

British Empire Medal for Alison and her Rainbow Boxes

In the Queen's Birthday Honours 2020, Alison Williams has been awarded the British Empire Medal.

Alison is 41 and from Edinburgh, and she has received the honour for services to the NHS, for Charitable Fundraising and for Volunteering during Covid-19.

As senior research nurse at The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh she has been working in Covid-19 wards with critically ill patients. Alison saw first hand how ill-prepared the many patients who were arriving on the wards were. Many arrived with little or no personal effects and no way of contacting loved ones.

She decided to activate the communities she had access to on social media and sent out a request for donations of pyjamas, toiletries. She started a crowdfunder to try to raise £500 to buy an iPad. At that time there was only one Covid-19 ward at The Royal Infirmary. It was shared widely on social media and it was evident the community wanted to support the patients in hospital. RBS then donated £25,000.

In no time the request went viral and the response could very well have been too much to handle. Alison had set her initial fundraising target at £500, however she received dozens of individual donations totalling more than just over £25,000.

The initiative, now named Rainbow Boxes, is in great demand, while the provision of these essential items is recognised as helping the patients become more comfortable and calmer as

they can now contact family and friends who are prevented from visiting under lockdown.

Rainbow Boxes were initially provided to wards in Lothian and West Lothian, however the response and support she has gathered has allowed the boxes to be offered to more places including local hospices and community hospitals. Rainbow Boxes are now in 10 hospital and hospice sites in Edinburgh.



Alison

Alison continues to work as a front line health professional and in what little spare time she has she devotes to buying, collecting stock and delivering supplies.

Rainbow Boxes has donated over 2,000 nightwear items to hospital patients and provide top up supplies for the wards.

Alison and her work colleague Rachel O'Brien continue to supply these wards with these essential items. It started as a Covid-19 initiative but has since benefitted non-Covid wards too.