

Press release

New national touring exhibition highlights vital role played by migrants in the NHS to mark 75th anniversary



The Migration Museum is launching [Heart of the Nation: Migration and the Making of the NHS](#), a new national touring exhibition to mark the 75th anniversary of the National Health Service (NHS) opening at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery on 30 June 2023.

The NHS has faced huge pressures over the decades – never more so than today. Yet the NHS and the millions of people who sustain it remain close to our hearts. And without its international workers, the NHS would not have become the beloved institution it is today.

Ever since its creation in 1948, people have come to Britain from all over the world to make this grand vision for a better society a reality. Today, around 1 in 6 people working in the NHS has a non-British nationality. And many others are the children and grandchildren of migrant healthcare workers, forging multi-generational legacies. But their crucial role has largely been ignored.

NHS workers care for us from the moment we're born, until the moment we die. *Heart of the Nation* is an immersive media exhibition that asks the question: who are the people who care for us? And do we care enough?

Featuring dozens of personal stories contributed by people who have come from all over the world to work at all levels of the NHS from the 1940s to the present day, alongside photography, film, newly commissioned artwork, unique artefacts and historical ephemera, *Heart of the Nation* shares the stories and experiences of the migrant healthcare workers who built and have sustained our health service.

The centre-piece of the exhibition is a newly commissioned interactive music and video installation, co-created and performed by seven people currently working in the NHS, exploring themes of care through singing and storytelling.

Visitors will finish an interactive healing space, where they'll be invited to reflect on and share their stories and experiences of care, and add messages for NHS workers who have cared for them throughout their lives to an evolving participatory installation.

The exhibition builds on a digital exhibition that the Migration Museum launched during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, which will be updated and integrated into the new exhibition, and includes new stories and material to mark the 75th anniversary of the NHS on 5 July 2023. Visitors will also be able to contribute their own stories to this evolving, participatory exhibition.

"For all its challenges, the NHS remains an immense source of national pride and is often painted as a distinctly British success story. Yet the NHS simply wouldn't exist without the generations of people from all over the world who have built, grown and staffed it," says Aditi Anand, Artistic Director at the Migration Museum, who curated the exhibition.

"*Heart of the Nation* highlights the vital role that migrants have always played in the NHS and the extent to which, just like the NHS, migration is central to the very fabric of who we are in Britain – as individuals, as communities and as a nation. Now more than ever, this is a story that needs to be told."

Leicester deputy city mayor Cllr Adam Clarke says: "The creation of the NHS in 1948 is one of the most important chapters in our history. It's a fundamental part of all of our lives and we owe a great deal to those who created it and all those who work in it.

"Migrants have contributed to Leicester and the UK in countless ways, and their immense role in the making of the NHS deserves to be highlighted and celebrated, so I am delighted that Leicester will be the first city to host this important exhibition as part of its national tour."

Dr Adil Akram, a psychiatrist working in the NHS who is one of the singers and co-creators of the music and video installation, says: "My father came over from Pakistan in the 1960s to practise as a doctor in the NHS – and I've followed in his footsteps.

"This exhibition is close to my heart – it's about the contributions of people like my father who came to this country and spent their lives and careers helping to build the NHS into the fantastic institution it is today, that symbolises all the good things about the UK."

The exhibition opens at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery on 30 June 2023 and runs until 29 October 2023, the first leg of a national tour. Future confirmed locations include Leeds and London.

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For more information, please contact:

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Notes for editors

Where and when

Heart of the Nation: Migration and the Making of the NHS opens to the public at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery on 30 June 2023 and runs until 29 October 2023 – the first leg of a national tour. Future confirmed locations include Trinity Leeds in November 2023 and London in 2024.

We will be announcing a series of free workshops and events to accompany the exhibition, programmed and co-produced with local creatives and organisations including award-winning photographer and filmmaker Kajal Nisha Patel and Inspirate, who we'll be partnering with during their Indian Summer Festival. More details to follow.

The exhibition can also be explored online at: www.heartofthenation.co.uk.

Opening hours and admission

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery is open seven days a week:

Monday to Friday: 11am – 4.30pm

Saturday and Sunday: 11am – 5pm

Admission free – no booking.

Address

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery
53 New Walk
Leicester LE1 7EA

For directions and visitor information, please visit: www.leicestermuseums.org/HeartOfTheNation

Website and social media

Website: www.migrationmuseum.org

Twitter: [@MigrationUK](https://twitter.com/MigrationUK)

Facebook: [MigrationMuseumUK](https://www.facebook.com/MigrationMuseumUK)

Instagram: [@MigrationMuseumUK](https://www.instagram.com/MigrationMuseumUK)

Hashtag: #HeartoftheNation

Media images

A selection of media images can be found [here](#).

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About Leicester Museum & Art Gallery

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery is the city's original and flagship museum, open since 1849 and the most popular free attraction in the East Midlands. The galleries and collections include Ancient Egypt, Dinosaurs, the Victorian Art Gallery, Arts & Crafts Gallery, Picasso Ceramics: The Attenborough Collection and Leicester's internationally renowned German Expressionism collection. www.leicestermuseums.org.

About the Migration Museum

The Migration Museum explores how the movement of people to and from Britain across the ages has shaped who we all are – as individuals, as communities and as nations.

We stage interactive, story-led exhibitions and a wide range of events, alongside high-profile digital campaigns and an education programme delivering workshops to thousands of young people each year and reaching millions more across the country via teacher training and partnerships. We also convene a knowledge-sharing Migration Network of museums and galleries across the UK.

The Migration Museum is currently based in a dynamic temporary venue in a busy shopping centre in Lewisham, south-east London. Longer-term, we aim to open at our new permanent home in the heart of the City of London in 2026, allied to a digital storytelling hub and a network of venues across the UK.

Find out more at: www.migrationmuseum.org.

For more information, please contact:

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Lead image: Photo © Roy Mehta