

**Press release - for immediate release
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Publishing industry and literature sector should work together to address diversity

The publishing industry can do more to address the issue of diversity in publishing, and the literature sector can support it in these goals, says Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North.

At New Writing North's Summer Talent Salon at Foyles on Thursday night (7 July), Claire will invite publishers and literary agents to consider working on partnership projects with New Writing North, including grassroots activity and establishing community ambassadors, to help connect with writers from a wider range of backgrounds.

Claire will say: "Our industry colleagues tell us that they are keen to discover and bring forth more writers of colour, more working class voices and more work that represents a diversity and range of experiences."

"Our twenty years of experience of literature development work means that we have the skills and experience to build programmes that can penetrate more deeply into communities to find and develop new writers. Through our work we can offer the sustained and personal support that it often takes to get writers from raw talent to industry ready."

New Writing North was founded in 1996 to support writing in the North of England. Its Northern Writers' Awards programme is the country's biggest talent development scheme for writers, and recognises work in progress. Recent winners include Andrew McMillan, Carys Davies, Zaffar Kunial and Benjamin Myers. Winning an award can range from receiving cash to buy time to finish a project to developmental opportunities for emerging writers. Crucially, it also often marks the start of a long relationship with New Writing North.

Claire will say: "We work with winners to support their ideas and ambitions as much as we can. In the past year that has included helping writers achieve Arts Council funding for projects, commissioning new work from them and working on a one-to-one basis to support and champion their work."

"We are there in the long term for writers, even when the going gets tough. It's a unique way of working with talented people over the long term and it's a way of working that achieves real results."

New Writing North also specialises in working in partnership, and already runs talent development programmes with the broadcasting industry, which are specifically aimed at

discovering the new voices of 21st century Britain.

The Channel 4/ Northumbria University Writing for Television Awards offer writers who are new to television the chance to undertake a 12-month attachment to independent production companies, including RED Productions and Lime Pictures. The 2015 recipients of this award, Sharma Walfall and Nuzhat Ali, have already made impressive inroads into the industry.

Another project, Verb New Voices, is a partnership between New Writing North, BBC Radio 3, Arts Council England and other literature sector partners. The scheme offers writers the chance to develop and produce new work for radio. The four recipients of the 2015 scheme, Andy Craven-Griffiths, Kamal Kaan, Chanje Kunda and Carmen Thompson, all had their work broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and have since developed that work into longer commissions and funded literature projects.

Both of these projects attract writers from a wide range of backgrounds and involve the writers being supported to gain experience in the industry with paid bursaries, mentoring from industry professionals, and developmental advice from New Writing North and other literature partners.

The success of these initiatives is one that Claire Malcolm and her colleagues at New Writing North would now hope to replicate with new partners in the publishing industry.

David Roche, chair of New Writing North and chair of London Book Fair, said: "New Writing North is an organisation that is innovative, inspirational and impactful. It shows leadership and drive in developing blue chip partnerships that deliver real results in a genuinely collaborative manner. Its reach now spreads right across the north of England and it is well placed to discover and develop diverse writers whose success is independent of their social background, and who produce writing that can have influence with no boundaries. I look forward to helping New Writing North come together with the publishing communities for the benefit of all."

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact Laura Fraine laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com or 0191 204 8850/ 07411 164 837

Notes to Editor

New Writing North is the reading and writing development agency for the north of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, Cuckoo Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.