



FELLOWSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY
HONORIS CAUSA

DAME JACKIE DANIEL

9 MAY 2025

DAME JACKIE DANIEL: HONORARY FELLOWSHIP

Chancellor Dharker, members of the University, distinguished alumni, and honoured guests,

Dame Jackie Daniel was born and raised in Haworth, where she had what she describes as a fairly normal upbringing, as well as plenty of time with her polyglot, entrepreneurial fashionista grandmother. That woman's inspirational spirit continues in her granddaughter, who started a career in health as a nurse and soon rose to become a ward sister on a thirty-bed surgical ward. She entered the boardroom at twenty-nine and received her first appointment as a chief executive officer before the age of forty.

As the CEO of the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, she spearheaded a remarkable turnaround, which took the institution from special measures to a Care Quality Commission rating of 'good'. At the end of her time in Morecambe, Jackie was not sure if she wanted to take on another chief executive role – but then just such a position came up here in Newcastle. She could not resist us. Newcastle, as she saw then and has demonstrated since, represented a unique potential for synergy, for enabling what she calls the 'sticky edges' between partners, and especially between the City Council, the University, and the hospital.

So, Jackie came to Newcastle in 2018, as CEO of a trust that has around two million patient contacts every year. She also became a keen walker of the Northumberland Coastal Path, and even a brave swimmer (and occasional paddleboarder) in the North Sea. Friends describe her as someone who 'doesn't just want to get involved in things' but 'wants to sort them'. She was approachable and keen to discuss sensitive and complex issues. With such an attitude a rich relationship developed between University faculty, the city, and the NHS trust, which is

perhaps best exemplified in the following story about a set of interviews in London, a lot of hard work, and some Mars bars.

Those extraordinary few who reach the final stages of a major funding bid are invited to London to face an interview process which will determine the fate of their proposal. Such interviews were held for three major bids involving Newcastle's University and its hospital: first for the Academic Health Science Centre, then for the Patient Safety Research Collaboration, and finally for the Biomedical Research Centre. Deeply invested in the research agenda of the region, Jackie was in the room for all three. She was thoroughly prepared, had attended rehearsal interviews, and, as one colleague put it, simply 'got stuck in'. It was clear to all the interview panels that those who had come down to London from Newcastle were functioning as a team. The bids for the Academic Health Science Centre, and then for the Patient Safety Research Collaboration were both

successful. As for the Biomedical Research Centre bid, the panel conducting the interview probably did not know that the Newcastle team had – in order to have as much energy as possible – all eaten Mars bars just before walking into the room, but I think they probably could guess at the amount of joy on the train back to Newcastle, as they celebrated yet another success.

Jackie was eighteen months into her role as CEO of the Newcastle NHS Trust when the Covid-19 pandemic hit. She knew, by this point, all of the key players, and – more than this – had focussed on building partnerships between them, generating a collaborative culture from the top down. This was evident during the crisis, with things like support from the University for

testing, but also clear in other ways. An online INSIGHTS lecture in 2021 on how to build a healthier future, for example, took the form of a discussion between Jackie and representatives from the City Council, University and volunteer community. Participants stressed the need for long-term strategy, and the phrase ‘as Jackie said’ notably recurs throughout the recording of the session.

Any consideration of our health both now and in the future must take account of global warming and the climate crisis. In June 2019, the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust became the first in the country to declare a climate emergency. It was also the first NHS organization to pledge to reach Net Zero Carbon. In 2023, Jackie went to COP as one of the UK’s #onestepgreener ambassadors, speaking about her experience of improving the environmental impact of a hospital at all levels, from waste management through to the institution’s culture and its engagement with the wider community. Newcastle University, which itself declared a climate emergency in 2019, was, of course, very much part of that community too, supporting the trust’s environmental sustainability work through research and other activities.

Jackie describes herself as a lifelong learner. Nowadays, she is busy as one of Accenture’s global luminaries, specializing in healthcare and technology; as part of the Dame Commander Society she helped to found; and as a prominent speaker on LGBTQ+ leadership. Across all these activities, and indeed across her remarkable career to date, Jackie has repeatedly shown her capacity to consider people and situations in the round, whether that might be collaborating with the University on research fundings bids or making clear how much a person’s health is shaped by environmental factors. Such holistic vision underlies her position

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as someone who, she recognizes, has had the good fortune to discover just what you can do when you work with brilliant partners.

It is said that one should finish a citation with a “flourish”. But in this case, I would defer to Dame Jackie. Her “Flourish” model of organisational change is something that she has championed and refined throughout her time in senior leadership positions. She is passionate about people and helping them to fulfil their potential. This is an ideal that I’m certain we would all subscribe to.

Chancellor Dharker, in recognition of outstanding service to Newcastle University and her commitment to improving the health, wealth and wellbeing of those in our region, I present to you Dame Jackie Daniel to be accepted into the Fellowship of Newcastle University.

James Harriman-Smith, Public Orator

Jill Taylor-Roe, Senior Public Orator

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