**Birmingham Poet Laureate & Birmingham Young Poet Laureate 2020 - 2022**

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[prepared by Jonathan Davidson, 22nd June 2020]

**About the Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate:**

The Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate are honorary posts appointed by Birmingham Libraries and Writing West Midlands. The position of Birmingham Poet Laureate was the UK’s first ‘city laureate’, with the first appointment being made in 1998. In 2005, the position of Birmingham Young Poet Laureate was set up. The two posts are now appointed every two years.

The Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate are asked to undertake a small number of honorary duties during their tenure, including writing poems to commemorate significant moments, giving performances of their work and encouraging an interest in poetry across the city. While the posts are honorary and the roles are voluntary, payments are sometimes made for work that is particularly time consuming. Reasonable expenses will be paid.

The Birmingham Young Poet Laureate must be over twelve and under eighteen years of age on 1st October of the year of appointment and should have a parent or guardian’s permission to take up the role. The Birmingham Poet Laureate must be over eighteen on 1st October of the year of appointment.

The biennial selection process is launched in the summer prior to appointment, with poets being asked to submit two poems, one of which should reference Birmingham, and to give a short statement about their interest in the post. Shortlisted poets will be asked to meet the selection panel and to read and talk about some of their work.

The new Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate will be announced on National Poetry Day (the first Thursday in October) with the new Poets Laureate being asked to read some of their work at the Birmingham Literature Festival.

The Birmingham Poet Laureate will be offered a place on Writing West Midlands’ prestigious Room 204 Writer Development Programme. The Birmingham Young Poet Laureate will be given free membership of Writing West Midlands’ Spark Young Writers programme.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

*How often are the Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate appointed:*

Both positions are now appointed every two years.

*How do I apply to be Birmingham Poet Laureate or Birmingham Young Poet Laureate?*

Applications are via online form on Writing West Midlands’ website. Applicants are asked to submit two short poems, one of which should reference Birmingham. Shortlisted applicants are invited to meet the selection panel to talk about their poetry and read their poems.

*Do I need to live in Birmingham?*

Applicants should live, work or study (at school, college or university) within the city boundaries. Applicants who are not in one of these categories will be not be eligible.

*Do I need to have been published to apply and are there any other restrictions?*

Applicants do not need to have been published, although the selection panel will expect them to demonstrate an interest in poetry (as detailed in a short statement of application) and to write poetry that is generally accessible and of a high quality.

*What are the selection panel looking for in a new Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate?*

The successful candidates will have an enthusiasm for poetry – both their own and other people’s. They will write poetry that can appeal to a broad range of readers and listeners. They will be happy to write commissions (although no commissions are compulsory). Being happy to read work aloud to audiences is an advantage, as is an interest in sharing poetry with other people.

*What will I have to do if I am selected as Birmingham Poet Laureate or Birmingham Young Poet Laureate?*

As the posts are both honorary (with no payment attached) the duties are not onerous. Typically, the Poets Laureate write a small number of poems each year as part of public occasions or in response to events or celebrations. Subject to funding being available, they may also run poetry workshops or be involved in other activities to encourage an interest in poetry.

*How are the roles of Birmingham Poet Laureate and Birmingham Young Poet Laureate managed?*

Writing West Midlands offers support to the Birmingham Poet Laureate, including in helping to shape a programme of activities across the two years and in helping to sustain and develop a creative writing career if appropriate. Birmingham Libraries offers support to the Birmingham Young Poet Laureate, including fielding requests for the appearances and commissions. The Young Poet Laureate will be given membership of Writing West Midlands’ Spark Young Writers programme, including a free place at a Spark Young Writers Group.

*Will there be any restrictions on what I can do as Birmingham Poet Laureate or Birmingham Young Poet Laureate?*

The posts exist to represent Birmingham and to encourage an interest in poetry. Although there are no formal restrictions, it is anticipated that the Poets Laureate will make a positive contribution to the cultural life of the city.

*Will I receive any payment for being Birmingham Poet Laureate or Birmingham Young Poet Laureate?*

Both posts are honorary and voluntary with no payment attached for the modest demands placed upon the post-holders. It is not anticipated that the role would, for instance, impact negatively on the Young Poet Laureate’s school work or on the Poet Laureate’s other professional commitments. However, reasonable expenses will be paid and whenever possible funds will be sought to provide fees for particularly demanding commissions or other work associated with the roles.