**Student Nursing Times Awards 2024 – Dr Fiona Cust**

***This article is not the final published version, but the Author Accepted Manuscript of the version published*** [***here***](https://www.nursingtimes.net/opinion/it-was-a-day-filled-with-positivity-reflection-and-a-sense-of-pride-16-05-2024/)***:***

Last week I had the pleasure (and honour), of attending the Student Nursing Times Awards (SNTA) in London. An annual event whereby the incredible achievements and initiatives of both our students, educators, and placement partners are, rightly, showcased.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the judging panel for Student Nurse of the Year (Child) and it was a momentous task to try to, initially, shortlist, and then, select a winner. The innovations, experiences, and journey’s that the students had experienced, shared, created, was spectacular. As the NHS continues to receive negativity at a time when it is struggling – from numerous contributory factors, it was a day filled with positivity, reflection and a sense of pride that, despite all of the ever increasing challenges, there are still passionate and determined nurses evolving.

The actual ‘trophy presenting’ day was, as always, a very impressive event whereby so many key players within nursing and midwifery come together to celebrate the achievements of our professions. The nominees all are recognised for their contributions and the actual ‘winner’ proudly represents their chosen career.

Recent figures show that there was a significant decline in nursing applications in England this year. This represents a 10% fall in the last year and a 26% fall in the previous two years. This is despite the governments Long Term Workforce Plan to employ 300,000 extra nurses, doctors and allied health workers. Immediate action is certainly required and certainly, as suggested by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the removal of student tuition fees to eliminate the financial burden and attract a wider pool of candidates would be a very welcome start.

However, despite numerous challenges within both the profession and the NHS, there are still things both to celebrate and to shout (very loudly) about. The incredible students, educators, nurses, and midwives who I met both on the judging day, and the actual event itself, were inspirational and I felt so very proud of my profession. Despite all of the current negativity surrounding us, let’s at least dine out on that for a little while…

Thank you to the Nursing Times for allowing us to reflect in our glory sometimes.