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## Northumbria celebrates International Women's Day with feminist festival

Northumbria University's Gender and Society Research Hub (GSRH) will place the spotlight firmly on feminism, activism and politics during a programme of events celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March.

*Not on the QT: Women and Politics* hopes to engage young people with the political process and the event provides an opportunity to meet some of the region's women politicians. On Friday 6 March, members of the public will be invited to put their questions to a panel of both elected members and prospective parliamentary candidates (PCC).

The panel includes Chi Onwurah, Labour MP for Newcastle Central; Charlotte Haitham-Taylor, Conservative PCC North West Durham; Jacqui Lovell, Green Party PCC Stockton South; Julie Pörksen, Liberal Democrat PCC Berwick-Upon-Tweed; and the writer and journalist Judith Holder.

*Not on the QT: Women and Politics* takes place at 6.30pm this Friday in Northumbria University's Business and Law building in City Campus East. The event is part of a month-long line up of sessions organised by Northumbria University's Gender and Society Research Hub (GSRH). The programme, which runs from March 3 to April 1, includes events on creative feminism, women's activism and issues surrounding women, politics and power. Speakers will include Northumbria academics and feminist thinkers and activists from the world of television, academia, law and from a range of campaign groups.

Launched last year, GSRH encourages researchers from across the University to share their experiences, ideas and expertise and to collaborate on research, teaching and public engagement activities with an explicit gender focus. The idea for the hub came from Karen Ross, Professor of Media, with the aim of providing a cross-University and interdisciplinary home for research and research-informed teaching and learning around the theme of gender and equality. GSRH has a growing membership and now includes colleagues from neighbouring universities and local women's organisations.

Associate Lecturer in Social Sciences, Sue Regan, is one of the event co-organisers. She said: "On March 30, the British Parliament will be dissolved and campaigning will start for Election 2015. The trends in voter turnout suggest that sections of the public seem increasingly disinterested in politics. Our politicians are seen as being very distant from us, not just being far away in Westminster, but also not understanding our concerns and everyday problems. There are very few opportunities to discuss issues with them and often they don't 'look like us' or even seem to listen to different points of view. Data shows that the lowest voter turnout in the last General Election was amongst 18-24 year olds, especially young women."

Professor Karen Ross added: "As we celebrate the strength of women on International Women's Day, we are pleased to host this event and the others in the Festival, and hope to see an active public engagement with some of the key issues affecting women and men in contemporary society."

The GSRH are working with Northumbria Students' Union to set up a voter

registration stall at the event. They will also meet with women's groups in the West End of Newcastle to hear about their views on voting and the General Election.

International Women's Day (8 March) is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. The day, first recognised in 1911, honours the work of the Suffragettes, celebrates women's achievements and is an annual reminder of the inequities still to be redressed.

The GSRH is marking International Women's Day by hosting a *Festival of Feminist Ideas and Actions* – a series of feminist conversations that will run between March 3 – April 1. Taking place in Bewick Hall inside the City Library, event topics include, Creative Feminism; Women, History and Social Change; Women's Activism Today; Women's Safety and Freedom; and Women, Politics, Power.

The *Festival of Feminist Ideas and Actions* programme features:

Tuesday 3 March: *Creative Feminist Action*

Speakers: Charlie Hardwick (actor, The Awkward Squad, Emmerdale), Kay Hepplewhite (lecturer, research, theatre practitioner), Fiona MacPherson (producer/director, the Guild of Lillians), Karin Young (writer, The Awkward Squad, Emmerdale).

Thursday 12 March: *Women, History and Social Change*

Speakers: Professor Joan Anim-Addo (Centre for Caribbean Studies, Goldsmith's University of London); Chris Drake (Greenham); Barbara Jackson (Women Against Pit Closures, Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign); Rosie Lewis (BAM Sistahood Heritage Co-ordinator).

Monday 16 March: *Women's Activism Today*

Speakers: Pat Fisher BEM; Lizi Gray (Slutwalk, Northumbria University Feminist Society, NE Feminist Gathering); Sue Robson (NEWomen's Network Co-ordinator).

Monday 23 March: *Women's Safety and Freedom*

Speakers: Chris McCurley, (Women's and Human Rights lawyer, Ben Hoare & Bell Solicitors); representatives from Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland.

Wednesday 1 April: *Women, Politics, Power*

Speakers: Louise Carol Donkor (University of Liverpool); Dr Justine Natale (University of Newcastle); Sue Regan (Northumbria University).

To register for any of the *Festival of Feminist Ideas and Actions* events, go to [www.newcastle.gov.uk/libraryevents](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/libraryevents)

*Not on the QT: Women and Politics* takes place on Friday 6 March in Northumbria University's City Campus East, Business & Law Building, Lecture Theatre 002. Refreshments will be available from 5.45pm and the session starts at 6.30pm.

To register for this event, visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/gsrh-qt](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/gsrh-qt). To submit a question to the panellists, email Karen Ross at [karen.ross@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:karen.ross@northumbria.ac.uk), include your name and keep a note of the question.

For further information about all of the International Women's Day events, contact Hazel Impey at [hazel.impey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:hazel.impey@northumbria.ac.uk)

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