

Dear J,

Thank you, for always coming from a place of nurturing and abundance- as a poet, an expert by experience, a friend and a leader. This letter is an honouring of the compassion, thoughtfulness and creativity you bring to Salford; of the way you have amplified unheard voices and helped to unlock and make sense of change and new possibilities.

Rather than maintain the status quo, you choose to not only acknowledge but amplify different voices and perspectives- particularly those who experience the most distress, greater inequalities and too often go unseen and unheard. Your insights draw on the wisdom of friends, family, colleagues and the community to lift up stories that might otherwise go untold. So thank you, for centering the experiences they have lived- and your own- at the very heart of how we think, feel and do. I am really, deeply inspired by that bravery. It has made myself (and others I'm sure) feel safe to bring our whole selves into the room.

Your vision- to build lived experience into the design, delivery and governance of the whole system- has helped us move towards a place of abundance, which recognises the diverse and untapped resources in our communities. Thank you for choosing abundance, in a system so used to speaking the language of scarcity, rationalising and efficiency saving.

I want to recognise the way you step into dialogue with others without judgement. You choose to build meaningful relationships (and friendships) across the system, taking care to step into and listen to the perspectives of others. There's a tension you hold beautifully- between deep listening, and holding us to our values. I'm in awe of the way you build community and foster new and reciprocal connections through the sharing and exchanging of insight, poetry and ideas.

I can't write this letter without mentioning your poetry. Your words have helped us to feel and make sense of our Living Well journey; to connect with experiences of pain and rage, as well as to joy, hope, laughter and light. Thank you for giving words to the things we could not say. In your poetry is a rallying cry, to embrace and value our experiences, to create something new and better.

In your own words:

*“Our pain is what will drive us on,
Our pain will turn the page
To better ways of working
Inside the cold machine
That offers warmth to those inside
And helps them to succeed.”*

Thank you, Daisy Carter