

Pro-Chancellor,

Gail Adams is an activist who represents the rights of healthcare professionals at the highest level and campaigns to ensure a fair deal for nurses and NHS staff. Having served as Head of Nursing at Unison for 14 years, she was awarded an OBE for services to nursing and public healthcare in 2017.

Gail attributes her decision to train as a nurse to both of her sisters being nurses, and two prolonged stays in hospital in her early teens. Having undergone intensive treatment for psoriasis, she developed a deep respect for the nurses who looked after her. Unfortunately, having begun her training, this same health condition almost scuppered her ambitions as she was told it was not conducive to a career in nursing. Gail was suspended from her training for a year to undergo further treatment, before returning, undeterred, to complete her qualifications at St George's teaching hospital in Tooting.

Gail began her nursing career in orthopaedics, working across high dependency units and in operating theatres at St George's. At the same time, she became an active trade union branch secretary, and successfully fought appeals against a new grading structure which secured significant back pay for nurses. Her progression through the trade union movement kept pace with her professional career and, following a secondment to the Department of Health, she became a team leader for education at St George's, as well as Chair of Unison's National Committee. These roles enabled Gail to put her values into action by increasing opportunity and removing inequalities through education.

Since moving from nursing to a full-time role with Unison, Gail has been influential in shaping healthcare policy affecting the rights and practices of frontline teams. Throughout her career she has promoted equality of opportunity; viewing hospital cleaners as vital parts of infection control, and domestic staff as central to the patient experience. This attitude has led her to campaign for greater investment in training for staff at all grades. It also led her to join the steering group of the Mary Seacole Awards, set up to recognise the outstanding work of black and minority ethnic staff in the NHS. Gail is clear that the experiences of black staff in the NHS are not the same as their white counterparts and that sometimes you must do things differently to achieve equality. She was instrumental in the Prime Minister's Commission on The Future of Nursing and Midwifery in England, and recently helped students campaign to retain the NHS bursary.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Gail Adams OBE, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.