Yorkshire’s young creative writers: the plan

Great art for everyone
I write because I love the way
The ink flows on the page
The tiny curves and flicks and falls
Of love and laughs and rage
The flow of life from mind to pen
That soothing whirl of thought
A small display of what might be
If dreams were ever caught.

Jennifer Durrant
Sheffield Young Writers
What’s happening

Young people are the emerging writers of tomorrow. Their voices should be heard and encouraged. Our plan is to make sure Yorkshire is a positive and exciting place for young writers to flourish.

We invest in a lot of literature organisations in the region, including several that focus on young people. This plan builds on the great work done by these organisations. And because we’re committed to taking great art to everyone, we want to reach a wider range of young people across the region. This plan needs to be sustainable, work with initiatives within formal education and connect to systems of support for writers’ ongoing careers.

Not only does writing develop artistic skills, but it also improves general literacy and an ability to communicate articulately. The benefits of confidence and personal development are considerable.

This plan is the result of talking to young people and those who work with them. We look forward to seeing it take effect.

Andy Carver
Regional Executive Director, Arts Council England, Yorkshire

Sheffield Young Writers. Photo: Vicky Morris

‘Writing is fundamental to health and well-being, to empowerment and our sense of self’

Matt Black
Signposts
We’ve been listening

Young people told us that they want to:

- be in contact with other young writers
- get feedback on their work
- be given more information about writing opportunities
- have outlets for their writing
- work with professional writers as tutors and mentors
- access funds to support their development
- make writing into a career

Our plan gets to grips with these things through a variety of practical proposals.

‘You need to be able to write about your reality, your culture and your history and feel that it’s okay. You don’t have to pretend to be somebody else in order to be a writer. It’s alright to speak in your own voice.’

Dorothea Smartt
Co-Director, Inscribe

‘I thought poetry was book reading. I saw people beat-boxing and performing. It blew my mind.’

Iqbal Saju Ahmed
Leeds Young Authors
Our vision

Our aims are to:

- inspire young people of all abilities and backgrounds to write for enjoyment
- support those with ambitions to become professional writers
- assist regional groups to recruit and to thrive
- provide professional development for writers working as tutors with young people
- make sure information about all opportunities is readily available
- enable the sharing of practice across the region, nationally and internationally
- complement initiatives within formal education
- develop better links between schools, universities and the wider community

We want to make Yorkshire a region where every young person is able to explore his or her full potential as a writer. We want to empower young writers to develop their own voices, projects and careers, and to celebrate their achievements in Yorkshire and beyond.

‘We shouldn’t be inviting young people to the party; they should be creating their own.’

Marcus Romer
Pilot Theatre

‘You have to find the secret writers – in bedrooms and on street corners.’

Khadijah Ibrahiim
Leeds Young Authors
Here’s the plan
for writing communities

To help young writers be part of a writing community, we’ll support:

- the promotion of existing young writers’ groups within the region
- the setting up of further groups
- the sharing of expertise between projects
- the meeting of young writers from across the whole region

‘I feel glad to have such a unique interest, but it’s starting to feel very lonely. I know there must be people like me around West Yorkshire who are into creative writing, I just don’t know where exactly. And I thought getting published was the hard part!’

Sophie Snee

‘...you have a chance to work in a creative environment with people who share your interests. It’s a relaxed atmosphere and there is always something new that is brought to the group that can inspire you and make you feel more confident in writing, performing and yourself...’

Sara Sivan-Whitehouse
Sheffield Young Writers
Here’s the plan
for online resources

To provide young writers with the information they need, we’ll support:

- the provision of online information about writing projects and opportunities
- online discussions and digital collaborations
- a database of young writers and the professionals with whom they work
- email bulletins for all interested individuals

If you are interested in receiving more information, just click here to submit your email address.

Andrew Cook
The Writing Squad

"I found out about 'The Writing Squad' from family (who found a leaflet). I recently found out about Sheffield Young Writers from a friend. Before knowing about SYW I didn’t really know there was anything for young writers."

Penny Broadhurst
The Writing Squad

"Other than... BBC Writersroom, The Writers’ Guild blog and bits and pieces Google turns up... there isn’t much of a collective resource, really, particularly not aimed at people beyond kiddie or beginner stage. A lot of the stuff is just focused on stage and screen and not other writing forms – there’s nothing for lyricists, for example."

Wes Brown introduces Andrew Mcmillan, Suzie Evans and Martha Sprackland at Ilkley Literature Festival. Photo: The Writing Squad
Here’s the plan
for publishing and performing

To provide young writers with outlets for their work, we’ll support:

- the showcasing of young writing talent on a range of platforms
- spoken word events and festivals for young people
- regional publishing opportunities for young people’s writing
- initiatives that celebrate new and emerging voices

‘The Writing Squad has also helped me by putting me onto magazines and competitions through which I can start getting my work recognised, and which I probably wouldn’t have the time or the contacts to search out by myself. This has actually led to a poem of mine being published in Revival, so that was a massive help!’

Jess Drew
The Writing Squad

‘It’s amazing to have participants winning awards and going to America from this little building.’

Zodwa Nyoni
Leeds Young Authors
Here’s the plan
for partners in education

To maximize the effectiveness of all our projects, we’ll support:

- initiatives for teachers to work creatively
- professional development for writers working in schools
- creative improvements to writing in education
- work with universities that connects the regional writing community as a whole

Many of the people we spoke to stressed the benefits of working outside formal education. While there is a new creative agenda within schools, and a rapid growth of creative writing as a university subject, it will remain the case that not everyone is served well by the education system. We need to support both those who are inspired by their experience of education and those who are not.

‘Let’s get away from this sense of division. Let’s have plenty of opportunities for young writers both in and outside formal education – with each feeding the other.’

**Paul Munden**
The National Association of Writers in Education

‘Teachers are absolutely key. They were for me, and were for many, if not most, if not all writers coming to the Squad... if we want to achieve anything in the long term then teachers have to be central to our strategy.’

**Steve Dearden**
The Writing Squad

Photo: Angie Garrett
Here’s the plan
for writing careers

To assist young people in pursuing a writing career, we’ll support:

- career development workshops and one-to-one sessions
- access to work experience opportunities
- a programme whereby young people can access funds and advice to support their writing careers
- mentoring arrangements with professional writers
- access to the full range of professional development information available nationally

From one application letter in April 2007, I’ve ended up with my first full-length professional production in April 2009. I think it’s important to provide writers with the possibility of a next step. Otherwise you finish something and slump.’

Tom Wells  
So You Want to Be a Writer  
West Yorkshire Playhouse
People will ask, eyes will squint, noses will wrinkle and I’ll feel like dying of embarrassment because I call myself a writer without having a book out. But at the end of the day, a writer is one that writes, as an occupation or profession. We can write with a cheap biro or a pricey fountain pen; a cruddy Windows 96 or a MacBook Air. The main thing is that we're writing, and no one can take that away from us.

Sarah Kabar
Cube Magazine Journalist
Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their time and ideas to this plan. The following organisations provide key services to young writers in the region and are our partners in delivering this plan.

**www.thewritingsquad.com**
The Writing Squad is a two year programme for writers of talent and promise between 16 and 20, offering group workshops, one to one tutorials, web based contact and ongoing professional development. Grads of the programme receive one to one mentoring, investment and work together in collaborative writing projects.

**www.leedsyoungauthors.org.uk**
Leeds Young Authors (LYA) was founded in 2003 by poet and writer Khadijah Ibrahiim as an approach to creative education to promote positive social dialogue through the written and spoken word by stimulating a love for poetry and literature as a whole, among youth (ages 13-19), primarily in the City of Leeds.

**www.cube.org.uk/sywriters**
Sheffield Young Writers is an ongoing programme for developing young writers, from 13-18 years old, outside of school, through weekly writing workshops with key workers and visiting writers. The group has performance and publication outlets, residential, online facilities, and links to other young writers in the region. We also now run Barnsley Young Writers.

**www.nawe.co.uk**
The National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) is the one organisation supporting the development of creative writing of all genres and in all educational and community settings throughout the UK. Members include writers who work with young people and other professionals such as teachers and literature organisations.

**www.thecadaverine.com**
The Cadaverine publishes the best new poetry and prose by authors under the age of 25 alongside interviews with established writers. The Cadaverine publishes online and in print. Giving our writers editorial support and the chance to develop a readership.

**www.peepaltreepress.com**
YOUNG INSCRIBE, a project housed by Peepal Tree Press, is a creative development and mentoring programme, supporting committed young people of African, Caribbean and Asian descent, aged 18-30, who really want to develop their craft, and take their writing further. We welcome writers of poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

**www.cube.org.uk**
Cube is a journalism and media careers project which supports a diversity of writing forms and interests by exploiting the broad potential of magazines. The project works closely with young writers through intensive work placements offering credible publishing opportunities, including a print magazine, website and online radio station.
Children and young people are one of Arts Council England’s development priorities.

This plan was written by Arts Council England, Yorkshire in partnership with the National Association of Writers in Education.

The full consultation report can be downloaded at www.artscouncil.org.uk/youngpeopleandwriting

You can get this publication in Braille, in large print, on audio CD and in other electronic formats. Please contact us if you need any of these formats.