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Innovative Public Health Walk for Nurse Education

Jacqueline P. Davies

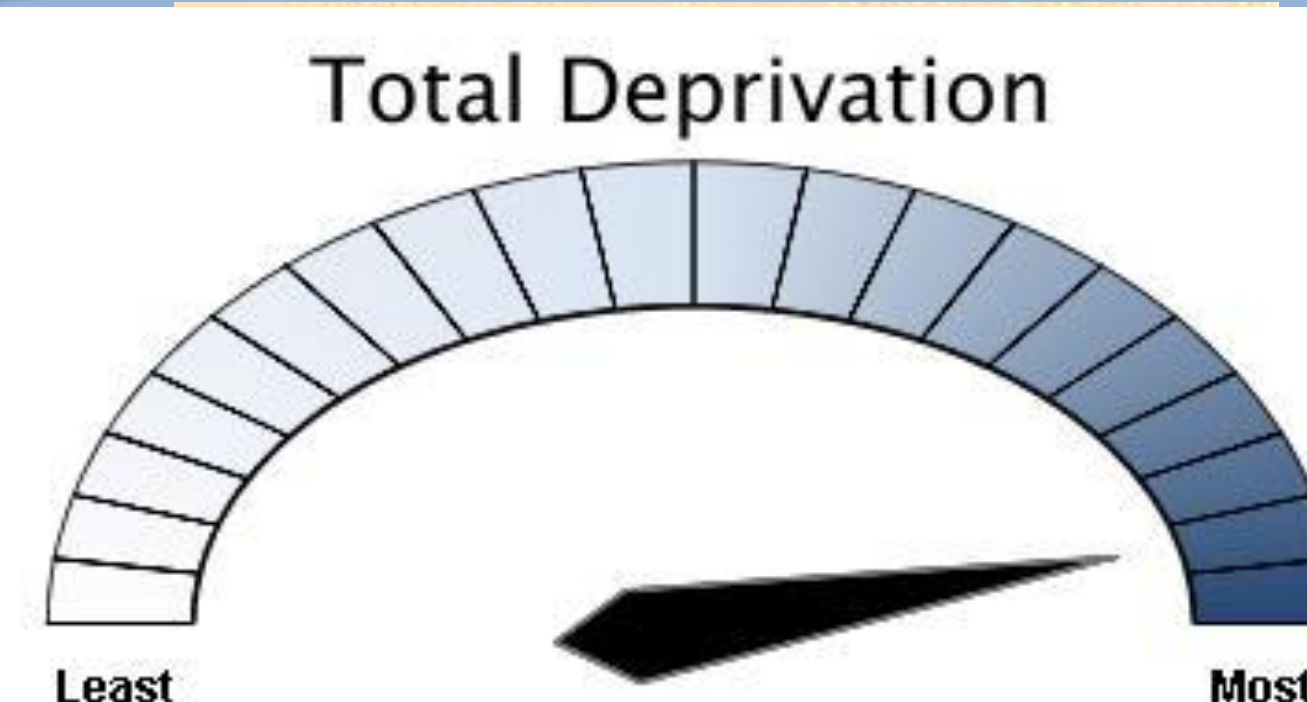
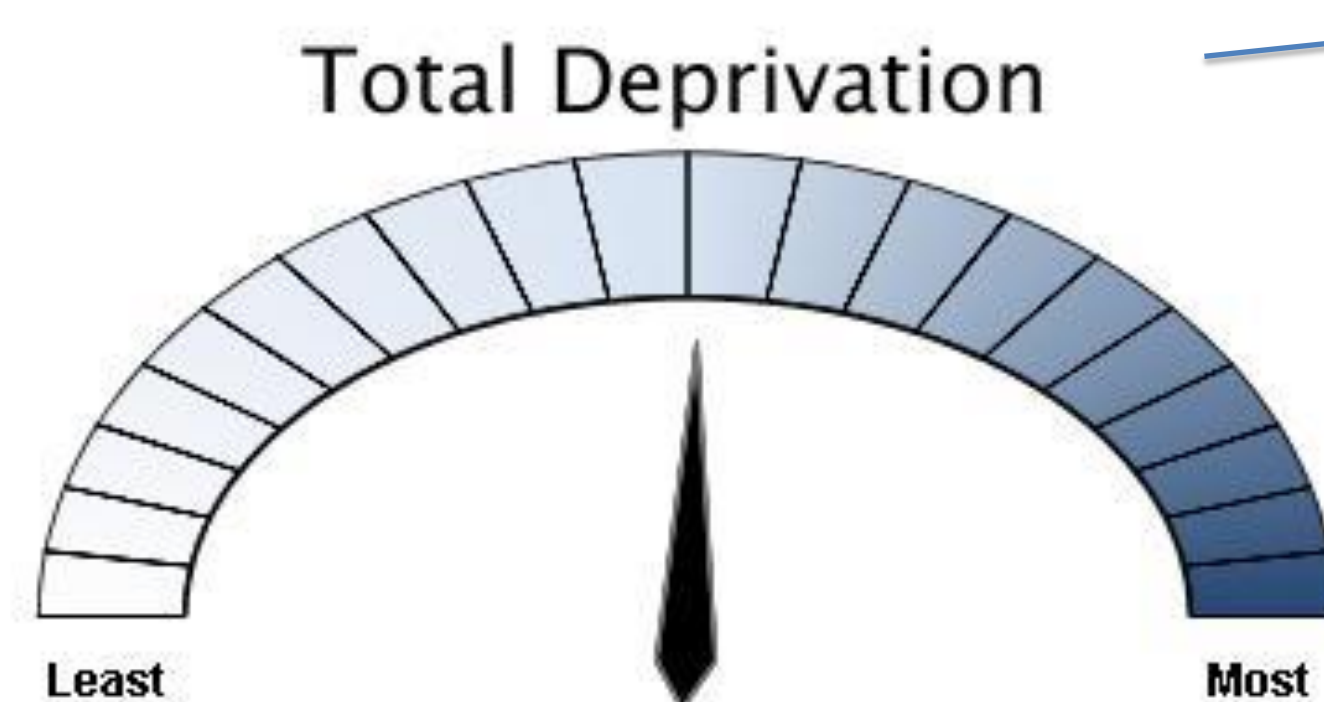
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INTRODUCTION

Student nurses must develop skills in observation, communication and reflection as well as public health knowledge from their first year of training. This paper will explain an innovative method developed for students to collect their own findings on public health in urban areas. These areas are both rich in the history of old public health that informs the content of many traditional public health walks, but are also locations where new public health concerns about chronic disease are concentrated. The learning method explained in this paper enables students to collect their own data and write original work as first-year students. Examples of their findings will be given. This award winning innovative approach to learning is underpinned by an approach to looking at the urban environment developed in Paris in the 1960s: the Dérive.

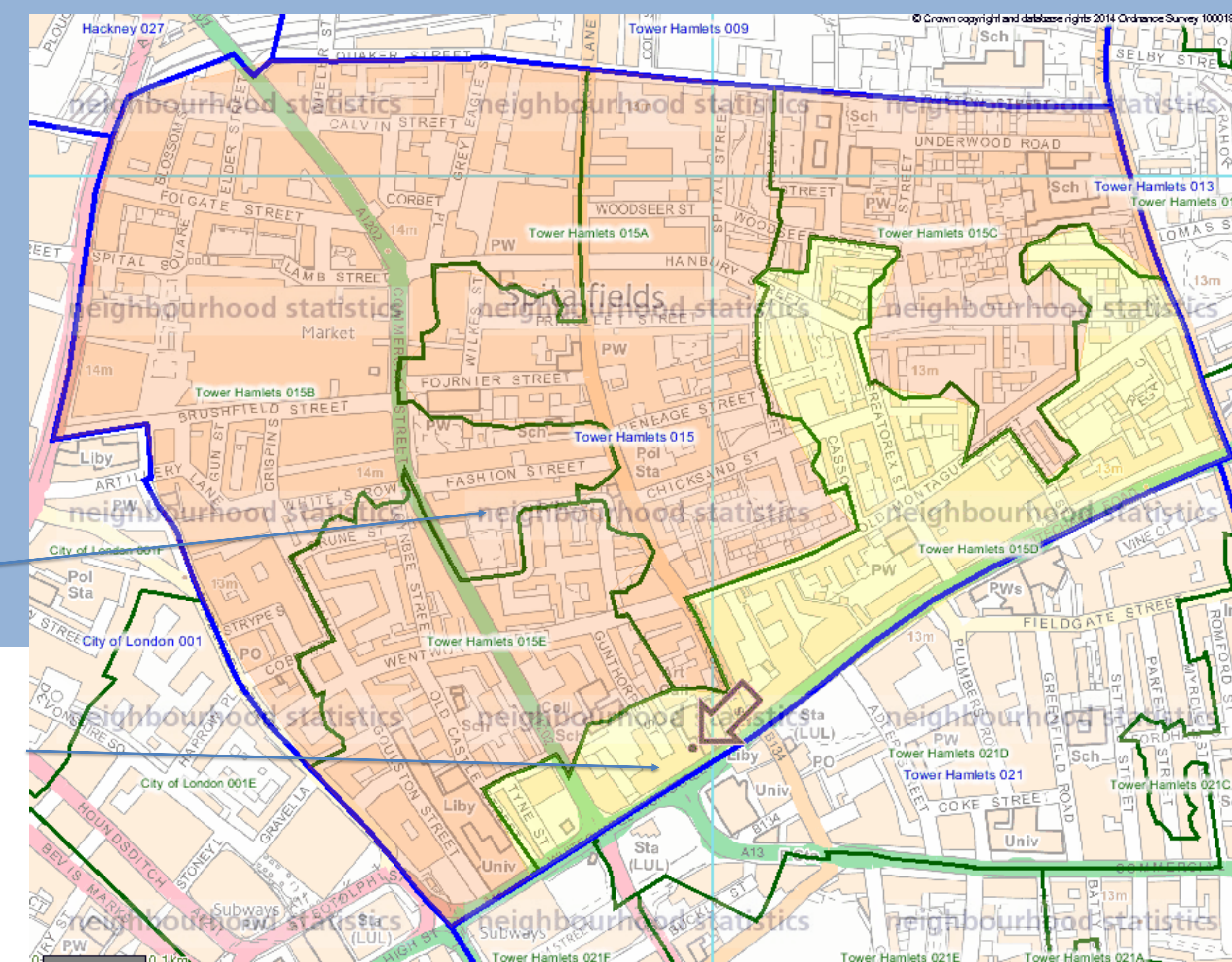
METHODOLOGY

In small groups, health care students are instructed to walk zones [eg. Zone RLH7] and think about the neighbourhoods near to the hospitals they will soon attend as apprentice nurses. On their walks, they wander slowly, engage in conversations and enter places open to the public. As they drift they observe with all five senses in the real three dimensional world to collect data for their reflective accounts of old and new public health. They are encouraged to stop for refreshments and taste, as well as look, hear, smell and touch while on their walk. They reflect as a group and later develop an individual reflective account in which they write up their deep reflections about what they observed on their walk. In preparation for their walk, they are encouraged to look at studies of Quality of Life and other neighbourhood statistics as well as undertaking a risk assessment for their walk.



FINDINGS

Deprivation indices calculated in 2015 show the main roads which had been the domain of the well-to-do in 1900 as the most deprived, and the back streets whose inhabitants were described by Booth as semi-criminal are now relatively desirable places to live. Understanding changes can be developed by students when they visit the real three dimensional environment and practice sociological imagination as the first steps towards a reflective account.



Source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0.

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FINDINGS (cont'd)

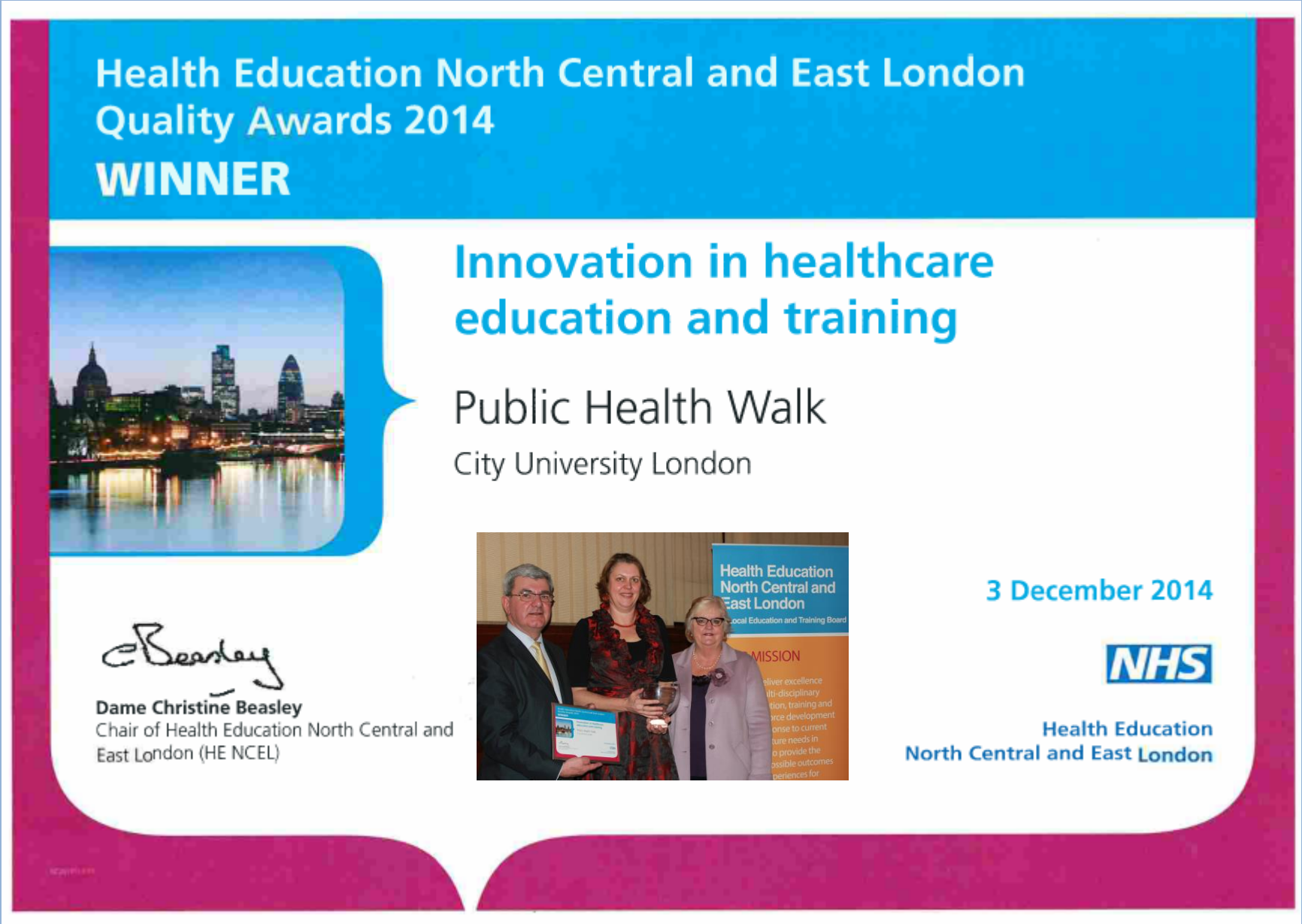
Reflecting on their walks, students apply theoretical concepts around social determinants of health and health inequalities to develop their understanding of communities in the neighbourhoods visited. They write about the treasured historical architecture; but also how the streets are used now. Students develop their observations into thematic analyses such as: what we drink as illustrated by the empty coke can tossed into a now disused drinking fountain and the fashion for street art in the backstreets of inner London which are popular sources of mobile phone images for tourists to snap.



CONCLUSIONS

This is an innovative approach which requires students to observe with all five senses at the real three dimensional world in which their service users are born, grow, work, live, and age. There is a wealth of information which can be found on the internet about the health and social care needs of every borough in England. However this teaching is based on the concept that only by walking the patch can a deep understanding develop.

The innovation has been commended by the Nursing and Midwifery Council and won the 2014 Health Education North Central and East London Quality Award for education and training.



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