



The Writer's Compass

Getting Started as a Writer in the Community River Wolton

This information sheet has been commissioned by **NAWE** (National Association of Writers in Education) to provide practical information and advice on starting out as a writer in the community. The role of the writer, what we mean by community, the skills and personal qualities needed, training, how to get experience and finding work are among the topics covered.

About the author

River Wolton trained in social work then worked as a counsellor in the voluntary sector and in private practice. Since 1998 she has taught in adult and community education, and run writing, publishing and arts projects for people of all ages and backgrounds, particularly people with learning difficulties and users of mental health services. As Derbyshire Poet Laureate (2007-9) she worked with libraries and museums, young writers' and readers' groups, young parents, carers and an environmental education centre. Recently she's facilitated writing projects with refugees and asylum seekers at the Northern Refugee Centre, and collaborated with older people in residential care to create a digital book. Her pamphlet *The Purpose of Your Visit* was highly commended in the Poetry Business Competition, her full-length collection *Leap* is published by Smith/Doorstop, and she is co-author of *Some Girls' Mothers* (Route) stories about mothers and daughters. She contributed to *Writing Works* (ed. Bolton, Field and Thompson), *Dying, Bereavement and the Healing Arts* and *Write Yourself* (ed. Bolton). She is currently a writer-in-residence with Writing East Midlands. www.riverwolton.co.uk

About NAWE

NAWE's mission is to further the knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of Creative Writing and to support good practice in its teaching and learning at all levels. As a professional membership organization, NAWE aims to assist contemporary writers of all genres both in developing their own practice and sharing their art, craft and imagination with new writers of all ages and backgrounds in a wide range of educational and community settings.

The Writer's Compass is responsible for all NAWE's professional development services, including its programme of seminars and events, its annual retreat and year-round professional development planning and coaching services, the majority of which are also open to non-members, together with all the information and advice services for writers generally formerly provided by literaturetraining. www.nawe.co.uk

What is writing in the community?

'Community' has many dimensions. It can mean where we live, what we do, who we are or what we aspire to. Being a writer in the community may mean that you write in a peer group, write to commission, and offer one-to-one support to other writers, but it's almost certainly going to involve working with groups in the role of a facilitator/educator. It's worth considering your response to this prospect: love, hate, indifference, a mixture? How will your own positive and negative experiences of groups affect you? Groups can be intimidating, but they can also be powerful arenas of change, where we contact our potential creativity, and feel strengthened and inspired. As a writer in the community, your role will be to help others find their voice and to de-mystify the process of writing, particularly for people who may not see themselves as writers or who have a difficult relationship to the written and spoken word.

As a freelance writer, you'll probably be juggling a variety of commitments and areas of work; writing in the community may overlap with writing in health and social care, and writing in schools (guides to these are also available from NAWE). An example of this from my own experience was when I worked, as one of three artists, on an intergenerational project in a former coal-mining area, linking Year 8 pupils with ex-miners, recent migrants, the police and other members of the community, to collect memories, write poems and songs, boost literacy and IT skills, culminating in a multimedia performance.

This kind of project reflects the demands that can be made on a writer to adapt, innovate and multi-task. Sometimes a project takes place in an existing 'community', based on shared experiences or location, sometimes it will aim to create community through particular activities. It can also have a campaigning or political edge. At best, writing in the community offers a voice, a means of expression and the tools to develop curiosity, confidence and autonomy; in short, it says Yes.

What kind of community settings can I work in as a writer?

Almost every setting – from young parents' groups to hospices – contains the potential for writing. There are writers who've worked with groups of ramblers, allotment gardeners, tea-dancers and knitters. There are increasing numbers of online writing communities which may cross national and international boundaries. Writers in Prison is an example of a well-established network in a particular setting, but many writers work with, for example, homeless people, ex-offenders, carers, refugees, older people, children and young people in and out of school settings. Some writers are drawn to work with groups with whom they share experiences and identities – BME (black and minority ethnic), LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), people with disabilities, travellers, people from particular regions, social and economic backgrounds, people who are isolated, excluded or 'hard-to-reach'.

A key thing to consider is your motivation for doing the work. Are you genuinely interested in the people you'll be working with? Do you have a particular axe to grind? How does this work fit in with your development as a writer? What is your own experience of, or connection to, this setting or group? It's not essential to have first-hand experience, and sometimes being an 'outsider' can have advantages, but how willing are you to research and inform yourself, particularly about issues or areas on which you may hold strong views?

In recent years, adult and community education have taken a big blow from funding cuts and the current economic environment. This has increased the onus on writers (and all community artists) to be flexible and adaptable, to continually shift and develop their skills, and explore new approaches and settings for their work.

Can writers in all genres work in the community?

Yes, all genres have something valuable to offer, with increasing opportunities for dramatic writers, non-fiction writers and those working with digital media. However, it's good to have a variety of approaches up your sleeve, so if you only read or write in one genre, try to expand your repertoire. It's useful, for example, to have short, fun warm-ups that can be spoken and don't require writing (you or another member of the group can scribe them if necessary). If people are shy or unconfident, borrow or think up some collaborative exercises, where people create a piece together. You'll find sources for exercises in the bibliography at the end.

When pitching a project or applying for work, think about how the genre(s) you write in can fit with the particular community you'd like to work with or the project outcomes. Funded schemes such as Writers in Prison or the Scottish Book Trust's Live Literature scheme will specify which genres are eligible.

Do I need to be a published / produced writer?

Not necessarily when you start out, but you will need to have publication / production in your sights, not least because the people you work with may well be aiming for this and may need your support with going about it. In addition to the increased self-confidence that publication can bring, it will also give you credibility and be seen as evidence of the quality of your writing. Some employers and funded schemes will expect a publication or production track record, but this doesn't necessarily need to be a novel, full-length collection or full-scale production.

As a writer in the community, it's essential to maintain space and time for your own writing and to feel that you are developing as a writer. Otherwise, your enthusiasm for teaching and facilitation can run dry, and you may start to resent the people you are working with.

Do you need any particular personal qualities?

A genuine interest in other people and their potential is essential, as well as enthusiasm, patience, flexibility and the capacity to inspire, engage and encourage others. You'll benefit from the ability to be aware of (and suspend) your judgement, to learn from 'mistakes', to adapt as you go along and be open to taking off in new directions dictated by the group's interests and energy. It's essential to see the people you work with as experts on their own experience, as collaborators and equals, whilst not denying that you have particular skills to offer.

What are the key skills I should have?

A writer in the community needs to have a wide set of skills. I've ordered these to mirror the timeline of a project.

● **Marketing and pitching**

Some of us may be self-effacing or unconfident about promoting ourselves as writers in the community. If you're not the shy or retiring type – great, you'll have a headstart! Developing the skills to promote yourself and your work will be ongoing and crucial and you may find it's useful to work with a mentor, coach or in a peer group of writers or artists with similar aspirations.

Here are some useful questions to ask yourself:

- How can your belief in the power and potential of words become a motivating force and foundation in what you offer as a writer in the community?
- Do you have related skills in networking, researching opportunities or gathering information that you can use to help you pitch for work, approach organizations, respond to opportunities, adverts and tenders?
- What are your 'unique selling points' as a writer, and how can you use previous work, volunteer or life experience as a basis for what you can offer?

● **Project and time management**

Skills in multi-tasking will be an advantage, as will the ability to create the self-discipline and structure to help you plan, deliver and follow-up work, particularly if you're making a shift from a 9 – 5 workplace routine. The possibilities for procrastination are endless! If you're working within a budget or brief, you'll need to be able to work out how much time to spend on different stages. Planning and preparation will always be a central part of what you do.

● **Communication and listening skills**

As a writer, you'll have a keen interest in honing effective communication skills. You'll also need to develop good listening skills – ways of being open to, taking in and responding to the views, questions, dilemmas, doubts and ambitions of the writers and potential writers that you work with.

• **Planning, teaching and facilitation**

Clear thinking about the aims and objectives of a project, group, session etc. is vital. Think about:

- What do the participants, funders, umbrella project, and you yourself want to achieve?
- What are the ideal end results?
- How might you get there?
- What might be the challenges and opportunities?

Being a writer yourself doesn't automatically give you the skills to establish a good learning environment and help other people creatively engage with words or write to the best of their abilities. The good news is that these skills can be learned.

Drawing on your own experiences of taking part in writing groups or attending workshops, think about what puts people at their ease, makes them feel valued as individuals, helps them trust their own voice and viewpoint. Think about the skills *you* have needed to develop as a writer, and the stages you go through when you write a novel, a poem, a story, a play, a piece of non-fiction etc. Can you break these down into a series of steps that will make sense to other people? How can you give people the tools for, and practice in, re-drafting and editing their work? How can you best give positive, constructive and encouraging feedback?

Structuring and delivering effective sessions will also include developing skills in how to use a variety of learning methods and how to build in evaluation.

• **Editing / publishing / production e.g. if involved in producing an anthology, staging a play etc.**

Community writing projects are often tied to an outcome which showcases the participants' work – a publication, production, display, upload to a digital platform, etc. This kind of outcome or showcase can really increase participants' confidence but will also draw on your skills as editor, deviser and producer. This outcome may be in place by the time you come along, but usually there'll be scope for adaptation. Skills such as editing, producing, or collaborating with other art form practitioners will be an asset. You may also need the skills of a trapeze artist when balancing 'process' and 'product' – to ensure that the journey towards the completed outcome is as enjoyable and empowering as the sound of the applause when the curtain falls.

• **Finance**

If you've not been self-employed before, it's worth tapping into the wealth of information for start-ups available from the Business Link website <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk> or you might like to join one of the free workshops on becoming self-employed and self-assessment run by HM Revenue and Customs (you can also download leaflets on these and other topics from their website <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/index.shtml>). In some parts of the UK, there are agencies offering specialist business support for those working in the creative and cultural industries.

As well as keeping your own financial records, it's possible you may have to manage finances for a writing project, so it can be helpful to have basic skills in budgeting and record-keeping.

How do I work with people with different needs?

In every setting there are people with different needs, so this question is worth considering when working with any and every group.

How can you best engage people who are new to writing or who may have difficulties reading or writing? This could be people with learning difficulties, people whose first language is not English, or who communicate in other languages, including BSL (British Sign Language), Makaton, Braille. Consider concentration spans when you're planning a session, as well as a variety of approaches that address different learning styles. You may want to incorporate other languages and encourage people to write in their first language. For a video on the power of using mother tongues in writing and performance, watch <http://vimeo.com/23315069> from Write for Life, the creative writing programme of the charity Freedom from Torture.

Can you incorporate other art forms that might be more accessible – visual art, singing, music, drama, photography? Can you make audio or video recordings of participants' work when the written word isn't suitable or relevant? When dealing with people with physical disability or learning difficulties, scribes can be invaluable – a 1:1 or 1:2 ratio can aid the group process enormously. Does the organization have volunteers or students on placement who could scribe and who would enjoy and benefit from the opportunity?

If you're engaging challenging or hard-to-reach groups, or anyone that feels very anxious or intimidated by writing and reading, be as playful as you can. If you share something of yourself (it doesn't have to be too revealing) or put yourself on the line, this will help people trust you. If you're working with people with learning difficulties, for example, take in some photos of significant people or places in your life, or some objects that are important to you, especially if you are inviting them to tell you about their lives.

Where possible, concretize the writing /speaking exercises and prompts, and use anything you can to engage the senses. Use objects, pictures, sounds and video. With printed resources use a font size that will be legible for the participants, and if necessary pictures that can support and clarify the words.

In adult groups which include refugees, asylum seekers or migrants to the UK, participants may be anywhere on a continuum from no formal education at all to higher education and professional training. They may be fluent speakers, readers and writers of many languages, or have very few or no reading and writing skills in any language. Many resources for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) can be adapted for creative writing. Creative writing exercises and worksheets which are mostly aimed at children can also be adapted. (See the appended Bibliography.)

When groups contain a wide range of language ability, think of how to pitch the activities at different levels, for example, by providing continuation exercises for those who can read and write fluently, and who may need more of a challenge.

Are there some ethical considerations to think about when starting this kind of work?

With some groups, particularly where there are different levels of expectation and vulnerability, it can be useful to develop ground-rules or group agreements. Draw on the group's ideas about what might make them feel 'safe enough' to work together. These might include confidentiality, respect, not interrupting etc. Something similar may be useful where groups are new to each other or where there's difficulty concentrating, or high levels of anxiety. Some settings may have codes of practice that you need to adhere to – when working in an organization or community setting, ask if they have any good practice guidelines or codes of ethics.

In general, always treat participants' work as confidential; in other words don't share with others unless you have the author's permission. If you want to quote from, publish, or use as evidence anyone's written, scribed or recorded work, you'll need to ask them to sign a copyright permission form which spells out where and how the writing is going to be used. The copyright will remain with the participant.

In cases where English is an additional language, or where participants are refugees or asylum seekers, or have learning difficulties, you'll need to translate, explain clearly and think through the implications for people's well-being and safety. Offer different options, e.g. anonymity, a pseudonym or first name only.

Do I need to have any kind of qualification?

Some adult education providers like the WEA are starting to require tutors to have the introductory teaching qualification PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Life Long Skills Sector). This is a 30 hour course that covers the basics of teaching in continuing and adult education including how to plan sessions, motivate learners and use a variety of assessment methods. You don't need any prior teaching experience or qualifications to enroll. PTLLS can be followed by CTTLS and DTTLS (Certificate and Diploma). You can find more about the courses plus contact details for the nearest approved training centre from the City and Guilds website <http://www.cityandguilds.com/45858.html>

If you work regularly with children and young people, it is advisable to undertake Child Protection Training. If you are embarking on a project with young people at risk you should negotiate to receive this training with your employers before starting work.

Having qualifications in areas such as facilitation, community work, counselling skills or coaching would be useful but is by no means required.

Are any training or professional development opportunities available?

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a vital part of being a working writer. Find ways to replenish your interest, energy and enthusiasm, by attending other people's workshops, having a go at writing in a new genre, bringing your current writing enthusiasms into the way you work with others.

Taking part in groups or attending courses as a participant or student is invaluable, and will be a useful reminder of how nerve-wracking and exhilarating it can feel.

NAWE's year round professional development programme regularly includes workshops and other events for writers working in the community, aimed both at those new to the field and the more experienced. Details are available at <http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/training-and-events.html>.

A number of other training opportunities exist, ranging from day-long workshops to short courses and degree programmes:

Artwork: Open Course Programme

Wide-ranging programme delivered at regional training centres - topics include using the arts with juvenile and young offenders, child protection and evaluation.

<http://www.artwork.org.uk/open-courses>

Cardiff University: MA in Creative Writing

One year, full-time course which includes a module in Teaching Creative Writing.

<http://courses.cardiff.ac.uk/postgraduate/course/detail/267.html>

Escape Artists: Practitioner Training Courses

Accredited courses in using creative writing with vulnerable groups, working with the arts in the criminal justice system and other areas of social inclusion

<http://www.escapeartists.co.uk/>

Goldsmiths, University of London: MA/PGDip/PGCert in Cross Sectoral & Community Arts

Full/part-time programme which explores arts practice in sectors such as education, health, prison, youth work, business and the community.

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/ma-pgdip-pgcert-cross-sectoral-community-arts/>

Keele University: MA in Creative Writing

Full/part-time programme which includes a module in Teaching Writing (possible to take as short course)

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/pgtcourses/coursedetails/creativewriting/>

New Writing South: Finding Creative Work in New Settings

Ran four taster sessions in 2011/12 and is now planning a longer training programme. Check website for updates.

<http://newwritingsouth.com/members-area/workshops-events/>

Sheffield Hallam University: MA/PgDip/PgCert in Writing

Full/part-time programme which includes a module in The Writer as Teacher (possible to take as short course)

<http://www.shu.ac.uk/prospectus/course/137/>

Spread the Word: Community Kit Training Course

Five week evening course which ran in spring 2011. Check if they have any plans to rerun it.

<http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/index.php?id=events>

University of Bristol: BA (Hons) in English Literature and Community Engagement

Part-time, six year programme which includes running projects in the community.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english/part-time/elce.html>

University of East London: BA (Hons) in Community Arts Practice with Creative and Professional Writing

Contact the School of Combined Honours for further details.

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/combined/index.htm>

The University of Gloucestershire: MA/PgDip/PgCert in Creative and Critical Writing
Full/part-time programme which includes a module in Teaching Creative Writing
<http://www.glos.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/ccw/Pages/default.aspx>

The University of Nottingham: BA (Hons) in Creative and Professional Writing
Three year full-time programme (part-time study also possible) which includes a module in
Writing in the Community
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/documents/undergraduate/prospectuscreativeandprofessionalwriting.pdf>

The Writers in Prison Network
Provides training and other support for writers undertaking WIPN residencies.
www.writersinprisonnetwork.org

You'll find up-to-date workshop and short course listings on the NAWE website in the events section of The Writer's Compass <http://www.nawe.co.uk/the-writers-compass/events.html>

Mentoring and peer support: Ongoing support from peers or from more experienced writers is essential. Seek out people who know about the area of work you're undertaking. Share ideas, tips and experience. Create peer support groups with other writers or artists. Mentors can help you plan your workload, work out priorities, brainstorm the approach to take with a challenging group, decide which directions are most fruitful, exciting or beneficial for you at a particular stage. If it's going to be particularly difficult or traumatic for you to work in a particular setting, you may need to put professional supervision in place.

How can I get experience?

When you start out, you may need to build up your experience through volunteering. This is a good way of getting known and gathering references. If there is a particular community setting you're interested in working in, research the organizations in this field and ask about volunteering opportunities. Some of these may offer induction and training.

Another option is to shadow more experienced writers. Formal shadowing opportunities are rare so if you're a NAWE member, you can use our Professional Directory to identify other members living in your area who are experienced writers in the community. Organizations like Literature Wales, Poetry Ireland and the Scottish Book Trust also maintain publicly accessible online directories of writers who are available to work in a wide range of settings. Get in contact with literature or writer development agencies in your area (see Appendix for listing) that operate community projects to see if they offer shadowing opportunities (or might be persuaded to do so) or if they can put you in touch with local experienced writers who work in the community.

How can I get work?

1) Look out for advertised opportunities

Good sources of national information on opportunities include:

ArtsJobs – free e-mailing list operated by Arts Council England
Subscribe online at www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/maillinglists.php

Arts Hub – jobs, careers and news for the arts and creative industries.
www.artshub.co.uk

Lapidus – opportunities in the field of writing in health and social care are posted on their regional pages www.lapidus.org.uk

Opportunities Creative Scotland – details of jobs, professional development opportunities and activities in Scotland and beyond.
<http://opportunities.creativescotland.com/>

The Writer's Compass (NAWE) – weekly jobs and opportunities e-bulletin. Subscribe online at www.nawe.co.uk

On a regional level, the literature or writer development agencies in your area are likely to have a jobs and opportunities mailing list. Your city/regional arts officer or team may also operate one.

2) Register your details on online directories

NAWE operates an online Professional Directory of its members which provides prospective employers with an easy and trusted means of engaging suitably skilled and experienced writers. Similar databases are maintained by Literature Wales (Writers of Wales database / Writers on Tour scheme) and the Scottish Book Trust (Live Literature funding – eligibility criteria apply). Some parts of the UK also operate regional online directories of artists (see Appendix for details).

3) Contact regional writing or community arts programmes

Another approach is to contact literature or writer development agencies in your area (see Appendix 2 for listing) that operate community projects. You can also try community organizations that run writing or arts programmes and see if you can become part of their team of writers or even to be the first writer on their arts team.

Information about some of the community writing projects run by New Writing North can be found at <http://www.newwritingnorth.com/projects-community-projects-page-1416.html>

4) Set up your own projects

Rather than wait for that elusive advertised opportunity, you can get something going yourself. It's often a matter of seizing the moment. For example, the first writing group I led started when I put up an advert in my local post office. I ran the group from my front room, word got round, a WEA group were looking for a tutor and things took off from there.

You will find examples of community writing projects set up by NAWE members in our magazine *Writing in Education* – issue no 47 is a good place to start as it has a writing in the community focus – you'll find a list of the articles contained in it at <http://www.nawe.co.uk/DB/wie-editions/editions/community.html>

And there is some advice from Penny Rutterford on setting up a community-based poetry trail in Walthamstow: on the NALD (National Association for Literature Development) website at http://www.literaturedevelopment.co.uk/?location_id=465

5) Networks and word of mouth

A lot of work comes through word of mouth or because you're in the right place at the right time and talking to the right people. You don't have to be the biggest extrovert or the most skilled self-publicist.

For some useful (and entertaining!) tips on networking for writers, read Cathy Grindrod's article http://www.writingeastmidlands.co.uk/projects/residencies/write_here_-_on_the_business/networking/.

How do I go about setting up my own projects?

Setting up your own project is a great way to create opportunities for the kind of work that excites and inspires you. Some things to consider:

- Is there a need and a place for your project – has an interest been expressed, are there other local activities which provide a springboard for your idea, are you filling a gap where nothing else exists?
- What are your aims and objectives? What are the planned outcomes, the benefits for the participants/staff?
- What will it cost? How is to be funded?
- Find your networks and do your research: Facebook and Twitter groups, local bloggers, press contacts, galleries, studios, museums etc.
- You don't need do it on your own – seek out partners, find enthusiastic people who can offer you contacts, know-how and skills you may not have (but may want to develop). (*Adapted from Penny Rutterford's article above*)

The next step is to decide whether you want to pitch the project to an organization in the relevant setting (for example, if you are interested in working with refugees, you might approach an organization like the Northern Refugee Centre if you're based in the North of England) or deliver it under your own steam. Either way, you will need to put together a brief proposal outlining what you want to do and why, your credentials, your evidence that it's needed, the planned outcomes, benefits, cost etc. For advice from an experienced fundraiser, see The Writer's Compass briefing *Planning a project and funding it*: <http://www.nawe.co.uk/the-writers-compass/resources.html>.

If you decide to approach an organization, your proposal is likely to have a much more enthusiastic reception if you've already identified some possible sources of funding. As getting funding as an individual can be difficult, it will probably be a case of the organization applying for funding on your behalf with you taking the lead on writing the application. You may find that they have other funding applications on the go and your project can fit in with one of these.

Possible sources of funding include:

- Arts Council England – individuals can apply to the Grants for the Arts Scheme for grants of between £1,000 and £30,000. Comprehensive guidance is available at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/>
- The Arts Council of Northern Ireland – various funding schemes are available within the Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP). Details available at <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/award/award.htm>
- Arts Council of Wales – individuals can apply for Small Project Grants (*£250 - £5,000). Details at <http://www.artswales.org/what-we-do/funding/funding-advice-and-guidelines/individuals>

- Creative Scotland – individuals can apply to the investment programme Quality Production – Arts. You can find detailed guidelines at <http://www.creativescotland.com/investment/investment-programmes/quality-production-%E2%80%93-arts>
- Awards for All – a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK (grants of between £300 and £10,000 a—application must be made by the community group etc.) <http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/>
- Big Lottery Fund – awards lottery money to community groups and projects that improve health, education and the environment www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
- Charitable trusts and foundations – there are thousands of grant-making trusts in the UK. To identify relevant ones, you can use directories like *The Directory of Grant-making Trusts* or *A Guide to the Major Trusts* (there should be copies in your local reference library) or free websites like Funding Central <http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk>.
- Local authorities – check if your local council operates some kind of Community Arts or Small Grants scheme. A useful source of information about local authority arts funding is Arts Development UK <http://artsdevelopmentuk.org/>
- Local businesses with a corporate responsibility budget may be able to offer a grant – *The Guide to UK Company Giving* is a useful source of information. It's also worth making contact with your local Chamber of Commerce and checking the Business in the Community website <http://www.bitc.org.uk/>

Are there recommended rates for pay and for travel and subsistence costs?

No. Competition law prevents NAWA and other organizations that support writing in the community to recommend rates of pay. However, you will find that day rates of around £200 - £250, with £100-£150 for half a day, are common. Some funded schemes suggest their own minimum rates.

In my experience, deciding on a fee and sticking to it is one of the hardest things to get right. In practice, I have an ideal day and half-day rate (half-day equates to a two-hour workshop) but there's some flexibility, for example if a community group is self-funded or minimally funded. If it's an area of work that I'm drawn to, or that I'd like to get more experience in, I might take a lower rate.

A useful exercise is to work out exactly the amount of time you spend on preparation, delivery, evaluation and build in an hourly rate that you think is fair. Don't forget to account for the time it takes to look at work, give feedback or edit and pull together a project such as a book, performance, recording etc. I always add travel (check with the funders or host organization what their mileage rates are). I rarely add subsistence unless the work involves a long journey or an overnight stay.

One thing to be aware of is the disparity between what you may be paid as a freelancer and what the salaried workers might be paid at a community organization. This is a potential source of resentment and it's sometimes good to be clear about the extra work and preparation etc. that your rate covers, alongside the fact that it doesn't cover holidays, sick pay, pension contributions, tax or National Insurance.

Will I need a criminal record check?

You will need a criminal record check or 'Disclosure' if you are working directly with children and young people, vulnerable adults or in health care. There are two types of check – standard and enhanced – and you will generally find that you need to have an Enhanced Disclosure. If you are being employed by an organization, they may make a specific Disclosure application on your behalf or they may ask you to present your existing Disclosure as part of your application for the work. As a Disclosure does not come with a 'sell-by date' – something detrimental could be added to your record at any time – they may request a further, fresh Disclosure. There is a fee for processing each Disclosure.

As individuals are not allowed to apply for Disclosure, you will need to apply through an 'umbrella' body. If you join NAWE as a Professional member, they can make the application on your behalf. As a registered body, they are fully up-to-date with any changes in regulations.

The Directgov website http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Startinganewjob/DG_195809 has a helpful section on making criminal record checks.

Do I need any kind of insurance?

Yes. Public liability insurance is essential if you are self-employed and working with others. It covers you should anyone have an accident whilst working with you or there is damage to property. Although many places will have their own public liability insurance, it is worth making sure you have your own, in order to be sure that you are covered. In fact, many employers now insist that you have public liability insurance. In response to this situation, NAWE now offers free public liability insurance cover to its professional members who work as writers in public or educational settings.

There is a very comprehensive and readable guide to the different types of insurance available in the Finance and Grants section of the Business Link website www.businesslink.gov.uk

Should I get a contract?

Ideally yes, especially if the work covers a number of sessions, and so that the following can be considered:

- the expectations of both the host organization and the writing facilitator
- whether there will be a volunteer from the organization to support the sessions
- confidentiality and reporting back
- timings (both of length of sessions and the length of the project in total)
- supervision (if any), record-keeping and feedback
- facilities: particularly the accommodation and arrangements for provision of any equipment that may be required
- and, of course, your fee and expenses.

Appendix 1: Bibliography

Books

The Alphabet of the Trees, A Guide to Nature Writing, eds. Christian McEwen & Mark Statman, Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 2007

A practical handbook, in the form of a collection of essays, about teaching all aspects and forms of nature writing including poems, field journals, fiction, and nonfiction.

The Arvon Book of Life Writing: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir, Sally Cline and Carole Angier, Methuen Drama, 2010

Includes a practical guide, complete with exercises, designed for use in creative writing courses or by individual writers at home plus reflections by the two authors and tips and tales from top British and American life writers.

The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing (Cambridge Introductions to Literature), by David Morley, Cambridge University Press, 2007

Looks at creative writing in performance, as public art, e-literature and as an act of community, making it a useful textbook for both aspiring students and teachers of creative writing.

The Creative Writing Coursebook: Forty Authors Share Advice and Exercises for Fiction and Poetry, eds. Julia Bell and Paul Magrs, Macmillan, 2001

Exercises and activities to suit people writing for publication or just for their own pleasure, those writing on their own or writing groups.

The Five-minute Writer: Exercise and Inspiration in Creative Writing in Five Minutes a Day, Margret Geraghty, How To Books, 2006

Short sections cover 57 topics to stimulate your thinking process followed by writing exercises which can be used with writing groups as well as individual writers.

Free with Words, ed. Clive Hopwood, Writers in Prison Network

Personal accounts of what it's like to be a writer in prison - the triumphs and disasters, the problems and solutions.

<http://www.writersinprisonnetwork.org/Publications.html>

The Routledge Creative Writing Coursebook, by Paul Mills, Routledge, 2005

A practical guide to the process of creative writing packed with individual and group exercises.

The Writer's Workbook, by Jenny Newman, Edmund Cusick & Aileen La Tourette, Bloomsbury Academic, 2004 (Second revised edition)

Provides a concise introduction to the world of writing, with exercises to hone your skills. Aimed both at those taking a course in creative writing or working on their own.

Writing Poems, Peter Sansom, Bloodaxe, 1993

Includes sections on meter, rhyme, free verse, fixed forms and how to use them, workshops and writing groups, writing games and exercises, and a glossary of technical terms. Draws on his extensive experience of running poetry workshops and courses

Writing Poetry: The Essential Guide, Kenneth Steven, Need2Know, 2010 (second edition)
Step-by-step guide which covers the basics of what poetry is, explains how to build a poem and how to edit, and gives advice on the different forms of poetry.

Writing Routes: A Resource Handbook of Therapeutic Writing, eds. Gillie Bolton, Victoria Field and Kate Thompson, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011
An introduction to the many different ways of getting into and thinking about creative writing for personal or professional development, drawing on the experiences of 70 contributors.

Writing Well: Creative Writing and Mental Health, eds. Deborah Philips, Liz Lington and Debra Penman, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999
A practical handbook of creative writing exercises designed for therapeutic use within the mental health field.

Writing Works: A Resource Handbook for Therapeutic Writing Workshops and Activities, eds. Gillie Bolton, Victoria Field and Kate Thompson, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006
Practical advice on how to organize writing workshops for a wide range of different clients, together with examples of their outcomes.

Write Yourself: Creative Writing and Personal Development, by Gillie Bolton, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011
Practical introduction to facilitating creative writing for therapy or personal development with individuals and groups. Part Two: Writing with Specific Groups includes accounts of work in prisons, with asylum seekers and refugees, and in substance and alcohol abuse treatment.

Writing Creatively in Another Language by Gill James
Article on creative writing using another language aimed at ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers which can be adapted for other contexts. Available to read on the TEFL.net site at <http://69.27.110.192/esl-articles/creative-writing.htm>

● Magazines / Journals / Newsletters

Writing in Education
Print magazine for NAWE members published three times a year which features articles on craft, critical issues and workshop techniques. An article search facility enables easy searching of back issues. You can also look at previous issues e.g. issue 47 focuses on Writing and the Community, issue 33 on Writing & Location, Issue 37 on Writing & Gender (includes several articles about working with writing groups.) Individual copies of most issues can be purchased.
<http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/nawe-magazine/current-issue.html>

Lapidus Journal
Online journal of writing in health for Lapidus members. Published three times a year.
<http://www.lapidus.org.uk>

Literature Professional
Online journal for NALD (National Association of Literature Development) members.
<http://www.literaturedevelopment.co.uk/>

Online resources / Websites

NAWE (National Association of Writers in Education) <http://www.nawe.co.uk/>
The one organization supporting the development of creative writing of all genres and in all educational and community settings throughout the UK. Website resources include information sheets, getting started guides, briefings and 'how did I get here' features e.g.

Getting started as a writer in health and social care settings, by Wendy French
<http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-and-community/writing-and-healthcare.html>

Writing for regeneration (briefing no 6), by Sarah Butler
<http://www.nawe.co.uk/the-writers-compass/resources.html>

Writing and public art, by Linda France and Sarah Butler
<http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-and-community/public-art.html>

Writing in the Community: Making Workshops Work, by Drew Campbell
<http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-at-university/professional-development/turning-the-next-page.html>

NAWE is currently developing a briefing sheet on writing residencies.

Freedom From Torture

Video on the power of using mother tongues in writing and performance from Write for Life, their creative writing programme, available to watch at <http://vimeo.com/23315069>

LANTERNFISH <http://bogglesworldesl.com/>

Extensive collection of printable teaching resources for language arts, TESOL, TEFL and ESL which can be adapted.

mailout.co <http://mailout.co/>

The home of information, sharing and networking for participatory arts in the UK

National Association for Literature Development (NALD)

<http://www.literaturedevelopment.co.uk/>

The professional body for all involved in developing writers, readers and literature audiences. Online archive of think papers, comments or studies covering different areas of literature development and wider issues around arts and creativity.

Appendix 2: Useful Links

National literature / writing development / arts / community organizations

UK/England

Apples and Snakes

England's leading organization for performance poetry and spoken word. Delivers workshops and long-term projects with schools, local communities, hospitals, prisons and other groups. <http://www.applesandsnakes.org>

Artswork

National youth arts development agency offering extensive publications and training programmes. www.artswork.org.uk

Arvon Foundation

Works to ensure that everyone can benefit from the transformative power of writing, running a year-round programme of residential creative writing courses at its four writing houses in Devon, Inverness-shire, Shropshire and West Yorkshire. Information about how to become an Arvon tutor available at <http://www.arvonfoundation.org/becomeatutor>

Booktrust

The UK's largest reading and writing charity. Delivers range of projects and programmes working with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Website has searchable archive of resource and tools to support reading and writing professionals. www.booktrust.org.uk

English PEN

The founding centre of PEN International, the worldwide fellowship of writers promoting free expression and the literature across frontiers. Its writer-led education programme Readers & Writers works with refugees, offenders, detainees and young people in schools. <http://www.englishpen.org/learning/>

Exiled Writers Ink

Provides a platform for the work of artists living in exile in the UK and mainland Europe through performance, publishing and training activities. <http://www.exiledwriters.co.uk/>

First Story

Runs residencies in challenging UK secondary schools (currently in London, Oxford and Nottingham). <http://www.firststory.org.uk/>

Forward Arts Foundation

Works to build new audiences for poetry through initiatives such as National Poetry Day. <http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/>

Lapidus

Membership organization promoting the benefits of the literary arts for personal development, health and wellbeing. Eligible writers can apply for their Professional Member category and have their profile on their Skillsearch online directory. Regional groups, online journal and resources. www.lapidus.org.uk

The National Association for Literature Development (NALD)

The professional body for all involved in developing writers, readers and literature audiences. Connects people working in literature through offering networks, intelligence and information, mentoring and professional development, advice and advocacy. www.nald.org

The National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE)

The one organization supporting the development of creative writing of all genres and in all educational and community settings throughout the UK. Publications, events, online resources, disclosure processing. Free public liability insurance cover for professional members. The Writer's Compass is its professional development arm.

www.nawe.co.uk

The National Association of Writers' Groups

Umbrella organization with over 150 affiliated groups across the UK. Provides information on finding a local group and how to set up a new group from scratch.

www.nawg.co.uk

(Information on creative writing groups in the UK is also available from **The Directory of Writers Circles** www.writers-circles.com)

The National Literacy Trust

Supports those who struggle with literacy and the people who work with them. Runs projects and promotions in schools, libraries and football clubs across the country

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>

The Poetry School

Delivers England-wide programme of courses, workshops and seminars on reading and writing poetry plus one-to-one tutorials. Information about current tutors can be found at

<http://www.poetryschool.com/courses-workshops/our-tutors.php>

The Poetry Society

Works to advance the study, use and enjoyment of poetry. Wide-ranging education programme working with schools, libraries, community organizations. Provides teacher training and teaching resources.

www.poetrysociety.org.uk

The Reading Agency

Aims to help children, young people and adults across the UK feel inspired and confident about reading. Specialising in working with libraries. Also reaches readers through broadcasters, publishers, workplaces, schools, prisons and youth services.

www.readingagency.org.uk

The Reader Organisation

Aims to extend the individual experience with literature and build communities that read together. Delivers Read to Lead training.

<http://thereader.org.uk/>

The Refugee Council

The leading charity in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees.

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Shape

Disability-led arts organization working to improve access to culture for disabled people. Runs participatory arts and development programmes.
<http://www.shapearts.org.uk/>

Survivors' Poetry

Uses poetry workshops, readings, performances, music, visual arts, publishing, recording and other arts activities by and for survivors of the mental health system as a means to explore wellbeing.
www.survivorspoetry.com

Voluntary Arts Network

Aims to promote participation in the arts and crafts across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Offers information, advice and guidance.
www.voluntaryarts.org

Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

The UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education. Provides courses for all kinds of adults with particular commitment to supporting adults facing social and economic disadvantage.
<http://www.wea.org.uk/>

Writers in Prison Network

Puts writers and creative artists into prisons to deliver creative writing, drama, video, music, oral storytelling, journalism, creative reading and publishing programmes. New residencies are advertised annually.
www.writersinprisonnetwork.org

Ireland / Northern Ireland

Arts and Disability Forum

The umbrella organization for arts and disability in Northern Ireland. Promotes equal access to mainstream arts (including literature) for people with disabilities, both as artists and audiences.
<http://www.adf.ie/>

Arts Care

Arts and health charity which works in partnership with health and social care trusts throughout Northern Ireland to bring all forms of art into health and social care settings.
<http://www.artscare.co.uk/>

Community Arts Forum

The umbrella body for community arts in Northern Ireland. Produces a free weekly newsletter and maintains an online directory of individuals and organizations working in the field.
www.caf.ie

LitNet NI

Literature development organization supporting writers and literature professionals working in Northern Ireland.
<http://www.litnetni.com/>

Poetry Ireland

The national organization for poetry in Ireland. Runs the Writers in Schools Scheme which part-funds visits by writers and storytellers to primary and post primary schools throughout the Republic of Ireland. Eligible writers (fiction, poetry, playwriting, screen) and storytellers can apply for inclusion on the WIS Directory.

www.poetryireland.ie

Prison Arts Foundation

Aims to release the creative self of all prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders and ex-young offenders in Northern Ireland using all of the arts and crafts including writing, drama, fine art, craft, music and dance.

www.prisonartsfoundation.com

Scotland

Artlink Central

Works across Central Scotland promoting and developing access to the arts through participation. Focuses especially on developing practice in the areas of arts and health; arts and disability; arts in prisons; and arts and young people.

<http://artlinkcentral.org/>

Artlink (Edinburgh)

Works to increase opportunities for individuals who experience disadvantage or disability to take part in the arts in Edinburgh and the Lothian region.

<http://www.artlinkedinburgh.co.uk/>

Scottish Book Trust

The leading agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing in Scotland. Manages the Live Literature funding scheme which subsidises writer events in schools, libraries, hospitals, prisons and community settings. Open to eligible Scottish / Scottish-based writers.

www.scottishbooktrust.com

Scottish PEN

The Scottish Centre of the international writers' association which works to promote freedom of expression throughout the world. Has developed a number of projects for use with students in schools and further education.

www.scottishpen.org

Scottish Poetry Library

Houses extensive collection of contemporary Scottish poetry plus poetry from around the world. Wide-ranging education programme including school poetry projects and workshops.

www.spl.org.uk

Wales

Literature Wales

The Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency and Society for Authors

Manages three funding schemes (Writers on Tour, Programme Support and Literature Residencies) which support the costs of writers going into schools, youth clubs, libraries, community centres, arts festivals and other venues through out Wales to give talks, lead workshops etc. Welsh and Welsh based writers, writing in the Welsh and English language, can apply to join their Writers of Wales database.

<http://www.literaturewales.org>

Ty Newydd

The National Writers' Centre for Wales. Runs year-round programme of residential creative writing courses. Also currently running projects in the use of creative writing and reading for wellbeing.

<http://www.tynewydd.org/english/home.html>

Regional English literature / writing development / community organizations

East

Creative Arts East www.creativeartseast.co.uk

Arts development agency for the Norfolk county.

Suffolk Artlink <http://www.suffolkartlink.org.uk/>

Improving the quality of life of some of Suffolk's most vulnerable people through the provision of creative activities

The Poetry Trust www.thepoetrytrust.org

Flagship poetry organization, delivering a year-round live and digital programme, creative education opportunities, courses, prizes and publications.

Writers' Centre Norwich <http://www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk/>

Literature development agency interested in both the artistic and social impact of creative writing. Delivers a wide-ranging programme of projects and events with writers, readers and diverse communities.

North East

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

Development agency for creative writing and creative reading, specialising in the development of talent. Runs creative projects with young people and communities.

Seven Stories <http://www.sevenstories.org.uk/>

The national home of children's books in Britain. Year-round events and exhibitions programme.

North West

Commonword/Cultureword <http://www.cultureword.org.uk/>

Writing development organization based in Manchester. Especial focus on working with groups that don't normally have access to writing and publishing resources.

Contact Theatre <http://contactmcr.com>

Provides opportunities for young people from a diverse range of communities to develop as artists, facilitators and project managers.

Litfest www.litfest.org

Literature festival, publisher and development agency.

Manchester Literature Festival <http://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/>

Annual literature festival plus year-round programme of projects and events.

East Midlands

Charnwood Arts <http://www.charnwoodarts.com/>

Independent community arts and media organization whose work encompasses most art forms and a range of approaches including long-term projects and residencies.

<http://www.charnwoodarts.com/>

Theatre Writing Partnership <http://www.theatrewritingpartnership.org.uk/>

Regional development agency for the encouragement and promotion of new writing for the theatre.

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

Writer development agency that supports, promotes and champions writing from the region. Facilitates new commissions, projects, residencies, and publications.

Writing School Leicester <http://www.writingschoolleicester.co.uk>

Specialist creative writing school delivering short, part-time writing and journalism courses. Also facilitates creative writing projects.

West Midlands

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

Regional literature development agency. Builds audiences for literature through its Festivals and Events programme. Also works with children and young people through its Write On! programme

London

Eastside Educational Trust <http://www.eastside.org.uk/>

Delivers arts activities and creative learning projects to children and young people through schools and community groups.

Poet in the City <http://www.poetinthecity.co.uk/>

Specialises in promoting poetry to new audiences through its events programme and educational work.

Spread the Word <http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/>

Provides a wide range of services and opportunities for all levels of writers including advice and information, networking, mentoring, events and work in the community.

The Ministry of Stories <http://www.ministryofstories.org/>

A creative writing and mentoring centre for young people in east London.

South East

New Writing South <http://www.newwritingsouth.com>

The region's new writing development agency. Runs the Writer at Work scheme, taking writers into business, and places writers in schools through its Creative Learning programme.

South West

Arts and Health South West <http://www.artsandhealthsouthwest.org.uk/>

An information, support and advocacy organization for people who believe in the value of creativity in enhancing people's health and wellbeing.

Cyprus Well <http://www.cypruswell.com>

Supports writing and reader development in the South West. Funding for literary activities available through its Grassroots small awards programme.

Yorkshire

Artlink www.artlink.net.uk

Delivers a range of community arts activities and for the people of Hull and the Humber.

Artlink West Yorkshire <http://www.artlinkwestyorks.org/>

A community arts organization specialising in arts and health initiatives.

Signposts www.signpostsonline.org

Sheffield-based literature organization supporting new and established writers.

The Writing Squad <http://www.writingsquad.com>

A programme for emerging young writers in the north of England who work with professional tutors for two years.