



Press release: for immediate release
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Sky Studios and New Writing North partner to inspire the next generation of television writers

Sky Studios has teamed up with writing development agency New Writing North in a bid to inspire the next generation of television writers from the North of England.

Sky Writes has been created to help diversify the pool of television writers in the UK. The programme offers an introduction to writing for television for people from under-represented groups and under-served geographical areas in the North of England.

Working with local groups in Blackpool, Gateshead and Rotherham, Sky Writes is now offering free, virtual introductory workshops to people living in and around these areas. No writing experience is required for these sessions. The introductory sessions will be followed by a free course in Writing for Television for those who show a talent for writing and masterclass panel sessions featuring industry insiders.

Led by experienced television writers Afshan D'souza-Lodhi (Rotherham), Caroline Mitchell (Blackpool) and Richard Stockwell (Gateshead), Sky Writes will provide participants with a grounding in scriptwriting, as well as offering an insight into the television industry's development and commissioning processes.

The partnership will see Sky Studios, the TV development and production arm of broadcaster Sky, work closely with New Writing North, the literature development agency for the North of England. Through Sky Writes, the two organisations are committed to identifying and nurturing new television writers from under-represented groups and under-served geographical areas in the North of England, with a particular aim to support people of colour and those from LGBTQ+, disabled and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Vicky Wharton, Executive Producer, Sky Studios, said: "Following the establishment of our base in Leeds 18 months ago, we've experience first-hand the wealth of writing talent that exists across the North of England. Working with New Writing North, we're excited to take this work further by uncovering and nurturing new voices to ensure that the stories we tell in the future are as diverse as the viewers that watch them."

Will Mackie, Senior Programme Manager (Writing and Awards) at New Writing North, said: "We are delighted to be working with Sky Studios on this initiative. The programme is an effective and innovative way of addressing issues that we know make it hugely challenging for underrepresented writers to break into screenwriting. We know that our region is bursting with talent and through a programme like Sky Writes we're looking to offer the kind of grassroots development that has the potential to open doors and create meaningful long-term opportunities. We have



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recruited inspirational and hard-working Programme Producers and Writers in Residence to carry out this work and look forward to working in Rotherham, Gateshead and Blackpool.”

Find out more about the programme and sign up for free workshops at <https://newwritingnorth.com/projects/sky-writes/>

Ends

For media enquiries please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager at New Writing North
laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com 07411 164 837

About New Writing North

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England, and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, the Gordon Burn Prize, Read Regional, Young Writers and Durham Book Festival. New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and act as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber & Faber, Sky Studios and higher education partners including Durham University, Northumbria University and University of York. As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.

newwritingnorth.com

About Sky Studios

Sky Studios brings to screen unique stories from the very best talent in Europe.

We develop, produce and fund original drama, comedy and documentary for Sky's 24m customers and beyond. Building on the success of critically-acclaimed Sky Originals including Emmy-winning Chernobyl, Bafta-winning Patrick Melrose and international hits Das Boot, Riviera and Britannia, Sky Studios is the new creative home of Sky Originals, such as The Third Day with Jude Law, I Hate Suzie, co-created by Lucy Prebble and Billie Piper and BAFTA-nominated hit comedy, Brassic.

We're an agile Studio, seeking out the best untold stories from new voices while working in creative partnership with today's best writers, producers and on-screen talent to bring viewers stories they wouldn't find anywhere else.

With commissioning talent and production capability across the UK, Germany and Italy, we understand local tastes across Europe better than anyone else and have



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plans to more than double our investment in original content by 2024, fully supported and backed by Comcast NBC Universal.

We're also developing a new TV and movie studio, Sky Studios Elstree, which is expected to lead to the creation of over 2,000 new jobs and generate an additional £3 billion of production investment in the UK creative sector in the first five years alone.

Sky Studios invests in the cultural economy and global production sector with equity stakes in several production companies in the UK and the US, including Great British Bake-Off creator Love Productions, and the premier reality crime producer in the US, Jupiter Entertainment, creator of long-running hit Snapped. Sky Studios has invested in high quality factual specialists Blast Films and True North Productions; entertainment and format expert Znak & Co (US & UK); natural history producer True to Nature; drama producers The Lighthouse and Longboat Pictures; and growth businesses Sugar Films, Chrysalis Vision, and Talos Films (US).

Sky Studios launched in June 2019. The senior leadership team is Chief Executive Officer Gary Davey, Chief Content Officer Jane Millichip, Chief Operating Officer Caroline Cooper, Director of Drama UK Cameron Roach, Director of Comedy UK Jon Mountague, Director Original Production Sky Italia Nils Hartmann, and Director Original Productions Sky Deutschland Marcus Ammon.

Writers-in-Residence

Caroline Mitchell: Blackpool

Caroline Mitchell has an MA in Screenwriting from the Northern Film School and has written over 200 episodes of the BAFTA and National Television award winning soap opera, *Emmerdale*, since 2002. She has also contributed to other drama series and is currently writing her first novel, alongside developing a feature-length screenplay and a comedy series both set in Yorkshire. She lives in Hebden Bridge with her two schnauzers, Sybil and Mavis.

Richard Stockwell: Gateshead

Richard's first writing success was in the 1998 when his play *Killing Time* toured the country starring Dennis Waterman. The play has been produced somewhere in the world every year since. After that he wrote for *Eastenders* for two years for the BBC. A number of other plays followed, in particular *Bad Blood*, which had a national tour and international success.

In 2005 he started working for Northumbria University where he established the Drama and Scriptwriting programme. Richard taught at Northumbria until 2018. During that period he also wrote a number of plays, in particular: *Future Shock* (Winner of the 2011 Best one act play, Drama Association of Wales) produced at the 24:7 festival Manchester and The Lowry in Salford; *The Prize* (co-written with Steve Gilroy) produced at The Underbelly, Edinburgh Festival and Live Theatre. He also wrote *Continuum* under commission for Live Theatre performed 2016 at Alphabetti Theatre.



Afshan D'souza-Lodhi: Rotherham

Afshan D'souza-Lodhi was born in Dubai and bred in Manchester. She is a writer of plays and poetry, and was recently commissioned to write and direct a short film for Channel 4 (*An Act of Terror*) and a radio play for BBC Sounds (*Chop Chop*). Her debut poetry collection 're: *desire*' (Burning Eye Books) came out in June 2020 during the lockdown. Her most recent play, *Santi & Naz*, described as 'tender yet sharply political' by the *Guardian*, puts female friendship against the backdrop of the partition of India and Pakistan. As well as her own writing, Afshan is keen to develop other younger and emerging artists and sits on the boards of Manchester Literature Festival and Pie Radio. Afshan also sits on the steering committee for Northern Police Monitoring Project, an independent campaigning and advocacy organisation that challenges police harassment and violence. @afshandl www.afshandl.com

Programme Producers

Chandan Shergill: Blackpool

Chandan Shergill hails from Wigan, she studied French and German at the University of Bristol and enjoyed time working abroad in Vienna, Paris, and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. She is currently the Coordinator of the Young Audiences Content Fund at the British Film Institute, which supports the creation of distinctive public service TV content for audiences up to the age of 18. She also works with BFI Network in the reader pool for the Short Film Fund, is on the steering group for a More in Common project at the People's History Museum in Salford, and is a trustee at Manchester City of Literature. She spent several years in a talent agency representing television presenters in London, and more recently she has worked in the charity and public sector, with roles at Refugee Action and Manchester City Council. She lives in Manchester and enjoys reading (of course!) cooking, and yoga. Chandan is delighted to be working with New Writing North and Sky Studios on this vital project.

Becci Sharrock: Gateshead

Becci is a writer, theatre maker and creative producer based in Gateshead. She has worked with and for a variety of North East cultural organisations including Live Theatre, The Word, Northern Stage, ARC, Stockton, Beamish Museum, Sunderland Culture and Hexham Book Festival. She has also produced and mentored a wide range of writers, artists and companies, specialising in new writing.

Recent writing credits include: *Christmas With The Hobs* (animated film, co-commissioned by Queen's Hall, Hexham, Alnwick Playhouse and The Maltings, Berwick); *Northern Pulse* (Film Poem, Great Exhibition of the North, N18 Programme); *Living Legends: Hidden Histories* (Published book & exhibition, commissioned by Made In Corby); and *Letters to Myself* (UK tour). She is currently under commission to write a stage adaptation of *The Secret Garden* and is working on her debut novel.

Stacey Sampson: Rotherham

Stacey Sampson was born and brought up in Rotherham. For 20 years she worked



as an actor across theatre, television and film and brings this background to her facilitation – leading drama and writing workshops in a wide variety of educational and community settings, including partnering with organisations that support people experiencing homelessness and/or the criminal justice system. Stacey is Community Producer with Third Angel as well as making work with them as a performer and dramaturg. She is also Drama Leader with Under the Stars, running weekly sessions for adults with learning disabilities, and regularly works with other local companies + venues such as Dead Earnest, Sheffield Theatres and Doncaster CAST to deliver large scale arts projects across South Yorkshire. Stacey specialises in collaboration with young people and communities, devising bespoke scripts and performances inspired by the people and places involved. She is also a keen writer and her works in progress have won the Arvon Award, a Northern Writers' Award, the Mslexia Novel Competition and been shortlisted for the Kudos North Award and Sundance Writers' Lab.