

Resources and Opportunities for Writers

Spread the Word is the writer development agency for London, helping London's writers make their mark on the page, the screen and in the world. Hi!

w: spreadtheword.org.uk

t: @stwevents

insta: @spreadthewordwriters

fb: [facebook.com/spreadthewordwriters](https://www.facebook.com/spreadthewordwriters)

e: hello@spreadtheword.org.uk

This resource was compiled by the team in June 2019, for attendees of Kerry Hudson's Breakthrough Festival. It's not at all comprehensive – but we hope it will give you some pointers in the right directions to support your writing journey.

Your writing practice – where, when, how

Where do you write? Do you write at home, a café, a library, can you write on public transport...

When do you write? Do you wake up early, stay up late? Can you write on a lunchbreak / whilst your baby naps? Do you write in a routine or snatch moments when you can? Is it working for you? What can make it better?

Writing workshops / courses / development

There are many, many places offering writing workshops / courses / development. A lot of them have costs attached – some are eye-wateringly expensive, some try to make their fees low, some can be free or have bursaries/ free opportunities thanks to sponsorship etc. NAWE contains lots of great opportunities listed from lots of different organisations: <https://www.nawe.co.uk/the-writers-compass/events-and-opportunities.html>

Great places to check and engage with would be your local regional literature development agency:

New Writing North <http://newwritingnorth.com/>

New Writing South <https://newwritingsouth.com/>

Writing West Midlands <https://www.writingwestmidlands.org/>

Writing East Midlands <http://www.writingeastmidlands.co.uk/>

National Centre for Writing (Norwich and surrounds)

<https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/>

Literature Works <https://literatureworks.org.uk/>

Literature Wales <https://www.literaturewales.org/>

Scottish Booktrust <http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/>

Getting feedback on your work

- **Writing groups**

Are you a member of one? Writers feedback groups can be a brilliant way to get support and useful input. Look for groups that offer skilled critiquing and have some kind of agreed structure to them to schedule who gets to share work and when. Building confidence in how to give and receive feedback is a really important part of a writer's development.

There are directories of writers' groups here:

<https://www.nawg.co.uk/>

<https://www.writers-online.co.uk/writers-groups/>

<https://www.ukwriterscollege.co.uk/Resources/UK+Writers+College++Writing+Circle+s.html>

<https://www.meetup.com/cities/gb/17/london/writing/> (London based)

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators have a network of critique and online critique groups for YA and Children's Writers.

<https://britishisles.scbwi.org/ecritique/>

Or, if you want to start your own – social media can be a good place to garner interest / set up something new. You can start small – two people can make a writing group! Being in a writing group can support you with writing discipline, giving and receiving feedback, ideas, networking, decision-making.

The Literary Consultancy – Free Reads

Opportunities for writers on low-incomes to receive professional feedback on their manuscripts. Open to writers across England via the regional literature development agencies and other key partners: <https://literaryconsultancy.co.uk/editorial/ace-free-reads-scheme/>

Editorial organisations / writers offering feedback (can often be quite expensive).

Look out for agent and publisher call-outs offering feedback on short extracts to new writers. These are posted on Twitter and run in partnership with regional literature development agencies and writers' festivals.

Getting your work out there – Prizes / publications

Competitions and magazine publication are great ways to get some exposure and build your writer's track record. There are many competitions – look at who the judges are, look at previous winners and shortlisted writers and follow the competition rules and instructions to the letter. Likewise, do read copies of magazines you're interested in submitting to – make sure it's the right place for your work. Great resources to see what prizes and publications are out there:

<http://paulmcveigh.blogspot.com/>

<https://shortstops.info/> for short fiction writers

<https://www.nawe.co.uk/the-writers-compass/events-and-opportunities/competitions-and-submissions.html>

Twitter – in general – a key communications tool used by literary Prizes and publications.

Mslexia magazine quarterly publishes up to date info on magazines, smaller publishers and competitions open for submission. Many of these publishers don't require you to submit via an agent. See also their annual print directory of independent presses. <https://mslexia.co.uk/>

Top Tip: The **National Poetry Library** stocks many magazines publishing poetry and prose in its reference section. You can read them online.

<http://poetrymagazines.org.uk/index.html> The Library is free to use, and is based at the Southbank Centre in London, where you can also read them in person.

<https://www.nationalpoetrylibrary.org.uk/>

Novel competitions

Curtis Brown Novel Award – free to enter:

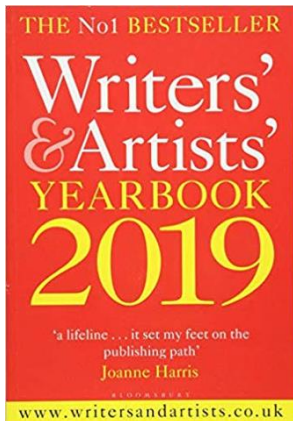
<https://www.curtisbrowncreative.co.uk/first-novel-prize/>

Bath novel award (inc sponsored free entries for low income writers)

<https://bathnovelaward.co.uk/>

Bridport Prize: <https://www.bridportprize.org.uk/>

Getting your work out there – securing an agent



How to find an agent

- Writers and Artists yearbook is a great resource for writers. You don't need to buy it annually, but there's a new edition every year with the most up-to-date info: <https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/> (Probably available in reference libraries local to you.)
- Attend events where agents do talks. Spread the Word runs events, the London Writers Café runs them, regional literature development agencies run them, literature festivals often programme them. Even if these particular agents aren't quite right for you they might give you valuable insight into the working relationship between agents and writers. NB You don't have to go to these events in order to secure an agent – but if they're of interest to you, do attend them! If you're feeling brave, there are sometimes opportunities to pitch your work to agents in short timeslots.
- When submitting to agents, make sure you've done your research; why are you submitting to that agent / agency in particular? Do they represent writers in a similar genre or style to you?
- Submit in the way the agent/ agency asks for you to submit your work. Don't send them additional or other material to what is asked for on their website or in a conversation with that agent
- Don't be too de-motivated or upset if an agent turns you down. It's just not the right fit – and what you really want is a relationship with an agent that understands and is passionate about your work! Likewise, do not necessarily sign up to the first agent who says 'I want you'. Author-agent relationships are long-term things – they want to build your career and champion you to the editors and publishing houses that will do their best for you (and them). Find the agent who really gets what you're trying to do and is excited by the possibilities of your voice and passions as a writer, and who you enjoy talking to and you feel you can trust (yes, it really is like that).

Watch out also for open-call direct submission windows from publishers, speed-pitching meet-the-agent events and online submissions ops such as #DVpit . This is a Twitter event created to showcase pitches from marginalized voices that have been historically under-represented in publishing. <http://dvpit.com/about>

Tip: before you sign anything, get your agent and publisher contracts checked out by the Society of Authors' legal team. This is their job – and you need to know that it's a fair contract and serves your interests for now and the longer term. Membership of the SoA is £72 a year. If you're about to get signed, do make sure you're not getting screwed in the process (yes, it does happen). <https://www.societyofauthors.org/>

Getting your work out there – getting published

Congratulations – you've got a book deal! It takes up to two years to bring a book to publication. During this time you may have to do substantial revisions as well as a lengthy proofing process. You'll also be hooked up to your publisher's marketing and publicity team to develop the promotional strategy for the book as well as having some input into jacket design. This team may be several people or just one; with a very small indie publisher, or it may be you. You and all your social media contacts and networks which you'll be tapping into to disseminate excitement about your book. There is a useful chapter in The Writers & Artists Yearbook on this and your publisher will help you think about how you want to shape your online profile as a writer.

Self-publishing

There are lots of great reasons to self-publish your writing.

Some places to explore if you are considering this route include:

The Alliance of Independent Authors <https://www.allianceindependentauthors.org/>

Completely Novel <https://www.completelynovel.com/>

CreateSpace – Amazon's self-publishing platform <https://www.createspace.com/>

Development Schemes

These are structured programmes designed to support the creative and professional development of talented emerging writers. In many cases the programmes are aimed at writers who have not yet published substantial piece of work (e.g. novel, poetry collection) but would have some track record or evidence of commitment to pursuing a writer career. In recent years, new schemes have emerged that are aimed at reaching writers under-represented in publishing: writers of colour, LGBTQ, disabled, writers of working class or socio-economically excluded background.

WriteNow – Penguin Random House (PRH). An editor mentoring scheme for under-represented writers of fiction and narrative non-fiction. Longlisted writers attend a publishing insight day and receive editor feedback on their extracts. Ten selected writers receive a year's editorial input on their work from PRH editors. PRH has right of first refusal of their work for a limited period.

WriteNow is currently on a break after three years but will relaunch in 2020.

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/company/creative-responsibility/writenow/writenow.html>

The Future Bookshelf – Hachette. An online resource for writers with a yearly direct submission window to the publisher. <https://thefuturebookshelf.co.uk/announcing-the-future-bookshelf-class-of-2018/>

Escalator – National Centre for Writing. A yearlong programme of mentoring and professional development open to all writers of fiction in the eastern region of England.

<https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/escalator/>

London Writers Awards – Spread the Word. A nine-month development programme for fiction and non-fiction writers of diverse backgrounds from the London area.

<https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/london-writers-awards/>

Jerwood/Arvon Mentoring Programme – Arvon Foundation. A year-long mentoring and residential programme open to all writers of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama. <https://www.arvon.org/learning/jerwood-mentoring/>

BookTrust Represents – BookTrust, charity promoting children reading. A programme of information days, workshops and mentoring for writers of colour of children's and young adult fiction and non-fiction/fact books. To be launched later in 2019. <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/booktrust-represents/>

Bursaries and Funding

The Literary Consultancy, - highly regarded editorial reading service has funding for editorial free reads, mentoring schemes specifically aimed at talented low-income writers of colour and disabled writers. Conditions apply so look at their website.

The Arvon Foundation offer bursaries towards attending their residential courses – though you still have to pay for the travel. <https://www.arvon.org/writing-courses/grants/>

The Poetry School (national), Spread the Word (London) The National Centre for Writing (Norwich and online) and the other regional writer development agencies offer bursaries and concessionary rates for their programmes. Check their websites.

Project Grants and **Developing Your Creative Practice** are the Arts Council England's open access funding schemes for individuals and organisations who use the arts in their work. For **Project Grants** as a writer you can apply for up to £15,00 to support your creative project – of which you will have to find 10% (£1500) cash or in-kind support. You can apply for time to write or mentoring or a combination of this and must offer some kind of activity that brings your work to the public – which could be your publishing deal if you have one, or workshops that engage members to relevant audiences. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants>

Developing Your Creative Practice funding is for developing a new way of working or new kind of work: a creative step change. The fund is about supporting you and your creative work. This is for up to £10,000, It is an extremely competitive fund.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-your-creative-practice/dycp-how-apply>

Do contact your regional Literature Development Agency for advice on both these funds, especially if you are not used to filling in these kind of funding application forms.

The Jerwood Arts also offers bursaries to artists (including writers) in the first years of their practice. <https://jerwoodarts.org/opportunities/jerwood-bursaries/>

And once you are published, [The Royal Literary Fund](#) offers grants and fellowships to writers.

The Society of Authors offers grants for published writers, twice yearly.

<http://www.societyofauthors.org/Grants>

Looking after your wellbeing

As with any creative practice that means a lot to us, it can be easy to have low moments if things don't seem to be going well. Remember to look after yourself and check in with how you are feeling.

There are some great resources on wellbeing for creatives on The Creative Independent: <https://thecreativeindependent.com/feeling-healthy/>