



Nov 15, 2018 10:33 GMT

## **Northumbria leads pioneering research into impact of Northern Writers' Awards**

**A champion for Northern voices and underrepresented groups, a key element in the North East creative economy, and a talent pipeline for the UK publishing industry.**

This is the verdict of Professor Katy Shaw's new research into the value and impact of the Northern Writers Awards (NWA) – the UK's largest literary awards of their kind in the country.

Professor Shaw's research explores the varied impact of the awards on its

winning authors, their writing practice, and subsequent professional development since the NWAs were launched by New Writing North in 2000 and have been supported by Northumbria University, in Newcastle upon Tyne, since 2012.

The Northern Writers' Awards have re-launched for 2019 with several new partners and awards strands. Judges for this year's awards include the literary editor and publisher Ellah Allfrey, writer and journalist Richard Benson, children's author Sita Brahmachari and poet Don Paterson. The NWAs exist to recognise talent and support new work towards publication or broadcast and have a reputation for identifying some of the best unpublished writing in the UK. Professor Shaw's research is the first study of its kind into the impact of the award based on feedback and responses from previous winners over the past 18 years.

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The research was designed to examine impact, identify elements of best practice, and consider opportunities for future enhancement of the awards. Its key findings found that the awards played a vital role in the ecology of regional writing and creates a talent pipeline to the UK publishing industry by identifying and supporting writers in the North and connecting them to both regional and national opportunities and literary industries. The research also identified how the awards have helped redress barriers to engagement and disparities of representation for authors from

underrepresented groups through specific and accessible engagement opportunities and grassroots development programmes. Alongside this, the awards were shown to connect writers to a network of fellow authors and industry professionals regionally and nationally, while also enhancing income and professional development. You can read the report in full [here](#).

Professor Shaw, Northumbria's Professor of Contemporary Writings, said: "This research highlights for the first time the significance of the Northumbria University sponsored NWAs to the Northern creative economy and the wider UK publishing and literary industries.

"Increasing writers' incomes, enhancing professional development and creating long-term networks and opportunities for regional voices to be better represented in national debates, this impact report evidences how the NWAs promote the vitality of contemporary writings as a source of creative and economic potential, not only for the North, but the whole of the country.

"It also shows how important it is for academics and regional partners to work together to further popular understanding of the function of culture in society today. More research needs to be done on the role of the NWAs and other literary awards in addressing the pervasive problem of the under representation of Northern writers in UK publishing."

Claire Malcolm, Founding Chief Executive New Writing North, added: "We have always known that the awards had a significant impact on writers and on writing in the region but had never had the capacity to look more closely at exactly how this worked.

"The research has been enlightening and incredibly useful in helping us to understand the micro and macro impacts of the work we are doing and to position our work and outcomes with funders, stakeholders and with potential investors in our programme. It's also helped us to see where we can add value and make improvements to our work to support writers even more."

New Writing North has created new awards for 2019 following Professor Shaw's recommendations to address the growing number of talented writers applying for support by enhancing the number of opportunities, and to aid winners' professional development by offering them wider support and longer-term engagement, including through extended and formalised

networks. In 2019, selected winners will be offered additional opportunities including the chance to pitch work to literary agents and editors at the Summer Talent Salon in London; membership of The Society of Authors; and a professional development session with the leading independent publisher, Oneworld Publications.

Speaking about the new NWA awards, Professor Shaw added: “The 2019 awards offer writers a brilliant opportunity to kick start their careers in the industry without having to relocate to the capital. The awards are bigger and better than ever this year, and proudly acknowledge the diversity and talent we have in the northern regions. I would encourage anyone thinking about applying to go along to one of the Northern Writers' Awards Roadshow events to meet previous winner and members of the New Writing North team and get free guidance on their application. A quick glance at the alumni of winners to date shows that winning a Northern Writers' Award can change your life – it's a chance worth taking.”

For a full list of this year's categories, awards, deadlines and terms and conditions, please go to: [www.northernwritersawards.com](http://www.northernwritersawards.com)

**The Northern Writers Awards 2019 are open now. Enter online at [www.northernwritersawards.com](http://www.northernwritersawards.com) by Thursday 7 February 2019.**

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