



A Woman of Substance Awards 2009
The shortlisted candidates (in no specific order)

Anna Kennedy, 49, lives in Middlesex



Anna Kennedy was nominated by her sister, Maria Luisa,
for her amazing work supporting children with autism

Anna's story

Anna is the mother of two boys, now aged 16 and 19, who are both affected by autism. Since the boys were born, Anna has had to struggle with health issues while working tirelessly to secure the quality of education her children deserve.

Living on only three hours sleep a night due to her youngest son's erratic sleep patterns, Anna helped found a charity for children and adults with autistic spectrum conditions and opened a specialist primary and secondary school for 95 children called Hillingdon Manor School in Middlesex. This has been recognised as a Centre for Excellence.

Anna has also opened up a small specialist college and residential home for adults, started an information website on autism, a dating agency, and even published her own book on autism and raising children which became an Amazon top ten bestseller.

Anna is constantly trying to raise awareness of autism and help other parents as well as juggle her own home life which is far from easy but she always has a smile for everyone even though sometimes she is exhausted. Maria Luisa, her sister, says it would be wonderful for Anna to be recognised for the amazing work she does while balancing the needs of her two growing sons.

Lisa Salmon, 42, lives in Leeds



Lisa Salmon was nominated by her mother and her friend for being an extraordinary human being

Lisa's story

Lisa Salmon is married mother of two and a journalist. Eight years ago, while travelling to work to cover a story, Lisa's car was involved in a head-on collision with a lorry which crushed her vehicle and resulted in her being cut out of the wreckage by the emergency services and being flown to hospital by air ambulance. Lisa had appalling injuries, including multiple skull fractures, a brain injury, broken legs, feet, arms, fingers, and vertebrae, as well as a crushed face. She also lost the only eye she could see with properly.

Lisa has rheumatoid arthritis, which left her nearly blind in one eye as a child. The eye she lost in the crash was her good eye, which meant she was blinded.

Over the ensuing months, she had 12 operations, one of them lasting 12 hours, to save her life and rebuild her shattered face – she had both cheek bones, both jaw bones, both eye sockets and her nose and forehead rebuilt, and now has 40 plates and screws in her face and arms. The brain injury left her like a child initially, but it healed. The accident also left her disfigured.

Lisa's mother, Sheila Salmon, was told her only child was not expected to survive the night – but she did. Sheila was then told she would be in hospital for 18 months but Lisa was out in less than three months. As Lisa was leaving Leeds General Infirmary, the head consultant Mr Dominic Bell came to see her, and when Lisa thanked him, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'No, it is I that must thank you. From you we learned that one must never give up, however hopeless the situation'.

Four months after the accident she fell pregnant and had a healthy baby boy called Conor. Tragically, Conor died two days after his birth after accidentally suffocating against his mother's breast in a Leeds hospital after she fell asleep while breastfeeding him and was not checked. An inquest ruled the hospital had failed Lisa and her baby. Lisa has undergone extensive reconstructive surgery on her face, but was not offered the surgery on the NHS after her initial operations. She found a top Harley Street reconstructive surgeon herself and has spent over £17,000 on surgery. Part of this money came from the damages she received from the hospital after Conor's death.

Lisa has gone on to have two beautiful sons now aged five and three, and juggles work, bringing up her children and working as a features writer with the help of her husband Mark. When she has spare time, she rides her horse, Oliver. She is a tireless advocate to raise awareness for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service that saved her life and has appeared on tv to help its fundraising efforts.

According to her friend Gail, Lisa is a remarkable person who is always cheerful and is an extraordinary human being. Lisa's mum Sheila sums it up: "If we could bottle the substance that is Lisa, what a wonderful place the world would become."

Felicity Davis, 52, lives in Driffield, East Yorkshire



Felicity Davis went back to school to change her life and is now an assistant head teacher

Felicity's story

Felicity grew up with a grandmother who was mentally ill. When left alone with her grandmother she would treat Felicity violently for no apparent reason. She suffered abuse on a daily basis. Through these tough times, Felicity developed her own coping mechanisms; optimism and a sense of humour, which she now believes helped prepare her for what lay ahead.

Damaged, she left school and home at 15 and moved into a bed-sit with no qualifications and no hopes or expectations. Felicity threw herself into a party lifestyle that helped her forget her troubled childhood.

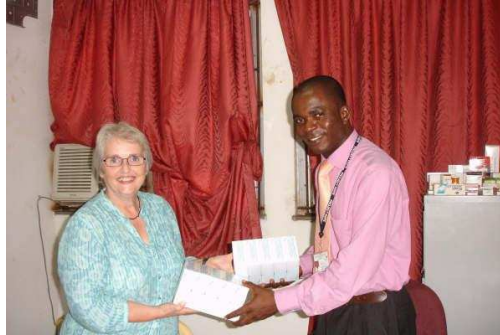
At 36, she looked back at two failed marriages, three sons, and was living in a council house with no money and no career. She realised that she had to get a grip and she was the only person who could make things change.

Felicity returned back to school to pick up where she had left off at 15. Finally gaining a degree in English Literature & Language, and then an MA and PGCE, to become a teacher. She had the support of her three wonderful sons and she overcame many challenges. Money was tight but there was never a shortage of love and laughter.

Now 52, Felicity is an assistant head teacher at George Pindar Community Sports College in Scarborough, with the qualifications to take her to a headship if she chooses.

She hopes she inspires all those she teaches to reach for the stars and achieve their dreams.

Angela Gorman, 62, lives in Cardiff



Angela (pictured left) was nominated by her sister-in-law and friend Bev Hampson for her campaigning work abroad to help reduce maternal mortality rates

Angela's story

It started on Sunday 26 June 2005 when BBC's *Panorama* showed a documentary called 'Dead Mums Don't Cry'. Angela, a sister on the neo-natal unit at University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, watched the programme which told of African woman Dr Grace Kodindo fight to stop women in Chad dying during pregnancy.

Angela was determined to do something to alter this and contacted the *Panorama* team. From this, the charity 'Hope for Grace Kodindo' was formed with the express aim of making birth safe for the mothers and babies of the Hôpital Général de Référence in N'Djamena, in the Central African country of Chad. Angela is chairperson of the charity and her determination and grit in acquiring the essential drugs needed to treat pre-eclampsia and infection has seen maternal mortality fallen from 14 per cent to 2.3 per cent.

Angela is passionate about the cause and not afraid to remind those in power of their commitment through the Millennium Development Goals to reducing maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa - something which she has, leading the charity, gone some way to achieving.

The Welsh Assembly Government has been so impressed with her work she has since been seconded to work for the charity which she is currently doing and has been to Chad twice, Liberia four times and Sierra Leone twice since 2005.

Angela demonstrates how ordinary people can change the lives of others. She has done this over the years while bringing up a family, caring for her ageing parents who have since passed away, and supporting her colleagues in her role as a union representative and offering kindness and practical support to the parents of the sick babies who were in her care.

Nicola Slingsby, 43, lives in Halifax, West Yorkshire



Nicola Slingsby was nominated by her friend for being a dedicated mother to her son who lost his legs

Nicky's story

Nicky was nominated by her friend Enid Jackson because she admires the dedication she has towards her family, bringing up three children as a single mother.

Enid says: "In the day and age of thugs and louts, Nicky has brought up three children to respect other people. They are decent kids and they do Nicky proud".

According to Enid, Nicky is an outstanding woman, dedicated to her children. She has been a single mum since her son Harry was a few weeks old. Harry contacted meningitis when he was nearly three-years-old and ended up needing to have both legs amputated from above the knee. Harry's body shut down and he was in intensive care for seven weeks and ended up in hospital for six months in total. According to Enid, Nicky survived all this and carried the burden of bringing Harry up by herself as single mum with the support of her own family.

Nicky had to be taught how to administer Harry's drugs and how to change his bandages so he could come home from hospital at an earlier date. During this time, Harry had to have skin grafts because his arm was so affected by the meningitis, and he narrowly avoided having it amputated too.

Throughout this difficult period of Harry's journey back to health, Nicky was looking after Jack, her other son, and also had to move from the four-storey house she was living in to a home suitable for a wheelchair.

When it came to schooling, Nicky wanted Harry's life to be as normal as possible but faced a year-long battle with the local council to allow Harry to attend the mainstream school his elder brother attended rather than a special needs school. Through her determination and tenacity and strong belief in what was right for Harry, Nicky stayed strong and, in the end, won her case.

Nicky has constantly boosted Harry's confidence throughout his childhood and supports him in his passion for wheelchair sports. At the age of 12, Harry was picked for the under 15s Wheelchair Basketball Yorkshire Squad. Now aged 15, he is competing for the International Under 22s Great Britain Squad.

Harry has won numerous awards for himself and Nicky has always supported him while bringing up two other boys and working part-time at Asda. She has dedicated her life to her family, working hard to help Harry achieve his dreams, all on her own, and Enid feels Nicky herself now deserves some recognition.

Wendy Morris lived in Liverpool

Hayley Fahy, 23, from Liverpool, will be collecting a posthumous award in honour of her mother, Wendy Morris. Hayley entered her mum for the awards earlier this year but, by the time the judging had taken place in August, Wendy had sadly died after losing her battle with Ovarian Cancer. Hayley's story about her mother (pictured below) is as follows:



Hayley's story about her mother

I nominated my mum for this award as she was an inspiration to myself and my two brothers, Lewis and Samuel, as well as all the people she came into contact with. She was left a single mum with three children – all under five years old - when my Dad walked out on our family.

Mum always made sure that we were safe, happy and loved. With no job or training, she put herself through a number of courses so she could then go on to study at night school. As we got older she went back to adult education, worked hard, gaining GCSEs and A Levels and won a place at university where she gained a 2:1 BA Hons in English Literature & Language.

She did all this purely so she could get a well-paid job so she could support her children. Over the past 10 years she had a number of jobs which led her to gaining her final post – which she enjoyed the most – and held until she died. This was as a Project Manager at Young Addiction in Halton in Liverpool (a charity which helps under 21s who have alcohol and drug addictions). Mum's jobs were always focused on helping others and she loved to give a helping hand to anyone who needed it. She also loved to inspire others to help them reach their full potential and she did this by teaching.

In August 2008, she was rushed into hospital unable to breathe with severe pain. Surgery showed she had stage 3c Ovarian Cancer. Over the next seven months, she underwent chemotherapy and major surgery. Despite being very seriously ill, she continued to think about others and wrote to ITV's *This Morning* asking them to raise awareness of Ovarian Cancer.

A week before having surgery, she appeared on the show and this resulted in over 1,000 hits alone on the ovarian cancer website www.ovarian.org.uk/lovewomen – exactly what Mum was hoping for.



When writing this submission for the awards my mother was in remission, and even though she knew the cancer would return, she was fighting to get her strength back and was planning to go back to work at the end of June: she returned for just over a week. Plus she had already gone back to her Samba Reggae drum band – she played the massive one!

Sadly, a further check up revealed that fluid had gathered in her stomach this was a sign the cancer had returned. We were waiting for a scan to tell us more. Over the next few days she became quite ill and then suffered a massive stroke at home and was rushed into hospital. Three days later she died on 19 July 2009 – after losing her battle with Ovarian Cancer.

Marjorie Hurst, 68, lives in St Helens, Merseyside



Marjorie was nominated by her friend Gladys Hull because she has worked tremendously hard for over 25 years helping disabled and sick children experience a better quality of life

Marjorie's story

Marjorie's daughter Helen died from a brain tumour when she was just 12-years-old in 1984. During her illness and death, Marjorie and husband Arthur discovered what little help was available locally for sick children. This began a journey over 25 years ago which started with the launch of the Helen Marie Friends charity for local sick children in honour of their daughter.

Marjorie has worked tirelessly with dogged determination for over 25 years to provide better equipment and provide an overall better quality of life for children who are sick, disabled or with special needs.

She organises fundraising events – from coffee mornings to barn dances – and has raised thousands of pounds to help local sick children. One disabled girl was given a specially-adapted bicycle so she could play with her siblings as a result of the charity's efforts.

According to her friend, Marjorie is a shining example to everybody, demonstrating how one can turn a negative into a positive.

Heather Champion, 65, lives in Wadebridge in Cornwall



Heather Champion (pictured right) put herself forward for the awards given the tireless work she does with the Girl Guides

Heather's story

Heather had a difficult childhood and this spurred her on to become one of life's protectors of children. By the age of 17, Heather was working at a Barnardo's Children's Home as an assistant 'Housemother' and this was the path her life took for many years.

Heather worked in a variety of children's homes, attended a residential course in the care of children and young people, until her marriage and the birth of her own two daughters in 1973 and 1976. When Heather's younger daughter was ten, she began to work in a local school as a teaching assistant, having meanwhile got involved locally in Girl Guiding. Heather has spent over 27 years working heavily for the organisation within the county and served on the Executive for a number of years.

Heather's youngest daughter had a little girl called Bryony who sadly was diagnosed with Leukaemia. Heather supported her daughter and granddaughter for over four and a half years as well as caring for her elderly mother. At the age of nine, Bryony relapsed and Heather began again to support the family with their hospital regime.

Bryony is now 16 years old and also active in the Girl Guides herself and enjoying life.

Heather has given many years to Girl Guiding, hoping that she may have had an effect upon the lives of numerous other girls and young women who will be the leaders of tomorrow.