

Eight young Newcastle writers receive share of £10,000 fund

Eight young writers from Newcastle have been selected to receive a share in £10,000 worth of support from the Northern Rock Foundation Talent Development Fund.

The award is supported by legacy funding from The Northern Rock Foundation and managed by New Writing North, in order to invest in talent, ambition and good ideas from writers in Newcastle.

The writers answered an open call-out from New Writing North, who sought writing projects across forms, from blogging to poetry. The result is an exciting list of talented new writers from the city, aged between 14 and 25, whose work and ideas show promise.

One of the recipients is Kema Kay, age 22, a North East performer who recently starred in the film *I, Daniel Blake*. The award will support him to develop the creative writing workshops he runs for young people. James Robson, age 15 and a participant in the Young Writers' City project with New Writing North, has received an award to develop the songwriting skills he gained in that project. Together with his friend Dillon, James will work with musician Jennie Brewis of The Cornshed Sisters to develop his songs and to record an EP of original songs and covers.

Literature graduate Maxine Davies is another recipient. She is using her funding to cover some of the start-up costs of a small press, Maybe Later Press, including printing a new issue of a short fiction and poetry zine and setting up a new podcast which will function as a sort of audio anthology.

Maxine Davies said, "The Northern Rock Foundation Talent Development Fund has helped developed my project by enabling me to acquire the resources and software necessary to set this up, and by providing me with access to the guidance and expertise of the team at New Writing North who are helping me to develop my project. I am absolutely euphoric to have been awarded funding from the Northern Rock Foundation Talent Development Fund; it is an incredible opportunity which will benefit my future career and will hopefully open up further opportunities in years to come."

Anna Disley, Executive Director, Programme & Impact, New Writing North said: We are so pleased with the range and calibre of young writers benefiting from this programme from young publishers to aspiring songwriters. There is a real wealth of young talent in this city and its vital that we both invest in and nurture it to ensure our culture remains vibrant. Our thanks to Northern Rock Foundation for their vision in recognising this.

The full list of recipients is:

Maxine Davies, age 25
Kema Kay, age 22
Stephen Mack, age 22
James Robson, age 15
Nicole Simcox, age 17
Rhys Stone, age 14
Lauren Vevers, age 25
Sarah Watson, age 25

Ends

For all media enquiries, including high res photographs of the recipients, please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager at New Writing North
laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com 07411 164 837

Recipient biographies

Maxine Davies

Maxine is a Literature graduate from Newcastle upon Tyne. The money she has received from the Northern Rock Foundation Talent Fund is being used to support a zine and series of podcasts from her small press, Maybe Later Press. The funding will hopefully enable Maybe Later to, in time, become a prominent voice in the North East writing scene, and will allow Maxine to gain focus on her role as Editor and Producer.

Kema Kay

Kema Sikazwe better known as his stage name 'Kema Kay' is a rapper/singer/producer/songwriter/Actor from the North East of England. Kema had a passion for music at a young age, which became his choice of career after his mother's passing in 2007. He constantly works hard to push his career to new heights and has performed at some of the biggest places in the region such as O2 Academy, Evolution Festival and The Sage Gateshead. As well as music, he has also progressed in his acting career being in popular TV shows such as *Wolfblood*, *The Dumping Ground*, *Vera* and recently cast as one of the main characters in the Palme Do'r awarding winning film, *I, Daniel Blake*.

The Northern Rock Foundation Talent Development Fund will support him to develop his skills in leading songwriting workshops for young people.

Stephen Mack

Stephen is a part-time writer and full-time contact centre staffer. Stephen is very interested in words and the systems by which they operate. The work he does, when not working, centres on the live experience of performer/audience/text. The Northern Rock Foundation Talent Development Fund support has bought in a professional director / dramaturg to work with

Stephen and his collaborator Grace on his latest work *The Gestation Period*, so that they get to a position where they can take it forward for performance.

James Robson

James is a participant of the Young Writers' City project and, with his friend Dillon, will be working with songwriter Jennie Brewis to develop his songwriting skills to record an EP of original songs and covers.

Nicole Simcox

Nicole is using her funding to be mentored by Carolyn Jess Cooke to develop her creative writing portfolio, experimenting with different writing styles, in advance of going to university this year.

Rhys Stone

Rhys will be working with friends from Excelsior Academy to design a narrative-based online game. The group will be working with Digital Designer, Steven Walker, to develop their ideas into a storyboard and using local young artists to create the artwork for the text-based game.

Lauren Vevers is a writer and an award winning blogger based in the North East of England. Her poetry and prose has appeared in various journals including Hobart Pulp, Poems In Which and The Bohemyth. Her non-fiction writing has been published in The Independent, NME, Notion Magazine, BBC Three Online and others. She is the founder of Papaya Press, a small independent press based in the North East of England, which is interested in the space between art and literature. Papaya Press collaborates with emerging artists and writers to make zines, host events and run workshops.

Sarah Watson

Sarah is a 25-year-old playwright. The Northern Rock Foundation Talent Fund is enabling Sarah to work with local playwright Carina Rodney to develop her ideas into a full-length stage play.