

# NORTHERN WRITERS' AWARDS

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## NEW WRITING NORTH

Press release: embargoed until **22.00 on Wednesday 24 June 2026**

### **Newcastle hosts largest awards event in England for aspiring writers, at Northumbria University**

The 27 winners have been selected from over 1,500 entries to England's largest and longest-running writer development programme. New Writing North's Northern Writers' Awards identify some of the best unpublished writing in the North of England and focus on supporting new work-in-progress.

The total package of support across all awards is approximately £75,000, including £64,300 cash bursaries going directly to writers. By supporting writers at an earlier stage than most literary awards – often before an agent or publisher is involved – the awards offer crucial support for writers at a pivotal stage of their careers.

Since the awards started in 2000, many winners have gone on to have successful careers. In the last year previous winners have been shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction (Rozie Kelly), won the Goldsmiths Prize for fiction (CD Rose) and won the Forward Prize for Best Collection (Vidyan Ravinthiran).

The 2026 winners are:

#### **Northern Writers' Award for Narrative Non-Fiction**

Désirée Reynolds (Sheffield)

#### **Northern Debut Award for Fiction**

Nate Black (Redcar)

#### **Northern Debut Award for Young Adult Fiction**

Rhianna Frances (Sheffield)

#### **Northern Writers' Award for Poetry**

Antony Dunn (Leeds)

#### **Northern Debut Awards for Poetry**

Sally Baker (Yorkshire), Carlton Rose (Manchester)

**Hachette Children's Novel Awards**

Wendy Davis (North West), Sabah Nawaz (Lancashire)

**Great Northern Read Award**

Sarah Hunt (Whitley Bay)

**Charlotte Aitken Trust Awards for Poetry**

Kris Johnson (York), Amelia Loulli (Cumbria)

**Charlotte Aitken Trust Awards for Fiction**

Jodie Matthews (Stockport), Phoebe Walker (Stockport)

**Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award**

Victoria Flemming (Newcastle)

**Tees Valley Award**

Shazia J. Altaf (Middlesbrough)

**Tempest Prize**

Lauren C. Maltas (Manchester)

**Sid Chaplin Award**

Alison Armstrong (Lancaster)

**Finchale Award**

Narimaan Shafi (Sheffield)

**Northern Promise TLC Awards**

Italo Ferrante (Manchester), Grey Marlow (Manchester)

**Arvon Award**

Beth Broomby (Cumbria)

**Young Northern Writers' Award: Winner (11-14)**

Anya Adnan (Newcastle)

**Young Northern Writers' Award: Highly Commended (11-14)**

Chidimma Nnadi (Altrincham)

**Young Northern Writers' Award: Winner (15-18)**

Nathan Graham (Rotherham)

**Young Northern Writers' Award: Highly Commended (15-18)**

Jessie Morris (Durham)

**Matthew Hale Award: Winner**

Juneau Atkinson (Gateshead)

## **Eva Ibbotson Award**

Hidayate (Newcastle)

## **Channel 4 Writing for TV Awards**

Winners to be announced in October

## **Northern Writers' Award Partners**

The 2026 awards are supported by partners including Northumbria University, Arts Council England, Hachette Children's Group, Channel 4, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Johnson & Alcock, Charlotte Aitken Trust, Arvon, TLC, Children's Books North Network, Pan Macmillan, the Society of Authors, Curtis Brown and C&W, ALCS, Newcastle University, the writers Benjamin Myers and Andrew McMillan and the families and friends of Sid Chaplin, Matthew Hale and Eva Ibbotson.

## **Northern Writers' Award Successes**

Books and poetry published in 2025 and 2026 by previous award winners include: Shaun Wilson, *Malc's Boy* (Conduit Press); Louise Powell, *Underdogs* (John Murray Press); KL Kaine, *Blood of Gods and Girls* (Penguin Random House); Bridget Hamilton, *We Wait for the Stars* (Little Tiger Press); HF Askwith, *Half a Dark Heart* (Penguin); Kit Fan, *Goodbye Chinatown* (World Editions); Amy Stewart, *Hex House* (Titan Books); Naomi Kelsey, *Pale Mistress* (Harper Collins); Rachel Pattinson, *Seven: Distracted Detective* (Aralyn Press); Mike Edwards, *Voice in the Flames* (Walker Books); Roma Havers, *The Natural Way* (Carcenet Press); Jennifer Lee Tsai, *Melete* (Bloodaxe); Carson Wolfe, *Coin Laundry at Midnight* (Button Poetry); Jazmine Linklater, *Snagged on a Red Thread* (Monitor Books); Kim Moore, *The House of Broken Things* (Corsair); and John Challis, *The Green Parcel* (Bloodaxe).

Also in the last year:

- 2024 winner Rozie Kelly was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction for *Kingfisher* (Saraband).
- 2022 winner Gráinne O'Hare was awarded the Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year Award for *Thirst Trap* (Pan Macmillan) and shortlisted for two Society of Authors prizes in 2026.
- 2021 Northern Writers' Award winner, CD Rose, won The 2025 Goldsmiths Prize for *We Live Here Now* (Melville House).
- 2020 winner Suzannah V Evans and 2016 winner Seán Hewitt were longlisted for the Dylan Thomas Award for *Under the Blue* (Bloomsbury Poetry) and *Open, Heaven* (Jonathan Cape, Vintage) respectively.

- 2021 winner, Patricia King, was awarded the Drue Heinz Literature Prize 2026 in the US for her story collection, *Those Who Vanish* (University of Pittsburgh Press).
- 2024 winner, Abby Walker, won the BBC Alfred Bradley Bursary Award for her audio drama, *The Counsellor*.
- 2017 winner, Vidyan Ravinthiran, was the joint winner of the Forward Prize for Best Collection.

## Quotes

**Shazia J. Altaf**, winner of the Tees Valley Award, said, “I remember many years ago dreaming about being a writer and wondering what it felt like to win one of these Northern Writers’ Awards – what did that writer exactly feel like, what was one of those writers actually like, what thoughts ran through their head? And now I know that it can be someone ordinary just like me, a kid from the boro who used to live in a nook in the library devouring paper books like sweets. Thank you honestly, New Writing North – it makes such a difference, a real tilt in your path. Thank you for seeing something in my words, these tangle of words that we use to make alphabet bridges to try and get somewhere... I still can't quite bloody believe it!!!”

**Sarah Hunt**, winner of the Great Northern Read Award, said, “I am so excited to win the Great Northern Read Award. Sharing your work is incredibly daunting, but being recognised by New Writing North, an organisation I've long admired, is such a confidence boost at this stage. As a first-time novel writer, the chance to receive bespoke mentoring from Johnson & Alcock is invaluable in taking the next steps towards publication. I'd like to say a huge thank you to all the judges for their time and for this opportunity.”

**Carlton Rose**, winner of a Northern Debut Awards for Poetry, said, “Kind words and encouragement from a few individuals gave me the confidence to apply for this award and I thank them for this. I'd also like to thank New Writing North and the judges who spent time with my work. I appreciate being given this opportunity to develop, which will help me to better realise the ambition of my manuscript. Being mentored and meeting other writers are aspects of the award I especially look forward to.”

**Phoebe Walker**, winner of a Charlotte Aitken Trust Award for Fiction, said, "Winning the Charlotte Aitken Trust Award for the manuscript of my novel is such an important moment for me in my career as a writer – the validation and practical support the award represents, as well as the connection to a community of Northern writers, is invaluable. After struggling for a long time to make proper time for my writing, I'm now full of happy anticipation for the scope and space to write which this award will afford me.”

**Anna Power**, Managing Director, Johnson & Alcock, partner on the Great Northern Read Award, said “What a privilege it has been to judge the inaugural Great Northern Read Award, and to get to enjoy and discuss the shortlisted novels with the other judges. The list was rich and diverse and included action-packed urban fantasy, original speculative fiction, and gripping suspense. It really drives home the importance of a new NWA award for great storytelling across all genres. Our winner this year is Sarah Hunt whose *The Fox at the Door* was an engrossing and beautifully observed novel, with a dark mystery at its heart. Sarah is a terrific talent, and we really look forward to working with her on developing her work.”

**John Glenday**, poetry judge, – “I've known for some considerable time that the North of England is a hotbed of outstanding writers and outstanding poetry. It must be something to do with the water or the geology, or the distance from London. In judging the Awards, I came expecting to make difficult choices, but I was unprepared for the sheer breadth and depth of talent on display. In the end, I was grateful that the shortlistings would at least grant some recognition to the many exceptional submissions that didn't quite make that final cut.

In judging the Northern Debut Awards, the Charlotte Aitken Trust Awards and the Northern Writers' Award for Poetry I was given a unique opportunity to appreciate the gamut of new writing in the North, from emerging poets on the cusp of a first collection, through early-career poets to established writers of repute. I was left with the feeling that I should be thanking all the poets who submitted their work. Thank you, I was the real winner here. It was a privilege and an absolute joy to judge these Awards.”

**Professor Lianne Gibson**, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Society and Culture, Northumbria University, said, The Northern Writers Awards are an invaluable platform to ensure that new writing talents from this region get the recognition they deserve. Sponsoring these awards since 2012 is just one way Northumbria University expresses its deep commitment to supporting the creative industries in the North East. As we celebrate the nominees and winners at the 2026 Awards this week, we will also be celebrating and supporting the next generation of writers this region has to offer.

**Heather Walker**, Creative Place Programmes Manager, Tees Valley Combined Authority, partner on the Tees Valley Award, said “Our region is home to exceptional creative talent, and we're working hard to make Tees Valley an engine room for creativity, where ambitious people can build successful careers and world-class ideas can flourish. That's why we're proud to support the Tees Valley Award which shines a spotlight on the incredible quality of our local writers and celebrate the creativity that continues to put our region on the map.”

**Will Mackie**, Senior Programme Manager (Talent Development) at New Writing North: “It's a special kind of joy to announce the winners of the 2026 Northern Writers’

Awards and have the chance to tell the world about these wonderfully exciting writers. We are massively grateful to all our partners and friends who have given their support and expertise to make this a truly exceptional year. Our dedicated and skilled Talent Development team will support this year's writers through a varied and nurturing programme that responds to creative challenges and the changing contemporary sector. Our approach to working with writers is to give them time and resources to enrich their craft and to make bridges between them and the industry. We're fortunate to work in the North with its diverse literary heritage and abundance of new talent, and we know that more northern writers on our bookshelves enhances the reading and writing culture for everyone."

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For all media enquires contact Jill Read, Director of Communications and Marketing, [jillread@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:jillread@newwritingnorth.com).

## Notes to Editors

### Images

- [2026 NWAs winner headshots](#)
- [2026 NWAs winner biographies and quotes.docx](#)
- Images of the winners receiving their awards will be available from 25 June 2026. Please email [carys@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:carys@newwritingnorth.com)

### Winners and judges

- For more information on individual winners contact [jillread@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:jillread@newwritingnorth.com)
- For more information on the judges visit <https://newwritingnorth.com/northern-writers-awards/judges/>

## About the Northern Writers' Awards

The Northern Writers' Awards discover and support writers in the North of England, with a focus on supporting new work-in-progress. They offer a wide range of opportunities for writers at all stages of their careers, including publication, mentoring, manuscript assessment, writing placements, retreats, and cash awards to buy time to write. They are the largest writing development programme of their kind in England. The Northern Writers' Awards are produced by New Writing North and supported by Northumbria University, Arts Council England, and a range of partners.

### **About New Writing North**

Writing talent is everywhere. But opportunities are not. That is why New Writing North exists. To identify and nurture talent. To inspire a love for creative writing and reading. To create lifechanging chances for people across the North. Through our programmes, events, and activities, we find and support talented people of all ages and backgrounds to access creative opportunities and to enable them to flourish. Find out more at [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

### **About Northumbria University**

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR (Times Higher Education Awards, 2022)

RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR (Daily Mail University Guide, 2024)

MODERN UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR (Daily Mail University Guide, 2024 and The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide, 2025).

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally. Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England. Find out more at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)