

WORD UP  
NORTH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

THE RIALTO  
Stand

# New Northern Poets 2026

## Application Pack



New Northern Poets, 2026: [left to right]  
Jamie Field, Nóra Blascsó, Laura Strickland, Vanessa Napolitano, Rachel Curzon & Nigeen Dara

# What is the New Northern Poets programme?

New Northern Poets is a unique mentoring opportunity for rising poets in the north of England, particularly those from backgrounds currently underrepresented within the cultural and publishing sector. Word Up North is pleased to announce new partnerships with long standing and leading poetry magazines in the UK, The Rialto, and Stand Magazine, along with a continued partnership with Poetry@Leeds, the hub for poetry at the University of Leeds.

We aim to discover new talent and provide our New Northern Poets with opportunities to improve their practice, receive 1:1 mentoring from experienced writers and join a network of peers to grow their confidence and experience in both writing and performing their poetry.

**Here's what some of our New Northern Poets alumni have to say about their experiences on the programme:**

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*It definitely gave me more confidence in the quality of my writing.*

*My mentor was generous with his time and his feedback. He had lots of very relevant comments and was also a great anchor of support.*

*I am thankful to the New Northern Poet role for being part of the development of my poetic career.*

*It's been fantastic joining my family of other New Northern Poets, it really does feel like stepping into a network, we have all got to know each other and find out about each other's projects and look at the world from different perspectives as well. It's been an absolutely enriching experience.*

*The showcase was fabulous. The turnout was incredible; it's by far the largest audience I have performed in front of.*

*The Word Up North team were so friendly and encouraging. The way in which our performance was promoted by the team was clearly very effective as the event was packed and that was so motivating, as we prepared to go onstage. I felt very supported by the NNP gang and found it really valuable to share experiences, before and after, with the other New Northern Poets.*

*Receiving the acknowledgement of New Northern Poet that the Ilkley Literature Festival awarded me allowed me to take a rest for the first time since beginning to write; it was a tangible milestone which helped to alleviate a certain amount of imposter syndrome that I didn't even realise I had. I felt seriously that I was becoming a professional, that I didn't need to work so hard for serious recognition for my work; I was recognised.*

”

**“Once a New Northern Poet,  
always a New Northern Poet.”**

## As one of our New Northern Poets, you'll receive:

### ◆ Mentoring

Each NNP will be matched with a mentor poet from The Rialto or Stand Magazine. You'll receive three online mentoring sessions. The mentoring sessions will help NNPs to develop their work and get advice ahead of a showcase at the 2026 Ilkley Literature Festival (programmed by Word Up North), which takes place across 2–18 October.

#### Our 2026 mentors are:

**Hannah Copley** is the author of two collections: *Speculum* (2021) and *Lapwing* (2024) and a collaborative pamphlet, *Hertz* (2025), co-written with Alycia Pirmohamed. A Poetry Book Society Summer 2024 Recommendation, *Lapwing* was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize 2024 and won second in the 2024 Laurel Prize. Hannah is a poetry editor at Stand magazine a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Westminster. She curates and hosts the regular poetry night Soho Poly Poetry.

**Matt Howard**, Manager of the Poetry@Leeds. His first collection, *Gall*, was published by The Rialto in 2018 and won the 2018 East Anglian Book Award for Poetry, was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Centre First Collection Prize in 2019 and won Best First Collection in the inaugural Laurel Prize 2020. After eleven years working for the RSPB, Matt was Douglas Caster Fellow in Poetry at the University of Leeds from 2021–2023. His second collection, *Broadlands*, is published by Bloodaxe.

**Michael Mackmin**, Co-founder of The Rialto (1984). Co-Editor 1984–96, Sole Editor 1996–now, with, latterly, assistants from Rialto's Editor Development scheme. The Rialto publishes the work of new poets alongside poems by established poets and has helped the careers of many now famous poets, such as Carol Ann Duffy, Hannah Lowe and Richard Scott. The Rialto also publishes pamphlets (2 x winners of Michael Marks award) and prize-winning poetry collections. Michael is a poet, with two collections (most recently *And*, published by HappenStance in 2017), and four pamphlets: he works as a Gestalt counsellor.

**Esther Morgan's** four poetry collections are published by Bloodaxe Books. Her third, *Grace*, was shortlisted for the 2011 T. S. Eliot Prize. Born in 1970, she grew up in rural Worcestershire. She began writing poetry seriously during a stint as a volunteer at the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere before arriving in Norwich to do an MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. Since then, she's been involved extensively in the poetry world as an editor and teacher. Her fifth collection *What to Look for in Spring* will be published by Bloodaxe in spring 2027.

**John Whale**, author of two collections of poetry, *Waterloo Teeth* (2010)

and *Frieze* (2013), both published by Carcanet. *Waterloo Teeth* was shortlisted for the Forward Best First Collection prize. A new volume, *Darwin & the Cuttlefish*, is due from Carcanet in early 2027. A pamphlet, *Wayward Observations*, will be published later this year by The Rialto. He is Editor of *Stand* magazine, an international quarterly which has been publishing poems and short stories since the 1950s. He was Director of the University of Leeds Poetry Centre (now Poetry@Leeds) from 2015 to 2025.

## ◆ A Slot in the New Northern Poets Showcase

As part of ILF 2026's Poetry Day event programme, NNP's will be invited to our New Northern Poets Showcase on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October to share a selection of their work they have developed through their mentoring sessions.

## ◆ Ilkley Literature Festival 2026 Poetry Delegate Package

The package comprises:

- Free access to Poetry Day events at ILF 2026 (includes workshops, readings, seminars & networking opportunities) on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October.
- A curated selection of poetry collections to reflect each NNP's individual writing style and interests.
- 10% discount from [The Grove Bookshop](#) during ILF 2026.
- Contribution of up to £40 towards travel expenses to ILF 2026.
- ILF 2026 print brochure.
- New Northern Poets lanyard.

## ◆ Commission

The opportunity to apply for one of following 3 commissions:

- To lead a 2-hour online creative writing workshop for adults (2 x opportunities available).
- To present and host the New Northern Poets takeover of the Word Up North podcast ([click here to listen to our 2024 & 2025 episodes](#)), interviewing the other NNP poets and contributing your own editorial content to the series (2 x opportunities available).
- To run a 'Poet's Corner Reading Group' session during ILF 2026. Our friendly, informal group sessions are an opportunity to discuss selected poems by a NNP. The Reading Group is suitable for anyone over the age of 16 with an interest in poetry. No specialist knowledge is required from audience members beyond a love of words! (2 x opportunities available).

## ◆ Profile Building Opportunities

These include:

- Image and bio featured on the **New Northern Poets listing on Word Up North's website.**
- Opportunity for head shot taken by professional photographer for future opportunities, including those outside of Word Up North.
- Opportunity to share updates of NNP journey on social media and to be featured across Word Up North and Ilkley Lit Fest's social channels (combined following of over 20k) and newsletter (over 10k subscribers).
- Opportunity to feature in our **NNP podcast series**, where participants share their poetry inspirations and aspirations.

## ◆ Networking & Workshops

- Introductory in-person workshop in Leeds with Poetry@Leeds Involvement (lunch and travel bursaries provided)
- Additional online workshops with mentors and poets on topics such as how to run a workshop, how to get published and more!
- Membership of a New Northern Poets online community forum on instant messaging platform Discord to share progress, prompts and career development opportunities/competitions in a safe and supportive environment.
- Invitation to attend poets networking event at ILF 2026's Poetry Day.

## ◆ Evaluation

Participation in the evaluation of the New Northern Poets programme to help shape future development.

## ◆ Remuneration

Each poet will receive a fee of £500.

## ◆ Additional Opportunity

**Opportunity to attend International Poetry Conference & an evening reading with Simon Armitage (with refreshments, lunch and evening wine reception)**

On 10 June 2026, Poetry@Leeds hosts a major international conference in collaboration with Hazel Press, Guillemot Press, Banshee Press, Modern Poetry in Translation, the Poetry Book Society, Brotherton Cultural Collections and the National Poetry Centre. It will be an opportunity to hear from international poets, critics, translators, archivists, activists, textual editors, digital specialists, and literary professionals involved in poetry and its environments.



## New Northern Poet Success Stories

### **2023 New Northern Poet Emma Conally-Barklem [left]:**

Emma won the Black in White Poetry Prize 2024. She is the author of three pamphlets. She was a core poet for the BBC's Contains Strong Language Poetry Festival 2025 and a guest on Radio 4's Front Row. Emma won the First Chapter Award 2025. She has also written her first novel, *Yoga Homicide*.

### **2024 New Northern Poet Claire Lynn [right]:**

Claire teaches creative writing around Northumberland. Claire's poem that she worked on with her mentor during her time as a New Northern Poet, 'Live Stream' was shortlisted for the Best Single Poem written in 2025 for Forward Prizes for Poetry and runner-up in the Mslexia Women's Poetry Competition. Her poems have also been placed in the Bridport Prize, the Wasafiri New Writing Prize and the Marsden the Poetry Village Competition and have appeared in anthologies including *The Nerve* (Virago).

# Who can apply?

If you're a rising poet based in the north of England (Yorkshire, North East or North West), we want to hear from you! We're looking for poets over the age of 18 and encourage applications from poets of all ages. We define rising poets as individuals who have a track record of publication in magazines, print and/or online and may be working on or have had a pamphlet published, but have not published a full poetry collection. There are six places available on the New Northern Poets programme.

This role is an opportunity for you to develop your creative practice, receive advice from experienced poets and expand your network.

We are particularly interested in hearing from writers from backgrounds that are under-represented in the cultural and publishing sectors.

# How do I apply?

Please apply with a sample of your writing (4-6 poems) along with a covering letter (of no more than two pages) explaining what you would bring to the role of a New Northern Poet and the impact the role would have on your poetry and poetic career.

If you have a writing CV or equivalent document that outlines your writing experience to date, such as any poems you have had published, details of any courses or workshops you've attended, readings or performances you may have done or competitions entered, please provide this alongside your application.

Please submit your application to [recruitment@wordupnorth.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@wordupnorth.org.uk) by 11.59pm on **Thursday 30 April 2026**. Shortlisting will take place in May with the role starting mid to late May.

This role will be managed by Word Up North. If you have any queries about this opportunity, please contact: [recruitment@wordupnorth.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@wordupnorth.org.uk)

## Indicative timeline

- Mid to late May: Role Starts
- 10<sup>th</sup> June – Poetry's Environment's Conference (additional opportunity)
- June–September: Mentoring
- June - September: In-person & Online Workshops
- 11<sup>th</sup> October: New Northern Poets Showcase & Poetry Day Events at ILF 2026
- October – January: Commission delivery

# About Word Up North

## Raising UP voices, stories and writers in the north

Word Up North is a literature development organisation with a mission to raise up writers in the north, foster a love of reading and writing within individuals and communities, and use the power of the written and spoken word to create positive change.

From our base in West Yorkshire, we deliver a year-round programme of work across four activity strands: New Writing and Talent Development, Children and Young People, Creative Communities and Live and Online Literature events. Our work has included partnerships with major organisations such as the BBC, the University of Leeds and the National Trust.

We started life as the Ilkley Literature Festival back in 1973 and continue to programme and manage the annual event - now the longest-running book festival in the North of England.

Word Up North is a registered charity and proud to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

**You can find out more about us and our work at [wordupnorth.org.uk](http://wordupnorth.org.uk)**

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