

Press Release

Outstanding Women in Social Care Awards 2024

Prestigious Multiple Awards Recognise a Lifetime of Dedicated Service for Sara

The Registered Manager of an independent fostering agency in the Midlands is celebrating after winning the Outstanding Woman in Care Services in The Women's Awards, hosted by The Shine Network. The awards recognise women who've made an outstanding contribution in their field and celebrate those who might not always receive public acknowledgement for the work they do.

Sara Chambers Ross, who heads up the National Fostering Agency in Solihull, beat off competition from across the East and West Midlands to win the prestigious awards at a glittering ceremony at the IXL Event Centre. She was named as Outstanding Woman in Care Services.

What makes this a truly extraordinary achievement is that, initially, Sara was only nominated in one category – the Outstanding Woman in Care Services award. However, when the judging panel saw the calibre of Sara's work, they put her forward in two other categories as well – Outstanding Senior Female Executive and Outstanding Woman in Public Services. This was a complete surprise for Sara who, initially, thought there'd been a mistake and queried it with the judging panel who explained their decision.

Sara was nominated by inspirational speaker, Michelle Mills-Porter, last year's winner of the Outstanding Senior Female Executive award. Michelle said:

“I've known Sara for 15 years. What I've seen in her is an unwavering commitment to what she does. I've seen her go through adversity but her resilience and passion is amazing and it's this that makes her outstanding at what she does.

“When I realised that I actually nominated Sara for one award, but the judges put her forward for multiple, it told me that it's not just me that recognises what she's doing for society. Nearly everyone on that judging panel thought 'Hold on a minute, this is somebody really special'. I am thrilled to have been the instigator of that and I congratulate Sara on this fantastic achievement.”

Sara runs National Fostering Agency Midlands, which has more than 300 foster children and young people, around 200 foster carers and 38 staff. She has worked in fostering for nearly three decades after qualifying as a social worker in 1993. Sara said:

“I am passionate about fostering and my purpose throughout my career has been to help and support families and children to form bonds that are nothing to do with DNA. This is challenging, fascinating and endlessly rewarding and I consider it a privilege to work in this field. My job is about winning over hearts and minds, responding to people’s humanity, there’s never a dull moment.

“This the first time I’ve been nominated for anything like this. I must admit, I don’t always like the attention but it’s good to share positive stories about social workers, as we don’t very often get this, and if it gives us an opportunity to bring fostering into greater public awareness then that’s great.”

Sara was nominated at the start of July and only had a short amount of time to respond to the nomination. She asked her staff to share their views about her and her leadership. She said:

“I actually felt like I’d won even before I received the award because of the amazing things they said about me. It was so heartwarming.”

Among the comments were:

“You’re like the backbone, and always wanting your team to achieve the very best for everyone concerned, which allows children to receive the best outcomes.”

“You recognise the qualities in other women and men, and you celebrate and encourage ongoing development for everyone. You want us to be the best version of ourselves and be proud of what we do.”

“I would fully agree that Sara is an outstanding woman in care services.”

Michelle, who has supported some of Sara’s team through behaviour profiling said:

“I only work with leaders who are ‘people passionate’ and Sara is that. She wants to empower her people to really understand where they shine and to bring that to the work that they do.”

Michelle describes Sara and other women like her as “unsung heroes”. She commented:

“These women are genuine givers. They are not the kind of people who would put themselves forward, fight for recognition. What these awards do is to recognise who are doing this because they genuinely are in service.”

Steve Christie, CEO of National Fostering Group said:

“Congratulations to Sara for this exceptional achievement. We are immensely proud of all our staff for the amazing work they do and it is heartwarming to see Sara receive such well-deserved recognition for all her hard work and dedication. Well done, Sara, you truly are an inspiration.”

Editor's Notes

To arrange an interview with Sara Chambers Ross contact: Press@nfa.co.uk

National Fostering Agency Midlands is part of National Fostering Group. For more information visit: <https://www.nfa.co.uk>