# Creative writing and access to literature

This factsheet won’t tell you how to write a masterpiece or get published, but it will hopefully point you in the right direction to develop your skills. The factsheet focuses on fiction writing, though some of the information might be useful to would-be journalists.

## Writing at home

Like reading, creative writing is an activity which can be enjoyed at home. If you cannot get out and about easily it could be a new hobby to try out. If writing is difficult for you, try recording your work onto CD or digitally.

If you would like others to read your work, why not try it out on friends and family? Alternatively, you could join a postal network of writers.

It is also possible to follow a structured writing course from home. The Open College of the Arts offers a course available on audio designed for home study.

You can borrow braille and audio books from libraries, including RNIB Library, and have them posted to you at home. There are also several publishers who offer a mail-order service.

## Joining a creative writing group

Joining a group of writers can provide support – particularly if you are just starting out. A local group can be a way of meeting new friends with similar interests, discussing ideas and gaining feedback on your own work. Later in this factsheet we list some local creative writing groups and organisations. Some are specifically for disabled people; others are mainstream groups that encourage the participation of blind and partially sighted people. The list is by no means exhaustive. Your local library or your regional arts board should be able to provide you with addresses of groups in your area. If you cannot find a club near to you, you might wish to join one of the national writing groups that circulate work through the post or via email.

Your local library should also be able to provide you with details of adult education classes in your area. These tend to be more structured than local writing clubs and may require you to complete assignments. Most courses begin in September, at the start of the academic year, though there may be shorter courses and workshops throughout the year. Larger colleges often employ student advisers to help students with specific needs. Alternatively, you could make contact with your tutor in advance of the course. Ask if it is possible for you to submit your assignments on audio or by email. If the college can supply, you with reading lists well in advance then it should be easier to get braille or audio copies of the required publications. Do invite your tutor to call RNIB if you think it would be helpful!

## Creative writing – local groups and organisations

This section lists some local creative writing groups. If there is not one close to you, contact your local library or regional arts board for details of clubs in your area.

#### Commonword and Cultureword

Based in Manchester, Commonword and Cultureword run workshops for disabled writers from time to time. They have a number of facilities for people to develop their writing and activities for people seeking encouragement and confidence. They also provide advice and information, manuscript reading service, free read scheme and writer’s agency. You can contact them to find out when the next workshops are due to run and information can be provided in any format. No fee is required for their workshops, but they do ask for a small donation.

Commonword

3 Planetree House, 21–31 Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JG

t: **0161 832 3777**

e: **enquiries@cultureword.org.uk**

w: **cultureword.org.uk**

#### Arcadea (The Development Agency for Art, Culture and Disability Equality)

Promotes the artistic and cultural equality of disabled people in the North East. Arcadea provide information, training and professional development, networking opportunities for artists and art form projects. They also have a quarterly newspaper that can be downloaded from the website.

Arcadea

Commercial Union House, 39 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 6QE.

t: **0191 222 0708**

Freephone: **0800 145 5345**

e: **info@arcadea.org**

w: **arcadea.org**

#### Shape

Shape is based in South London, the charity opens up access to the arts, enabling greater participation by disabled and older people. Shape runs a wide range of arts events and workshops, including some creative writing events.

Shape

Floor 2 Peckham Library, 122 Peckham Hill St, Peckham, London SE15 5JR

t: **0207 424 7330**

e: **info@shapearts.org.uk**

w: **shapearts.org.uk**

#### Swarthmore Centre

The Centre runs several creative writing classes for older people, which blind or partially sighted people are welcome to join. Members can develop their writing skills and find inspiration and new ideas in informal and friendly groups. Contact them to find details of forthcoming classes.

Swarthmore Education Centre

2–7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3 1AD

t: **0113 243 2210**

e: **info@swarthmore.org.uk**

w: **swarthmore.org.uk**

#### Workers’ Educational Association

The Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) runs a wide variety of part-time courses for adults, from creative writing to art techniques and practice, in different locations throughout the UK.

Workers’ Educational Association

4 Luke Street, London EC2A 4XW

t: **0300 303 3464**

e: **national@wea.org.uk**

w: **wea.org.uk**

#### Regional Arts Boards

The Literature Department should be able to provide information on creative writing training and activities in their area. They may also be able to offer grants to groups or individuals.

The Arts Council of England supplies contact addresses of regional arts boards in England as well as grants and funding. Contact details of their nine regional offices are on the website. Contact details for the national Arts Councils are below.

Arts Council of England

21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF

t: **0845 300 6200**

txtpne: **0161 934 4428**

e: **enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk**

w: **artscouncil.org.uk**

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28 1FJ

t: **028 262 3555**

e: **info@artscouncil-ni.org**

w: **artscouncil-ni.org**

Arts Council of Wales

Bute Place, Cardiff CF10 5AL

t: **0845 873 4900**

txt: **0779 780 0504**

e: **information@artscouncilofwales.org.uk**

w: **artswales.org.uk**

Creative Scotland

Waverley Gate, 2–4 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EG

t: **0845 603 6000**

e: **enquiries@creativescotland.com**

w: **creativescotland.com**

## Creative writing – national groups and organisations

#### TheFED

TheFED is an umbrella organisation for individual and community writing and publishing. TheFED is carrying on the work of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers (FWWCP) which was formed in 1976.

TheFED organises an annual Festival of Writing, as well organising training days and developing networks. FEDeration magazine, which is published quarterly, is available on audio and may be accessed via TheFED’s website. One of the main aims of TheFED is to make writing and publishing accessible to everybody. There is a small membership fee.

TheFED

2 Clydesdale, 5 College Road, Buxton SK17 9DZ

t: **01278 77623**

e: **glasscoe@tiscali.co.uk**

w: **thefed.btck.co.uk**

#### National Association of Writers Groups (NAWG)

An organisation that provides support for writers’ groups, including a directory of writers groups, legal advice, and a bi-monthly news magazine called Link. The magazine can be provided on tape or in large print on request. NAWG also offers members free entry to competitions and an annual presentation ceremony. They also have festivals at the Art Centre, St Aidan’s College, University of Durham.

Nation Association of Writers Group

e: **chairman@nawg.co.uk**

w: **nawg.co.uk**

## Creative writing training courses and holidays

### The Arvon Foundation’s writing courses

Residential courses lasting five days are tutored by professional writers, and open to up to sixteen students. They cover many disciplines – poetry, fiction, theatre, screenwriting and many more. There are courses for beginners and those who have been writing for some time. The courses are held at three centres at Totleigh Barton in Devon, Lumb Bank in West Yorkshire and The Hurst in Shropshire. The course fee, which includes all food, workshops, readings, tuition and accommodation, is currently £725. The Foundation aims to makes its courses accessible to all and there are some grants and bursaries available for those people who are unable to afford the fee for whatever reason.

Each residential centre has facilities for disabled people. Braille versions of the brochure can be borrowed on request. Taped versions of the brochure could also be supplied on request.

Arvon National Office

Unit 103, Clerkenwell Workshops, 27/31 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1R 0AT

t: **0204 529 4970**

e: **national@arvon.org**

w: **arvon.org**

#### Graeae Writers’ Workshops

Graeae is a professional theatre company of disabled people. It has an ongoing programme of training that sometimes includes workshops on writing for the stage. They also regularly commission new writing and look for new talent.

Graeae Theatre Company

Bradbury Studios, 138 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DY

t: **020 7613 6900**

e: **info@graeae.org**

w: **graeae.org**

#### Revitalise

Revitalise organises a huge range of activity holidays and weekend breaks throughout the UK and abroad. In the past, these have included storytelling holidays with a literary theme, visiting places where famous authors lived and found their inspiration, as well as creative writing breaks. A brochure is available in print and braille.

Revitalise

212 Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London, N1 0QH

t: **0303 303 0145**

e: **bookings@revitalise.org.uk**

w: **revitalise.org.uk**

#### Higham Hall

The Lake District's Residential College for Continuing Education provides a wide range of adult education courses. It offers residential weekends, week-long courses and study Sundays in a range of subjects, sometimes including creative writing and literature.

Higham Hall endeavours to make its courses accessible to blind and partially sighted people and can provide a prospectus in large print if required.The Friends’ Bursary Fund is designed to help people who would wish to attend a course at Higham, but for a variety of reasons, are not in a position to find all the fees for the course.

Higham Hall College,

Bassenthwaite Lake, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9SH

t: **01768 776 276**

e: **admin@highamhall.com**

w: **highamhall.com**

#### Lancaster University – Open Studies

Open Lectures are provided by Lancaster University for the people of Lancashire and South Cumbria. They include “Creative Writing”, “How to Write Short Stories” and various others, as well as some literature courses. Courses range from summer schools lasting 1-2 weeks, to University qualifications.

On request, course information can be read to you or provided on tape or in large print. The Lancaster University library has a selection of taped material. Blind and partially sighted people have successfully completed previous Lancaster courses. There are sometimes free course places available to helpers.

For enrolment and enquiries:

Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom, LA1 4YW

t: **01524 844 295**
w: **lancaster.ac.uk**

#### Open College of the Arts

The college is affiliated to the Open University and uses similar methods of home study. Two creative writing courses “Starting to write” and “The experience of poetry” are available with course materials on audio. You can start courses at any time of the year and optional graded assessment is offered. Several students with sight loss have successfully completed courses with the College.

OCA

Michael Young Arts Centre, Room 201, DMC02, County Way, Barnsley, S70 2AG

t: **0112 697 8330**

e: **enquiries@oca.ac.uk**

w: **oca-uk.com**

## Useful resources

### Publications

#### Writers’ and Artists’ Yearbook

This annual publication includes details of magazines, book publishers, literary agents, societies, prizes, writing courses and more. It also includes information on writing for newspapers, magazine articles, children’s books, poetry into print, word processing, desk top publishing, libel, income tax, copyright and opportunities for freelance artists.

Bloomsbury Publishing

31 Bedford Avenue, London, WC1B 3AT

t: **020 7631 5600**

e: **contact@bloomsbury.com**

w: **bloomsbury.com/uk**

### Equipment

#### Materials for writing and recording your work

RNIB’s Everyday Living Solutions product catalogue contains many items which may be useful to budding writers. You can order supplies of braille paper, raised line notepaper or writing frames. If you record your work, you can buy cassette and digital recorders. There are also solutions to labelling your work.

Contact our Helpline to order the catalogue or visit our online shop to search for products.

t: **0303 123 9999**

e: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

w: **shop.rnib.org.uk**

## Large print, braille and audio literature

If you enjoy reading books or magazines but are unable to read normal print comfortably, there are several alternatives that are worth trying out.

#### Large print

If you have some useful sight you may want to try large print books. A selection may be available from your local library. Talk to the librarian about your reading interests and ask if they can provide any help in selecting titles. Many of them will be used to dealing with similar requests and will be happy to help. Alternatively, you can contact the RNIB Library who offer books in a variety of accessible formats, including Giant Print.

RNIB Library

17 Saltmeadows Rd, Gateshead NE8 3AH

t: **01752 690 092**

e: **library@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/library**

Two publishing companies, Isis and Ulverscroft, publish a wide range of large print fiction and non-fiction books.

Isis Publishing Ltd

Centremead, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

t: **01865 250 333**

e: **customerservices@isis-publishing.co.uk**

w: **isis-publishing.co.uk**

Ulverscroft Large Print Books Ltd

The Green, Bradgate Road, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7FU

t: **0116 236 4325**

e: **m.merrill@ulverscroft.co.uk**

w: **ulverscroft.co.uk**

The Large Print Bookshop is an internet and mail-order bookshop created especially for readers of large print books and has one of the biggest selections of large print books available anywhere.

The Large Print Bookshop

Fluin Lane, Frodsham, WA6 7QT

t: **0800 009 6036**

e: **info@largeprintbookshop.co.uk**

#### Braille

RNIB Library is the UK's major lending library for people who read by touch. It offers a free lending service of books in braille. The library has a large collection of titles in braille including fiction and non-fiction, books for younger readers and music.

RNIB Library

17 Saltmeadows Rd, Gateshead NE8 3AH

t: **0303 123 9999**

e: **library@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/library**

RNIB has many braille books available for sale, and you can keep up to date with new titles as they become available by subscribing to New Books magazine. RNIB also produces magazines in braille, covering a wide range of subjects for all ages available in braille and also electronically via email. Contact the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.

The Clear Vision Project lends children’s books that are all produced with braille, print and pictures, enabling children learning braille to read along with sighted adults, or blind and partially sighted adults to read along with sighted children. The selection of books available is expanding rapidly, and the library holds thousands of books.

Clear Vision Project

Linden Lodge School, 61 Princes Way, London SW19 6JB

t: **020 8789 9575**

e: **info@clearvisionproject.org**

w: **clearvisionproject.org**

#### Audio

If you have difficulty reading print or large print, then why not try RNIB Talking Books? We have over 31,000 titles available on Daisy audio CD, USB stick or digital download. All our titles are unabridged, and have been recorded by professional actors and broadcasters, in order to make them lively and interesting. The range includes fiction, such as romances, westerns and whodunits; non-fiction, such as biographies, sport, history and music; and books for children.

RNIB Library

17 Saltmeadows Rd, Gateshead NE8 3AH

t: **0303 123 9999**

e: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/talkingbooks**

Calibre is another lending library with over 8,000 unabridged audio books on CD, USB or via streaming, with a wide variety of titles. It is a free to join service for all users, no matter if you are joining as an adults, or the Young Calibre which is aimed at the under 18’s.

Calibre Audio Library

Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 5XQ

t: **01296 432 339**

e: **enquiries@calibre.org.uk**

w: **calibre.org.uk**

RNIB Newsagent provides over 200 national newspapers and magazines on, audio CD, DAISY CD, email and download. Prices start from £2.78 (subscription title and length depending)

RNIB Newsagent

t: **0303 123 9999**

e: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/newsagent**

## Directories

#### Poetry Book Society

Members receive a discount on poetry books ordered from the Society and there are a small number of audio books available. Members also receive a quarterly bulletin with details of new publications, poems and articles by selected poets. This is currently available in print only.

Poetry Book Society

Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1LF

t: **020 7831 7468**

e: **info@poetrybooks.co.uk**

w: **poetrybooks.co.uk**

## Feedback

We hope you have found the information in this factsheet useful. Whilst we make every effort to ensure the information is accurate, please let us know if you come across any errors so that we can rectify them. If you know of an activity or organisation that you think should be mentioned in this pack, please also let us know and we will try to include them in further updates. Any feedback is always welcome.

## Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences, and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call **0303 123 9999.**

## RNIB Helpline

Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**, we’re ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am to 7pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm. You can also email us at **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. You can also say, **“Alexa, call RNIB Helpline”** to an Alexa-enabled device.

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