides. I enjoy the specialist and medical knowledge I have gained and keep</p>

	<p>learning. I enjoy working with diverse and multi-skilled experts and am so very proud of all my iCaSH colleagues delivering outstanding sexual and reproductive health services to our local communities.</p>
<p><i>What's the most challenging part of being a nurse?</i></p>	<p>Working in the NHS can be extremely challenging. Funding, commissioning, expectations, demand and capacity can overwhelm the visions and goals we should aspire to. Daily 'firefighting' in the NHS can be exhausting and can be a barrier to longer term visions and aspirations.</p>
<p><i>What are the main skills needed to do your role?</i></p>	<p>Energy and optimism! Being organised. Communications skills. Being aspirational as well as realistic. Having clinical credibility and having professional curiosity. Being a good listener – HEARING what is said.</p>
<p><i>Do you have any advice for the next generation of nurses?</i></p>	<p>Have courage and hope; be willing to frequently adapt, often at pace, without feeling threatened or scared.</p> <p>Sometimes (often in the NHS), we have to do things differently to make things work!</p>
<p><i>My wish for the future of nursing is...</i></p>	<p>I am so very proud of the NHS and all that it stands for. I would like to hope that future generations of nurses campaign and advocate for the NHS and all that it brings to our diverse and varied communities.</p> <p>I would like to see nurse leaders at the forefront of a successful, supported and sustainable NHS.</p>