



PRESS RELEASE: 5th December 2024

Our National Health Stories wins national art and health award

An exciting creative programme marking 75 years of the NHS, *Our National Health Stories*, won the Royal Society for Public Health Arts & Health Award at the RSPH Health and Wellbeing Awards in late November.

The RSPH Health and Wellbeing Awards is the UK's premier awards scheme for promoting health and wellbeing, celebrating activities, policies and strategies that empower communities and individuals, improving the populations and health and address the wider social determinants of health.

Our National Health Stories was awarded the top prize in the Arts & Health category. The award recognises organisations whose work has furthered the contribution of the creative arts to health and wellbeing.

An unprecedented national programme of artistic work created in collaboration with 19 hospital trusts across England, *Our National Health Stories* was a powerful and moving portrait of the NHS on its 75th Anniversary. Starting in May of 2023, NHS staff embarked on a six-month programme of creative activity, culminating in November of the same year with a live, day-long, nationwide relay performance in Trusts across England, as well as performing at a one-off show led by Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah at Aviva Studios.

Artwork of all different forms – music, drawings, paintings, dance, poetry and more – was created by and with over 2,000 staff members in more than 80 hospitals across the country, allowing NHS staff to tell their stories and share what being part of the NHS means to them, as well as recognise the impact it has had on their lives.

Our National Health Stories was funded by Arts Council England and NHS Charities Together, in partnership with NHS England.

On behalf of the *Our National Health Stories* steering group Laura Waters says, “I’m delighted to announce that *Our National Health Stories* has won the RSPH Arts & Health Award; it’s a huge testament to the incredible creativity of thousands of NHS staff across the country, showcasing the often-unseen work of hospital arts.”

Guy Noble says, “Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing *Our National Health Stories* to life! We’d like to thank our funders, Arts Council England, NHS Charities Together in partnership with NHS England. The project wouldn’t have been possible without the support and commitment of the 19 NHS trusts, their staff and performers, Thanks also to our amazing creative team led by Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah, Creative Director Emma Dunton,



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alongside writer Chris Bush and composer Ruth Chan, with dramaturg Teunkie Van Der Sluijs and associate director Jennifer Tang; plus, everyone else involved behind the scenes that helped to realise the project.”

The 19 NHS trusts that were part of *Our National Health Stories* were:

- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridgeshire
- Chelsea & Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London
- Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, Surrey
- Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust, London
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London
- Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Liverpool
- Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Chester
- Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle
- Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, Nottingham
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford
- Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield
- Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Somerset
- St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London
- University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London
- University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust, Bristol
- University Hospitals Derby & Burton NHS Foundation Trust, Derby
- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicester
- York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, York

The National Arts in Hospitals Network, a membership network supporting arts managers in hospitals across the UK, is now continuing the work of *Our National Health Stories* and is currently working on a new project for spring 2026 focused on staff wellbeing. More information on the National Arts in Hospitals Network and upcoming projects can be found on its website: <https://nahn.org.uk/>

For more information about *Our National Health Stories* and to watch the 2023 performances, please visit: ournhstories.org.uk.

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About The National Arts in Hospitals Network (NAHN):

The National Arts in Hospitals Network is the new name for the National Performance Advisory Group for Arts, Design and Heritage in Hospitals. Hosted by NHS Charities Together, the network is expanding to cover all four UK nations. NAHN is a national membership organisation of NHS managers and professional leads who are involved in the leadership and delivery of Arts, Heritage and Design services across hospitals. The purpose of the group is to share best

practice, to find solutions and offer support to those working within this field of healthcare. Its vision is for every patient, visitor and staff member in UK hospitals to have access to high quality, impactful arts interventions to support recovery and wellbeing. Further information: <https://nahn.org.uk/>

NHS Charities Together is the national charity for everyone who uses, cares about and works in the NHS. We have a unique relationship with the NHS and a unique role as the membership organisation for over 230 NHS charities across the UK. Our vision is a future with a thriving NHS and we mobilise the collective power of the NHS charity sector to create the best possible healthcare for everyone. Together we help the NHS go further for patients, workforce and communities.

Thanks to the heartfelt generosity of the public, NHS Charities Together's 2020 Covid-19 Urgent Appeal raised over £160 million. We have now allocated £148 million and distributed approaching £100 million to reach every NHS Trust around the UK, supporting the NHS during and beyond its immediate recovery from the pandemic. Donations have funded thousands of projects providing extra support for the NHS, including mental health support for the workforce, training and equipment for community first responder volunteers and preventing ill health in communities.

To find out more visit www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE is a British actor, playwright, director and broadcaster. He was Artistic Director of the Young Vic theatre from 2018 - 2024. He was Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage (2011-18) and Artistic Director of the Festival of Black Arts and Culture, Senegal (2010), where he wrote and directed the opening ceremony at Senghor stadium. As a playwright, Kwame was the first African Caribbean to have a play produced in London's West End (Elmina's Kitchen). His triptych of plays was produced at the National Theatre, where he later created the online resource The Black Play Archive.

Kwame was Chancellor of the University of the Arts, London (2010-2015), is Patron of Ballet Black and The Black Cultural Archives, Chair of Warwick Arts Centre Advisory Board and a Trustee of the Tate and the Black Equity Organisation. Kwame was awarded an OBE for Services to Drama in 2011, and in 2020 listed as one of 100 Great Black Britons.