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‘The writer will see you now’: Writer in Residence to help Newcastle Hospitals staff share their stories

NHS staff across The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust will soon have the chance to tell their stories and develop their writing talents, thanks to a new ‘Writer in Residence’ initiative set up by Newcastle Hospitals Charity and leading writing development organisation, New Writing North.

During her residency – the first of its kind in the region – award-winning writer Laura Lindow will support Newcastle Hospitals staff, across their sites and within the community, to share their experiences, providing them with creative writing skills and editorial support.

The position is the result of a new partnership between Newcastle Hospitals Charity and New Writing North and comes as the NHS turns 75 this year.

As part of the 75th anniversary celebrations, Lindow will edit a book showcasing contributions from hospital staff. New Writing North will launch this unique collection at a special event in 2024, with readings from contributors.

The Writer in Residency programme aims to offer NHS employees new opportunities to express themselves and to strengthen bonds with other colleagues across the hospital trust.

Staff will be supported and encouraged to choose what they want to write about – be that ‘life on the frontline’, short stories, memoir, or something completely different. Some of the work will also form part of ‘NHS Staff Stories’, a national NHS initiative artistically directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the Young Vic Theatre.

Participants will be able to engage at whatever level suits them – attending anything from informal drop-in sessions to taster workshops to interviews or working with Lindow to develop complete writing projects. Lindow will also generate her own piece of work, as part of her residency.

As well as being a North East resident, Lindow is herself no stranger to Newcastle Hospitals’ staff: she regularly appears as the much-loved clown doctor, ‘Dr Lulu McDoo’, working with children in hospital and their families.

Commenting on the initiative, writer Laura Lindow said “This residency creates a space for staff to tell their stories. To write. To explore. To learn. Whether with a pen on a page, a script and a screen, or just in conversation. Of worlds behind hospital walls or far beyond. Everyone has stories. And I can’t wait to support their telling.

“The NHS hasn’t just touched my life: it’s improved, extended, and at points rescued mine and those I love. The power of the organisation is made from the incredible work of its exceptional people, and I feel immensely proud and privileged to be in this exciting new role that can hopefully give something back.”

Anna Disley, New Writing North's Executive Director for Programme & Impact, said: "We're delighted to have Laura's help in identifying hidden talent in our health services. We hope to support staff to write for pleasure and their own wellbeing, as well as to identify the next Adam Kay! Together, they will literally help to pen a new chapter in the story of our NHS - and all that it has been through in the last 75 years."

Katie Hickman, Newcastle Hospitals Charity Arts Programme Manager, said: "Through our Newcastle Hospitals Charity Arts Programme, we are looking forward to working in partnership with New Writing North, and our new Writer in Residence, Laura Lindow. This exciting collaboration aims to centre Trust staff and their stories, to make visible their experiences, and bring their creativity to light.

"We can't wait to get started and encourage all Trust staff to get involved, whether that be through writing workshops, email submissions, or drop-in taster sessions. Creative writing is proven to help our wellbeing, recognise thoughts and feelings that we might find difficult to explain, and the best thing about it... there are no rules!"

For more information, please visit: <https://charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/news/calling-all-trust-staff-writers-storytellers/>

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Notes to Editors

About Newcastle Hospitals Charity

Newcastle Hospitals Charity is the official charity for Newcastle Hospitals, which includes the Royal Victoria Infirmary, the Freeman Hospital, the Northern Centre for Cancer Care and many community services. Our charity's mission is to help our hospitals to go further by providing support for compassionate and innovative healthcare, education, and research.

We work in partnership with Newcastle Hospitals to complement the world-class healthcare services provided and we proudly support patients, staff, and the wider hospital community by funding a range of initiatives - from cutting-edge cancer research to staff psychological support and vital improvements to the patient experience and environment.

<https://charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/>

About New Writing North

Based in Newcastle, New Writing North leads the development of creative writing and reading in the North of England.

A charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, we believe that writing talent is everywhere, but that opportunities are not. We work hard to both identify talent and create fantastic career-changing opportunities for people from across society.

We develop programmes and activities that inspire people to engage with creative writing and reading, whether this is to develop their skills and professional ambitions or for pleasure and wellbeing.

We help excellent writing find local, regional, national, and international audiences.