

HELEN Richardson is owner of the Therapeutic Massage Clinic in Ponteland and Gosforth. She is one of the first in the UK to gain a Level 5 sports massage qualification and is going to work as a sports massage therapist at the Paralympics in August.

She has more than 19 years of experience in the health and beauty industry, setting up the Therapeutic Massage Clinic in 2000 aiming to provide relief for those with deep muscle tension, soft tissue injuries and stress-related illness.

Were you ill much as a child? No, just the usual childhood illnesses, chicken pox and the odd cold.

What sports and activities did you take part in at school? I really wasn't sporty at school but did take dance classes. Mainly ballroom then ballet and jazz but had a go at most things!

Have you ever had a health scare? No.

Have you ever had an operation? Had my wisdom teeth out.

How often do you exercise and what do you do? I exercise four to five times a week on average. I enjoy running outdoors and practise karate but like to try different things. In the last year I have been indoor climbing, horse riding and belly dancing.

What's the most challenging activity/event you've ever done? I



think my most challenging activity is yet to come as I am working as a sports massage therapist at the Paralympics. Considering what is at stake for the athletes, we need to be at the top of our game to help.

Have you ever done the Great North Run? No, I don't know if I could run quite that far but I always feel I do my bit as I have lots of lovely clients who do run. I provided massage teams at the charity village a couple of years ago and it was a fabulous experience.

How do you keep motivated? I am very lucky to really love my job and I have known some of my clients so long it is like spending a day with friends. I like variety and always have something in my diary to look forward to. Aside from the Olympics, this year I am doing my first zipwire

off the Tyne Bridge for Arthritis Research in June and have tickets for the best night of the year - of course I mean the Bruce Springsteen concert in Sunderland!

What's your diet like and how could you change it? My diet is pretty good. I follow the 80:20 rule in that if 80% of my diet is good I don't worry about the other 20%.

Have you ever been on a diet and did it work? No, not really.

Are you happy with your body? I would like to be taller!

What are your guilty pleasures? Tatler magazine, reading, LK Bennett shoes and M&S custard tarts.

How much do you drink a week? 8-10 units of red wine a week over three to four days.

Have you ever smoked? No.

Do you have any health or fitness tips to pass on? I really need my sleep to perform well and I drink lots of water so I would recommend both. Also stay active, rest when you need to, don't ignore injury or pain and, of course, have regular massage.

What are your health and fitness goals for the future? To stay fit, healthy and injury-free so I can continue to try new things and continue to do my job well. I do aim to progress through the karate gradings one step at a time.



SPORTY Helen Richardson wants to move up through the karate gradings