

CASE STUDY - NHS PROFESSIONALS

Milandra James

ICU Staff Nurse

I started working at UHS in 2015 as a newly qualified nurse. I have since worked in ICU, spent some time community nursing and undertaken a nurse practitioner role. Despite exploring new roles, I have continuously found myself being drawn back to work in ICU – particularly over the last year where I was redeployed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

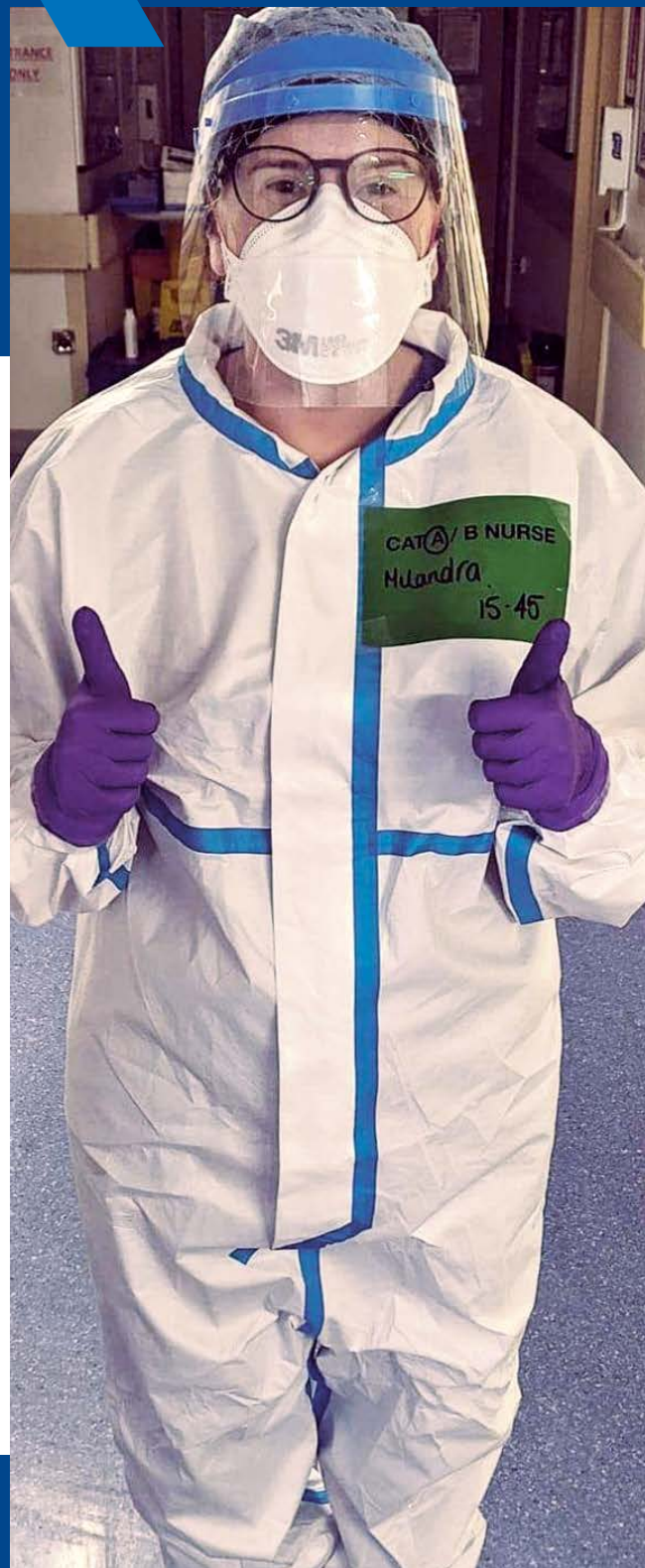
Why did you decide to join NHSP?

I joined NHSP as a full-time bank member at the start of 2021, I realised I missed working in the ICU I previously left, as I wanted a role with more flexibility. I was struggling to balance home life and work and NHSP gives me more control over my hours and shift patterns.

I love the camaraderie in the General Intensive Care Unit at UHS, ICU can be incredibly challenging, but the team is great. The staff have always been kind and welcoming, which makes even the most difficult of days positive. It is also great to work in Trust who are specialists in many fields, as there are many learning opportunities.

What is a typical day for you?

I find the fact that no two days are the same interesting, it may sound cliché, but I enjoy going into my shift not knowing what to expect. I look after patients with multiple ailments varying from single to multi-organ failure. ICU is a fast-paced environment which keeps you busy and active throughout the shift and encourages you to continually develop as a nurse to keep your knowledge and skills up to date.



What has it been like working through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Turning up on the first day of working in ICU during the pandemic, was a shock. I've worked in full PPE in side rooms before but never in a full isolation unit. I was shown the donning and doffing area and had a quick tour of the new unit and its layout. It took some getting used to the correct way to remove all the PPE correctly and trying to hear each other through masks and hoods but now it is second nature.

Working in ICU during the pandemic has been challenging but invaluable. ICU's have adapted so quickly to provide the optimal care to a huge surge of patients. As ICU nurses we had to adapt our style of nursing, instead of nursing patients 1:1 or 1:2 we worked in a team nursing model sometimes looking after 3 very sick intubated patients. The ICU nurse would delegate tasks to the non-ICU member(s) of staff working with them. Together as a team they would care for a cohort of critically unwell patients. Prior to this year I could never have imagined caring for multiple intubated patients at one time but through teamwork, planning and practice this model has become streamlined.

What has been your proudest moment working with NHSP?

My proudest moment working in the NHS has been implementing change in practice. I am passionate about End of Life (EoL) Care and in my first nursing job I became the link nurse for EoL care. This meant attending study days to improve practice. I had seen other Trusts using a picture of a butterfly hung outside a patient's bedspace or room to indicate that the patient is receiving EoL care. This acts as a tool to staff to review the patients EoL care needs, such as pain relief, comfort and holistic care. Our ward had never heard of this before, I discussed using the butterfly tool and teaching staff about the principles of EoL care with my manager who agreed and it is still in use today.

What are the benefits of NHSP for you?

If anyone is seeking flexibility and more control over their working hours, I would recommend NHSP. I now have a far greater work/life balance and feel I'm able to look after myself better especially during such a challenging time. I find the booking system simple and easy to use. I can book a shift within a few minutes!

When I'm not working, I try to find a balance between exercising (where possible with lockdowns!) by going for runs or doing yoga and having time to rest and recuperate. Sometimes this will just be having a "self-care day" where I'll practice crocheting, or I'll relax with a good book. As soon as safe and possible I'm keen to fit travel around working, as I love to visit new countries.

For me, my work life balance is so important to my overall happiness and health, both mental and physical. NHSP is fantastic for this as I can pick up shifts in advance, plan ahead and have the flexibility to work when suits me.