

Citizens Stories: The Michael Varnam Awards 2018

In 2007 an annual recognition award in memory of Dr Michael Varnam was established. Michael was a great inspirational practitioner who worked tirelessly for 35 years to improve the health and wellbeing of some of our most disadvantaged people in Nottingham. The local health community wanted to honour his life and ideals, as well as his vision for the future.

The award is given to publicly recognise and honour the dedication, enthusiasm, commitment and achievement of an individual and a group who have made a difference to the health and wellbeing of people in Nottingham. The award recognises that motivated by altruism and caring, they have made a difference to either the population as a whole or a disadvantaged section of our community.

A panel of judges met to consider all the nominees received and, from a shortlist, selected the winners. The awards were presented at an event on 31 October 2018.

In recognition of the achievements of all the shortlisted nominees, a brief summary of the reason why they were nominated is set out below.

Individuals

Gordon Garrick – Winner

"...He never gave up on me"

Gordon Garrick has worked tirelessly in the substance misuse field for many years and in this time has positively impacted countless people's lives.

Gordon:

- inspires his colleagues with his dedication to service users and his ability to work with a range of partners to develop the best possible pathways and secure good outcomes for those in his care;
- is an optimist, known for taking on any case, never deterred by service user resistance to change. This optimism has paid off, transforming the lives of many;
- takes an active role in advocating for his service users, going to any length necessary, and never suggesting it was a chore;
- has earned the love and respect of colleagues and patients alike.

Maria Watson – Highly Commended

"Maria is an absolute credit to our community..."

Maria Watson is a community activist from Clifton who helps the under privileged, the homeless, the elderly and many more.

Through her charity, Clifton Donation Group, Maria:

- provides free food hampers to struggling families;
- co-ordinates litter picking in the community;
- gifting Christmas Hampers to residents in local elderly care homes;

- co-ordinates free family fun days for the local community;
- founded the Pride of Clifton Awards, in which children are celebrated for their bravery in adverse circumstances

To find out more about the Clifton Donation Group you can visit their website: <https://www.cliftdonationgroup.co.uk/about-me> or find them on Facebook.

Kate Smith – Highly Commended

“...a well loved and respected colleague and friend to many”

Throughout her career in Nottingham City, Kate Smith has led programmes across the system to tackle smoking prevalence.

Kate’s achievements include:

- developing strategies which recognise the roles of a wide range of partners;
- working with Nottingham University Hospitals (NUH) to implement NICE guidance on smoking in acute, maternity and mental health services;
- being highlighted as taking a best practice approach in published texts;
- developing the local Strategic Tobacco Control Strategy and overseeing its implementation;
- pioneering work to introduce smokefree areas where children are likely to be present, including playgrounds and at the school gates.

Groups

Sit Up Shelter – Winner

“...they help the most vulnerable when the risks are most severe...”

The Sit-Up Shelter first opened its doors in January 2018, providing people at imminent risk of rough sleeping with a place of shelter and safety on nights when temperatures were predicted to fall to 0c or below.

The sit up shelter:

- was open for a total of 29 nights across the winter period, during which time 79 separate individuals were supported (often on multiple nights);
- those accessing the service were often those most resistant to other offers of support and accommodation. Everyone who attended was encouraged and supported to access more permanent help;
- was a true partnership effort:
 - Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service provided the premises
 - British Red Cross co-ordinated the service and staffed the service with trained volunteers
 - Framework’s Street Outreach Team supported those attending to longer term accommodation and support
 - The Police and Community Protection Officers dropped-in to provide support and help ensure safety

- Muslims Hands provided sleeping bags and other kit, as well as donations from numerous other organisation and members of the public.

Partners will be running this service again in the coming 2018/19 winter and the model was so successful it is being replicated across the Country.

The Ferguson Family – Highly Commended

“...they have given to so many and continue to do so every single day...”

The Ferguson family have spent years helping foster children, and using their own resources and initiative, they have founded the My Bag Charity.

The Ferguson family have:

- dedicated their time to fostering children in Nottingham, working tirelessly to give them a better chance at life and giving the child quality experiences and memories to enjoy;
- through their My Bag Charity the family aims to ease the process of those coming into care by providing each child their very own bag complete with a blanket, colouring book/notepad, a teddy and other age appropriate items. This gives children something to call their own and a place to put their belongings, providing comfort and security at a challenging time;
- as well as this, Karen Ferguson has been incredible in helping those in need, including supporting elderly neighbours to attend dementia classes and hospital appointments.

To find out more about the My Bag Charity you can visit their website: <https://mybagcharity.co.uk/>

Open Minds – Highly Commended

“Yes you can!”

Set up in 1995, Open Minds has supported isolated disabled people through the provision of health and wellbeing activities for the last 24 years.

The service provides:

- a range of activities for members at times when isolation is known to be most noticeable, including weekdays, evenings and weekends;
- support to members, whose ages range from 25-70, and have a range of disabilities including learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders as well as mental health issues such as panic attacks and anxiety;
- much needed respite time for parents and carers of those attending;
- 1:1 support to help members identify personal goals and stretch their potential

To find out more about Open Minds you can visit their website: <http://www.emom.org.uk/>