**PRESS RELEASE**

**New book of poetry reflects on the Coronavirus crisis**

**A book of poetry capturing the mood and emotions of people caught up in the Coronavirus pandemic has been published thanks to a University of York professor.**

Professor Stephen Linstead brought together more than 50 poets and 30 illustrators from the city and  wider community to create the collection called Viral Verses.

The collection of 120 poems – almost all of which were written specially for the volume – express memories of loss, struggle and renewal and capture moments of humour and sadness of people living through the pandemic.

Yorkshire literary icons Margaret Drabble and Milly Johnson provide enthusiastic introductions for the book, and the work of well-known figures such as writer and broadcaster Ian McMillan, and humorist Mike Harding, features alongside that of emerging talents and first time writers, including students from the University’s Department of English and Related Literature.

Professor Stephen Linstead from The York Management School began the project in response to the death of a close friend, Edward Crum, to Covid-19 last year. The book is dedicated to Edward and to NHS workers across the country.

Professor Linstead said: “It was agonising for Edward’s many friends not to be able to say goodbye to a much-loved character. When I was younger I had learned a lot from him at a difficult time in my life. So I wrote a poem in his memory and shared it with Facebook friends. My eldest son, Nick shared it with some of his friends, and one of them offered to illustrate it. And so Nick's idea for this book was born.

“We invited poems that focused on directly viral experiences and reflections, people, observations and practices, but also those that resonated with moods and inflections that though unrelated may be evoked – from loss to joy, recollection to recovery, helpless isolation to passionate puissance. We received a set of poems that really cover every inch of that terrain.

“Hopefully this book will help us in dealing with often agonising memories, and will help to ensure that we continue to quietly celebrate their selfless sacrifice and keep alive the loving spirit in which it was made.”

Professor Linstead and his son, Nick, edited the book and Bryan Ledgard was the designer. With support from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Charlie Jeffery and Professor Kiran Trehan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Engagement, they secured financial support from the University’s Partnership and Engagement Fund, which helped to publish the book.

Contributors include Ralph McTell, Maurice Rutherford, Graham Ibbeson, Jeannie Clarke, Anne Genner Crawford, Monika Kostera, Jenny Knight, Jane Hilberry, Tony Heald, Brian Lavery, Jed Grimes, Heath Common, Frances Sladen, Ray Hearne, Joe Solo, Granville D. Clarke, Alan Andrews, Lynda Rose Morgan, Liz Deakin, Ella Waters, Roseanna Kettle and Jenni Pascoe.

All profits from the book will be donated to the NHS Charities Together Covid-19 Appeal. For more information on the book visit www.viral-verses.com

**Please contact press officer Julie Gatenby,**

**01904 32 2029   email: julie.gatenby@york.ac.uk**