



# 'The 'Value' of the Writing: The Impact of the Northern Writers' Awards to the Northern Creative Economy'

## The Challenge

Historically there has been little research on the impact of winning a writing award on the writing practice and professional destinations of authors. Instead, existing studies have tended to focus on the impact of awards on book sales and marketing strategies. Established in 2000 by New Writing North (NWN), the Northern Writers' Awards support work-in-progress by new, emerging and established writers across the North of England. NWN identified an opportunity to create new knowledge and insight by critically examining the value and impact of winning a Northern Writers' Award on authors and the creative economy of Northern England. By addressing gaps in existing research, the aim was to improve policy making, while making recommendations for the future of the Northern Writers' Awards and UK publishing.

## Solution

Northumbria University's Professor Katy Shaw worked as an Impact Fellow with NWN to conduct research into and author a report on the impact of the Northern Writers' Awards on the creative economy of Northern England. Combining existing data from NWN with new data generated as part of the project, Professor Shaw used a mixed-methodology research approach to explore how and why value was created for winning authors, as well as for the region. Research included surveying all past winners of the Northern Writers' Award to understand perceptions of the impact of investment on both soft outcomes (such as self-esteem and aspiration) and more practical outcomes (such as professional support, income and earnings increase and profile-raising).

## Impact

The outcomes of the project have the potential to inform new frameworks for writing development, to identify examples of good practice in the cultural awards industries and to help policy makers better understand how writing contributes to the Northern creative economy. A public report will be published in November 2018 to coincide with the launch of the 2019 Northern Writers' Awards the year of the Great Exhibition of the North. The research findings will also be disseminated to academic beneficiaries in a journal article and in a presentation to the national editing and publishing conference.

## Organisation Overview

### NEW WRITING NORTH

New Writing North was established in 1996 to support writers in the north of England to fulfill their creative ambitions. It was the first regional writing development agency in the UK and remains the biggest organisation of its kind in the country.

"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".

**Claire Malcolm, Founding Chief Executive New Writing North**



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