A tribute to Paul Gaythwaite

It is with great sadness that I let you know we have lost a second member of our staff to Covid-19.

Paul Gaythwaite, a senior nurse practitioner in our St Helens community later life and memory service, contracted Covid-19 in September. He became seriously ill three weeks ago and was admitted to Whiston Hospital, where he lost his battle with the virus on Sunday.

Caring for older people was Paul’s passion. He joined our Trust in 1998 and has spent his career working within our later life and memory services in different settings.

Paul, aged 53, leaves behind David, his partner of 22 years who he married three years ago. John Heritage spoke to David this week, who is understandably heartbroken, but very much wants us to recognise and celebrate Paul as he believes he would have loved to have a tribute shared.

Outside of work, Paul loved entertaining his wide circle of friends at his home in St Helens. He loved music, films and the theatre and was a huge Blondie fan. He enjoyed spending time with David in their garden and regularly visited his mum, dad and two sisters in Cumbria, where he grew up.

Some of Paul’s close friends at work shared their memories of Paul as a nurse, a person, and a friend.

Nicky Mercer has been friends with Paul for 13 years: “In all my career, I don’t think I’ve ever worked with a more dedicated nurse. Paul gave so much of himself and his cheeky sense of humour made him very popular with patients – they asked for him by name as their care coordinator.

“We’ve received so many lovely messages and emails from people. One summed Paul up for me. A student nurse he worked with in the past said ‘Paul will live on and I hope I can be half the nurse he was’. I agree and would 100 per cent have Paul nurse my own family which is the highest compliment you can give.”

Julie Murray was one of Paul’s closest friends, having shared a trip to New York with Paul and David: “The way I’d sum Paul up is that he could sometimes be the most grumpy person, with a heart of gold, a wicked sense of humour, he was very generous and I adored him.”
Tanya Worsley was Paul’s line manager: “The thing that stands out for me most was that Paul always took time to ask how you’re doing and he meant it. I would look you right in the eyes and genuinely want to know if you are okay. A genuinely gorgeous, caring person.”

Ajit Rughoo trained with Paul in 1992: “We shared a love of vinyl records and thought we’d found a way to make our millions buying rare Elvis vinyls at car boot sales and selling them on, but it turned out we bought the wrong ones! I still have a stash of Elvis records to this day.

“Paul had been hoping to have a reunion with a group of us who trained together and who haven’t all been together for 30 years. Sadly, we weren’t able to make this happen, but we’re planning to join together as a guard of honour for Paul’s funeral, which I think he would appreciate.”

Sharon Golding has known Paul for almost 30 years: “Paul made me laugh every day. I have a phone full of silly videos he would make and send to us all. He was one in a million and we were privileged to be his friends.”

On behalf of the Chairman and the whole Trust Board, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation for everything Paul has done for the Trust over the years. It’s very clear he was a dedicated and caring person who loved his job and was adored by his patients, colleagues and friends. He lived and breathed our values and improved the lives of the people he cared for.

At David’s request, we will be sharing a tribute from the Trust with the local media to further celebrate Paul’s life.

We would also like to produce a book of condolence for David. As it will be difficult to collect messages in person due to Covid restrictions, please send your messages, stories, photos, memories and condolences to communications@nwbh.nhs.uk. These will be added to an online wall of remembrance for staff to read and will be later collated into a book to present to David.

I know this is difficult news to take in and really brings home that the virus remains in circulation and can have devastating effects. Now, more than ever, we need to make sure we’re looking out for each other and doing all we can to keep each other and our patients safe.

Additional support is being provided to Paul’s close colleagues. If you are impacted by this sad news, please do take advantage of the support available through our Occupational Health Team (occhealth@nwbh.nhs.uk / 01925 664010) and our staff wellbeing hub. You are not alone.

Thank you for everything you are doing and stay safe.

Simon Barber
Chief Executive