

NEW WRITING NORTH

Channel 4 and New Writing North launch Talent Development Partnership for TV writers in the North of England

Channel 4 and New Writing North have announced a three-year programme of support for new and emerging television writers in the North of England. The Talent Development Partnership aims to identify and support new writers from the North through innovative programming and networks, with a particular focus on supporting writers from backgrounds that are currently underrepresented in the television industry.

Running from 2022-2024, the programme will offer awards, placements with independent production companies, script development, writers' roadshows and workshops, and the formation of the Northern Talent Network.

Channel 4 and New Writing North have worked in partnership since 2014, offering aspiring television writers nine-month funded placements at independent production companies through the Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards, part of the Northern Writers' Awards. The Northern Writers' Awards are New Writing North's flagship writer development programme.

The awards have already launched the television careers of several writers, including Sharma Walfall, who has gone on to work on productions including *Noughts and Crosses* and *A Town Called Malice*, and Jayshree Patel, now a core writer on the *Hollyoaks* team, as well as writers Taiba Amla, Adam Bennet-Lea and Joshua Haim. Now, an extension of the Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards will mean that from 2022, three writers per year will be offered a placement with an independent production company alongside mentoring and a bursary of £3000.

North-based independent production companies Bonafide Films (*Mood; The Last Post*) and Lime Pictures (*Hollyoaks; Zero Chill*) have been long-term partners in the awards. A third production company, Leeds-based Rollem Productions, is also offering a placement. Rollem was set up in 2000 by BAFTA award-winning writer Kay Mellor OBE to produce the ITV drama, *Fat Friends*, and has gone on to produce shows including *The Syndicate*, *My Left Nut*, *In the Club* and *A Passionate Woman*. As well as the three award winners, a further nine writers per year will be accepted on to a Script Development Programme and receive group workshops, a bursary of £500 and script feedback.

In addition, the newly formed Northern Talent Network will offer open-access community events for people interested in taking their first steps into writing for

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television. The network will also provide a series of specialist masterclasses for emerging TV writers in the region. Sessions will be delivered both online and in-person, particularly taking place amongst communities across the North currently underrepresented in television writing. It will also create a resource for production companies, encouraging them to discover and hire talented writers from the North.

The Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards are now open for entry until 17 March 2022. Eligible writers will be based in the North of England and will not yet have had a script professionally broadcast.

Will Mackie, Senior Programme Manager (Writing and Awards) at New Writing North said: “New Writing North and Channel 4’s new Talent Development Partnership builds on several years of positive and fruitful collaboration and learning. We are absolutely delighted to be expanding our work alongside Channel 4 to enhance opportunities for writers in the North of England through innovative developmental programmes, community work and support networks. We’re looking forward to deepening our work with television writers to provide them with experiences that not only transform their creative work and professional connections but also contribute to enriching and diversifying the fabric of writing for television. We believe strongly in the importance of mutually beneficial partnership work and, along with Channel 4, we’re thrilled to again be working with inspirational production companies such as Lime Pictures and Bonafide Films, and delighted to be adding a third award alongside the pioneering and exciting Rollem Productions.”

Sinéad Rocks, Managing Director, Nations & Regions at Channel 4 said: “This partnership underlines Channel 4’s commitment to nurturing talent in the north of England. I’m delighted that we’re increasing our backing over the next three years so this new partnership with New Writing can help launch the careers of many more television writers. This initiative coupled with the wide range of projects being undertaken by our training and development team, 4Skills, will open opportunities to hundreds of people who might never have thought a career in the broadcast industry was for them.”

Kay Mellor, Managing Director at Rollem Productions said: “We are delighted to be taking part in the Northern Writers’ Awards and working with New Writing North. Here at Rollem we pride ourselves on telling stories about ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, and we are dedicated to shining a spotlight on our region and nurturing the next generation of writers. We can’t wait to read the ideas that come in, and to work alongside an emerging writer to help shape their work and hone their craft.”