

# Paper Nations

## Creative Writing in Schools Programme 2016-18



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### OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

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#### What is Paper Nations?

Paper Nations is a creative writing partnership initiative located in TRACE, the Research Centre for Transnational Creativity and Education, at Bath Spa University. Paper Nations' 2016-18 programme is supported by the Arts Council England Creative Writing in Schools fund. The programme involves four key partnership projects between Bath Spa University Creative Writing Faculty and Institute for Education, Bath Festivals, the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), Poetry Can, StoryHive and a thriving community of local schools and arts organizations.

#### The importance of creativity

At the heart of Paper Nations' 2016-18 programme is a desire to help all young people explore and appreciate the art of writing. Paper Nations seeks to accomplish this ambition through a process of creative investigation and dialogue, resulting in the creation of evidence-based resources to help sustain, enhance and celebrate the culture of support for writing in and around schools.

Our core focus is on approaches to the art of writing that are inclusive, playful and exploratory. We want to help writing to flourish – both as a pleasurable activity with intrinsic worth, and as a practical activity with wider cultural and social benefits.

In the current landscape where libraries are closing and

creativity is regarded as a luxury within the dominant educational system, it's more important than ever that we create spaces to help children and young people find their words and explore the art of writing.

#### The purpose of this document

Since 2016, Paper Nations has been conducting a programme of practice-led research with authors, teachers, schools and cultural organizations in Bath and the south-west England as well as reaching out to the rest of the country online. Our work in schools and our engaged research with communities has developed into a national conversation about the importance of writing as an art form.

This spring, in collaboration with NAWE, Paper Nations opened a Call for Evidence to teachers, writers, poets, authors and workshop leaders. The call, which will run until **1 August 2018**, asks people to tell us about their views and experiences of creative writing education. We are doing this research to help us to understand more about what people value, what they need and what they think is missing from the current system of creative writing education for young people. The responses will further inform our four key pieces of practice-informed research, enabling NAWE and our other partners to share a set of resources that aim to help educators continue to build, enhance and sustain the infrastructure of support for creative writing in schools and communities.

This document provides an overview of the Paper Nations 2016-18 schools programme. It outlines the reasons for the programme, our methods and our four

key outputs. In November 2018, we'll reach the end of our funded programme of activity. Our aim here is to provide you with background information about our activities to date, and to let you know how you can still inform our project to enhance creative writing provision for young people. Following this introduction, in the Autumn edition of *Writing in Education* we'll provide you with a more detailed report on our outcomes.

### **The Arts Council England Creative Writing in Schools Scheme**

In 2015, Arts Council England (ACE) established the Creative Writing in Schools (CWIS) fund. The fund's aim was to enable children to "express themselves imaginatively" through writing and to open opportunities within areas facing socio-economic barriers for engagement in the arts. The CWIS call emphasized the importance of fostering relationships between schools and cultural organizations with an interest in writing in the north and south-west regions of England. As a key part of their call, ACE issued a "theory of change" outlining a mission "to build a regular, consistent and high quality creative writing offer in schools across England". To achieve this, ACE challenged cultural organizations to develop creative, educational and business models that could enhance the development of "a national infrastructure" for creative writing education.

The two successful recipients of the CWIS award were First Story and Bath Spa University (BSU). The award allowed First Story to extend their current programme of creative writing residencies across north and south-west England, and also enabled the charity to mount a national creative writing initiative aimed at every school-age child.

Led by Professor Bambo Soyinka, the BSU award presented an opportunity to form a partnership with Bath Festivals, NAWE and a host of local delivery agents and authors. The objective of this partnership was to deliver a three-year programme of activity to expand creative writing education opportunities available in schools across south-west England. Following ACE's theory of change, the partnership also aimed to contribute to the sustainability of a national infrastructure of support for creative writing. The partnership worked together under the banner of "Paper

Nations", a creative writing initiative housed within the TRACE centre at BSU's Research and Enterprise office.

### **Paper Nations, answering the call**

The Paper Nations 2016-18 school programme set out to respond to ACE's call and to speak to writers and teachers about what change would look like to them. Throughout the programme Paper Nations has asked partners and the wider community of authors, teachers and NAWE conference attendees to describe what they value about creative writing. The response has been consistent and clear: most people value approaches to writing that are **exploratory, playful** and **inclusive**. The Paper Nations 2015-16 programme therefore aims to serve, support and illuminate these three principles.

To this end, the programme has involved a series of co-produced projects with local partners and writers, as well as a national consultation campaign. This work will result in four key outputs. The lead authors involved in the development of our 2016-18 CWIS outputs are Bambo Soyinka and Lucy Sweetman, with specialist input from Seraphima Kennedy (NAWE), Hazel Plowman (Bath Festivals), Janett Bluett, Janine Amos and a team of creative partners and collaborators. The children's author David Almond is our chief creative champion. Nick Sorenson from the BSU Institute of Education has helped to reach schools in south-west England and pilot our professional development programme.

The Paper Nations Creative Writing in Schools Programme has been a collaborative project throughout. We could not have achieved this body of work without support from the local and national community. A full list of credits and thanks to all involved can be found on our website.

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## **THE FOUR KEY PROJECTS OF PAPER NATIONS**

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Our core projects have emerged from grassroots initiatives and projects co-created with writers, schools and communities. Working from the bottom up with our partners these projects developed over a two-year period into four key strands of work. Each strand is intended to have a value in its own right and a life beyond the initial Creative Writing in Schools fund. The

underlying aim is to support all young people to explore, play and benefit from sustained practice in the art of writing.

### 1. Dare to Write?

*Dare to Write?* is an invitation to explore the art of writing. At the core of *Dare to Write?* are eight activities that help people to start and continue writing for fun. The activities are intended to inspire a playful creative journey of exploration and discovery.

Using just a notebook, participants can explore the activities at their own pace over the course of an hour, day, week, or a lifetime. Our focus on the notebook is underpinned by research emerging from Paper Nations and from the expertise of hundreds of experienced writers that have informed our work. The regular use of a notebook can help to build good writing habits, including having fun, exploring on the page, observing the world around you and making time to write. The notebook can also be a private space where young writers take risks without the pressure of assessment.

#### *Purpose*

- To invite exploration in the art of writing
- To speak directly to young people
- To champion the art of writing for fun and pleasure
- To celebrate the culture of creative writing in the UK
- To highlight available local support and activity to young people, families and schools.

#### *How can parents, teachers and young people get involved?*

To complement individual writing journeys, the platform will also feature an interactive map plotting writing resources and opportunities around the country. *Dare to Write? Communities* offers a further badge of affiliation for anyone looking to support young people and their creative writing at the local level. To get started visit the *Dare to Write? Platform*, an online space where young people, teachers and parents can discover new writing activities and explore a map of writing resources and opportunities.

#### *How can writing tutors and providers get involved?*

Writing tutors, providers and festivals can feature their activities on the interactive map. Or, within south-west England, you can work with us more closely to establish and expand writing communities.

### 2. The Writer Development Canvas

The Writer Development Canvas will be delivered in the form of a collection of resources exploring good practice principles in writer development programmes and initiatives. In the first instance, we are working with NAWE to create a *benchmark* describing the key good practice principles, a wheel visualizing the flavours of these principles, and a series of *case studies* exploring how some of the best creative writing individuals and organizations in the UK put these principles into action.

#### *Purpose*

- To help those who want to support people in developing playful, exploratory and inclusive approaches to writing
- To develop a culture of regular support for young writers.

#### *How can I get involved?*

You can get involved in our research and consultancy activities, respond to our Call for Evidence or apply to sit on the benchmark committee.

### 3. Creative Writing Award

This project involves the development of a *Creative Writing Award* for young people and a research-led *professional development programme* for teachers and writers. These two linked initiatives will embed the core principles of good practice outlined in the WDC benchmark. We'll also map out other existing ways to reward, celebrate and accredit the efforts of writers and teachers of all ages.

#### *Purpose*

- To formally recognize and celebrate young people and their writers/educators for their sustained efforts to explore the art of writing.

### *How can I get involved?*

We'll be presenting the next stage of our work on the award at the 2018 NAWE Conference. Please join us at our forum, or look out for further information on the NAWE website.

#### **4. Success factors for sustainability**

Without resources and financial support, writers, teachers and organizations doing great work in this field cannot continue. To tackle this challenge, we will produce a series of *briefing papers* that will identify what helps and what obscures the ability of writer/educators to both sustain support for young writers and remain grounded in the three core values of exploration, play and inclusivity.

#### *Purpose*

- To ensure that all young people get a chance to explore the art of writing
- To further research and identify gaps and barriers and to test solutions – especially around two key issues raised in last year's research and evaluation: inclusivity and economic sustainability.

### *How can I get involved?*

Please respond to our Call for Evidence. If you've successfully overcome barriers and have expertise to offer then please get in touch – we may be able to conduct a case study on your work.

#### **Bringing it all together**

Throughout this process of investigation, we have been engaging experts, parents and decision makers in dialogue about the value of writing and methods to support young writers. From August 2018, we will draw the programme to a close through the creation of four key resources that share our emerging insights and open up further opportunity for conversation with fellow literary organizations, authors, writers, librarians, teachers and parents. For those who are interested, there is still an opportunity to get involved and inform these outputs.

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## **OUR CREATIVE JOURNEY AND RESEARCH PROCESS**

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### **Towards an imaginative and inclusive culture for young writers**

Building on ACE's theory of change, our journey has involved working with collaborators to explore and illuminate good practice in creative writing education. We want to enhance, build and share models and structures of support that enable the three core principles of exploration, play and inclusivity to flourish. The goal of our research is to describe these principles in detail, to identify good practice in upholding these principles, and to understand what gets in the way of initiating and sustaining creative writing activities.

In this section we will outline how our research and consultation process has organically informed the formation of four of our key interlinked projects:

- a) The Writer Development Canvas, including a benchmark and case studies (WDC)
- b) The Creative Writing Awards and professional development schemes
- b) Success Factors for Sustaining Creative Writing Education initiatives
- c) Dare to Write? and our young people-focused activities at the local level.

We will focus on the evolution of the Writer Development Canvas (especially the benchmark and the case studies) as the project has been the central point of our collaboration with NAWE. Our intention here is to introduce you to our creative process of investigation and to some of our emerging findings. This is an account of the journey so far and a preface to the full report on the Writer Development Canvas which will be published later this year, in the Autumn edition of *Writing in Education*.

### **Overview of our research and consultation process**

Throughout the life of Paper Nations, we've undertaken a series of reflective activities with writers, partner organizations, schools, teachers and young people. We've taken a flexible approach to our programme, responding to feedback and evidence, changes in

conditions and external factors so that we can meet arising as well as predicted needs. This flexibility has allowed for responsive shifts in emphasis while never straying too far from the project's stated aim. We have been collecting evidence since 2016, employing a creative process of investigation that includes the following methods:

- We've co-produced projects with local grassroots organizations across south-west England. Participants involved in our local projects have shared their reflections with us in the form of field notes, reports and journals. We've also gathered information from local stakeholders and beneficiaries via knowledge sharing days. These have involved informal round-table forums for talking about values, approaches and challenges to creativity, writing and working with young people.
- In collaboration with NAWE and Bath Festivals, we've consulted at national and regional events using these as opportunities to check our progress with our partners. We've also issued a Call for Evidence with NAWE to gather further perspectives from people across the nation.
- Finally, we have used *evaluation forms and questionnaires* to help us evaluate and measure our progress (undertaken by our independent evaluator LKMCo).

In short, we have taken a conversational, engaged and rigorous approach, to describe the big picture and to capture the more subtle lessons, impact and good practice relating to the project. We take the view that people who have worked on, and on behalf of, the project are also knowledge holders about the project. This collaborative, celebratory and supportive approach has been crucial to Paper Nations' mission to be a platform through which good practice, information, insight, tools and knowledge can be shared in the service of our common values, so that creative writing becomes part of the fabric of life in our communities and schools.

### **Our grassroots activity with cultural organizations in south-west England**

Paper Nations has initiated and run several pilot

projects across south-west England to help identify and share models for good practice. Our approach has included delivery of school pilot projects in partnership with local arts organizations and freelance writing tutors, with opportunities for participants (tutors and young people) to share their thoughts with us at key junctures.

A recurrent theme emerging from this process is that those who deliver creative writing provision to young people often do so for altruistic reasons – because they understand that creative writing brings a host of benefits to participants. Reported benefits include deeper appreciation of the art of writing, expanded opportunities for human interaction and expression, personal growth, and a chance to navigate the chasm between school life and adulthood.

Another emerging theme is the critical importance of developing safe creative spaces for writing. The best outcome, for participant and facilitator alike, is to carve out a fresh space for creative writing, both literally in terms of the physical environment in which activities are set, and figuratively in terms of how those activities are approached and delivered. This might, for example, involve taking creative writing out of the conventional classroom setting.

We also identified some challenges. Limited resources in terms of time and money – a problem for the education system at large – constitute a considerable stumbling block for people who are committed to supporting young people to develop a passion and talent for writing. Looking forward, we need to continue to develop and expand our work with young people in rural and coastal communities and those from marginalized backgrounds. These groups of young people are often underserved by their local arts infrastructure (if indeed they have access to it). It is part of our ongoing mission to ensure that we collaborate with local providers to explore ways of opening up support. The underlying goal here is to enable young people to find writing opportunities and sustain their writing habit in the longer term. One of the core outputs of Paper Nations – *Success Factors for Sustainability* – will help us clarify some of the ongoing obstacles and potential practical solutions to these issues.

The themes discussed above have emerged from

research and development involving two principal models: the *Writing Explorer Model* and the *Writing Community Model*.

### *The Writing Explorer Model*

The aim of this sub-project was to explore good practice models for embedding published authors in schools, using an approach similar to that of the peripatetic music tutor. To test this model, we developed a standard in-house approach that emphasized our core principles of exploration, playfulness and inclusivity. Encouraging young people to use notebooks to explore writing was central to the process and this model developed into the *Dare to Write?* project.

Having established an approach, we contacted schools to offer writing workshops. We linked each school to an independent writing explorer (or “tutor”), usually a professional author who worked independently. Workshop leaders brought in their own ideas and approaches, but they had access to and free use of our model which could be tailored to their own style of writing and teaching. The emphasis throughout was on exploring writing for fun. Some of the children also had a chance to experiment with making zines, origami booklets and performances.

The *Dare to Write?* project is launching in its final form this summer as an online platform aimed at young people with a focus on celebrating writing at home, at school and in the community. The platform takes forward the idea of using notebooks, writing for fun and collaboration with local providers. The key turning point on this project was to shift our focus away from the “workshop programme” towards a simple invitation for participants to explore writing at their own pace, in their own way, tapping into local support as and when they need or want to. This may sound like a simple solution, but it’s the freedom to explore writing in an environment free of assessment **and yet still structured** that is important.

### *The Writing Community Model*

The aim of this project was to explore the challenge of creating and sustaining an enthusiasm for writing across the whole school or community. For this project, Paper Nations worked with key players in the south-west of

England to support and establish “writing communities”. The community writing projects were spearheaded by “lead schools” and/or lead arts organizations working in partnership to establish a local cluster.

Paper Nations’ role was to act as a researcher, facilitator and/or co-producer. For example, one approach was to work with a lead school over a period of 3 months to help them set up a sustainable writing cluster. We worked closely with existing cultural hubs such as Bath Festivals and the Pound Art Centre to link schools to local grass-roots creative writing groups. Crucially, lead schools played an important role in bringing on board other schools in the area. As the project developed, and where schools played an active role, our emphasis shifted from “setting up creative writing projects within their community” to supporting the school or a lead champion within the school, to expand and develop their own innovative writing community initiatives.

As with the writing tutor model, we have helped the schools to refine their approach and we have used their feedback to inform our research to refine our models. Our final set of models on writing communities will provide guidelines on the best approaches to sustaining writing within and across schools and communities. In addition, within south-west England, we will provide further opportunities for co-production through our *Dare to Write?* communities in order to build, enhance and make visible joint provision for young writers.

### **Paper Nations’ school & community activity: Key facts**

We’ve reached over 100 Schools through celebration events, *Dare to Write?* communities, creative writing workshop programmes, and partnership/sustainability projects. 6000 students have taken part in activities; 5200 through Inspire Days and Celebration Events, and 800 through our two key models.

Examples of writing community projects include:

- A partnership with the Clevedon Learning Trust, Clevedon Secondary School and linked primaries within their cluster. Jo Carrington, Head of English at Clevedon School, is committed to introducing writing across the school and within the local community. Amongst her many innovative projects is a plan to

build a new library on the school grounds to support enthusiasm for reading and writing.

- A year-long project, “Word Up” – working with Lisa Millard, editor of *The Little Things* magazine, produced in association with Bath Festivals. The work produced here will feed into our case studies on writing communities’.
- The establishment of a *Dare to Write?* community in Corsham to sustain writing activities for young people in schools and around the area. This includes collaboration on “Story Town”, a festival celebrating writing, the establishment of a new writing club for secondary school pupils led by Chris Vicks, and collaboration with Corsham Regis Primary School through MakeBelieve Arts, who ran a project using their “Helicopter Stories” approach.
- With arts organization 5x5x5=Creativity, we collaborated on two projects in Bath and Somerset: a writing and publishing project with David Almond, and a workshop programme with Alice Maddicott linked to their “Schools Without Walls” project.
- One of the lead Paper Nations partners, Bath Festivals, has facilitated a wide range of projects across Bath. Hazel Plowman set up projects in Bath Community College and Hayesfield Girls School with Rebecca Tantony and worked on an outreach project at Bristol Children’s Hospital. Bath Festivals also collaborated with a local organization called Mentoring Plus, around the theme of the Wisdom of Youth. The project involved eight primary and secondary age pupils taking part from across Bath and North East Somerset, all vulnerable young people who are part of Mentoring Plus’s mentoring programme.

### **Our national consultation activity with NAWE and regional networks**

In addition to our grounded work with organizations in the south-west, we have consulted the wider national community of writers through online campaigns, via regional networks and through face-to-face consultation with NAWE members at conferences. The focal point for the consultations has usually been around our *Creative Writing Awards*, the *Writer Development Canvas* and, more

recently, the *Success Factors* project which emerged from questions about best practice in sustaining support for young writers.

The *Creative Writing Award* emphasizes the importance of the art of writing for pleasure. We began the process of setting up the award in 2016, building directly on findings emerging from our initial consultation work, on expertise within Paper Nations and on models that we’ve been piloting in schools across the academic year. The award for young people aims to encourage and celebrate an exploratory approach to writing. In keeping with this aim, the award does not involve assessment, marking or grading of young people’s creative writing. Currently in the beta stage of creation, the award is described as follows:

*The Award is intended to enrich and enhance young people’s understanding of writing as an artform. It can be delivered in any setting – in the classroom or as an after school activity, at a city farm, youth association, museum or library, by teachers, writers or by a group of parents. As practising writers, young people will be given a notebook in which they record their thoughts, impressions and inspirations for writing, along with snippets of creative pieces, reflecting our belief that children and young people are natural artists and that there are stories everywhere.* (Paper Nations CWA, Working Report 2017).<sup>1</sup>

To complement the Young Person’s Writing Award, we developed an adult certificate in “creative writing education”.<sup>2</sup> The pilot award referenced the emerging Paper Nations evidence base, as well as a wider body of previous research and existing approaches to creative leadership and education, including the Arts Award and the “Teachers as Writers” research report (Cremin et al 2017).

We presented both the adult and young person’s versions of the award to a focus group at the NAWE Conference in 2016. The feedback from the NAWE group on the first draft of the award resulted in the following observations and actions and marked a critical turning point in our process:

- The focus group reminded us that there is a vibrant, rich and long-standing community of experts in this area and suggested that we tap into the constituency that NAWE represents to gather further evidence.

Some people suggested that awards are not always the best route for all young people and that we consider alternative ways for young people to celebrate their achievements. They prompted us to look at alternative ways of describing good practice in creative writing education. For example, what about facilitators who want to use the principles underlying the award, but don't want to run the award itself? Could we present these important and valuable principles in another, more accessible form?

- Drawing from the above observations, we evaluated our approach and decided to temporarily put the award process on hold and produce the *Writer Development Canvas* as a set of underlying standards. We also undertook to produce a benchmark that would be made freely available to anyone developing a creative writing project with young people in or out of school. Bambo Soyinka redrafted the award in the form of a benchmark in 2017, and the Paper Nations team took this out for further consultation. We received more feedback from various groups including participants on the Paper Nations Writing Ambassadors training programme and writers/educators at the English Shared Futures conference.

In 2017, we ran a second consultation exercise at the NAWE conference in York. During this session, we asked participants to respond to six questions relating to good practice in creative writing education, barriers to delivering good practice and potential solutions for a way forward. For the final question, we asked people to identify the one change that they would like to see going forward. Many delegates agreed that they would like to change the way that creative writing is taught in schools.

Specifically, they wanted to see:

- more creative writing in schools, and
- a greater emphasis on the joy of writing.

One of the themes to repeatedly emerge from these discussions is the issue of sustainability and financing. Many creative writing tutors are passionate about the value of what they are doing and are confident in their own approaches and models. What they need however is support to finance, administrate and sustain their efforts. This echoed findings from our grounded

research in the south-west. Given that financing and resourcing can be a make or break issue we established a new project in 2017 called *Success Factors* that will explore possible barriers and solutions in more detail.

Our final consultation activity with NAWE is the Call for Evidence, which is currently live, and will help us to gather further insights from across the country. The Call gives writers and writing practitioners (teachers, community artists, etc.) the opportunity to share their good practice, their process, and their thoughts about creative writing with young people in schools and communities. You can read more about this and how you can get involved later in this briefing paper.

### Evaluating our programme

An independent interim report produced by LKMCo noted that Paper Nations and the wider CWiS programme has “made tangible progress in increasing teachers’ and writers’ access to creative writing networks, and there is fertile soil for further development”.<sup>3</sup> It’s instructive to remember at this juncture that our CWiS programme is a partnership initiative and that this change was only made possible through active collaboration with local organizations and through our key partners – Bath Spa University, Bath Festivals and NAWE. This finding highlights further the crucial contribution that festivals, universities and professional associations such as NAWE play in building and sustaining networks of support for young writers.

LKMCo also reported that “since working with Paper Nations, more people are participating in creative writing more frequently since their involvement with the programme began”. The report indicated that the approaches that we have identified encourage young people to write on their own, i.e. beyond the context of the classroom and even beyond support from a professional writing tutor. This finding is important to us and has informed the development of our final set of outputs as it provides evidence for one of our core goals – enhancing structures of support for creative writing education so as to encourage young people to start, enjoy *and continue* writing.



## Conclusions and Emerging Findings

The aim of this document has been to provide you with an account of our research process and the twists and turns in our journey so far. We will publish the full set of findings emerging from this programme in the Autumn edition of *Writing in Education*. In the meantime, below is a summary of what you have told us so far about your priorities in creative writing education for young people:

- You think that any writing intervention should encourage reading. Young people should be supported to read diversely and widely, to reflect on what constitutes captivating writing.
- You want us to work together to champion and support approaches that are inclusive, playful, and open to fun. There is a feeling that the current educational system is not conducive to creativity.
- You think that it is important to allow room for exploration, curiosity and process. You want us to inspire parents and teachers to write as well, so that they can go on the journey with young people.
- You think that it is important to take a non-judgemental approach: take away the hierarchy; tune into the creative frequency of those around you without regard for their age or stage of writing.
- It's crucial to ensure that there is space for safety, support and community. There should be measures in place that take account of vulnerability and confidentiality. Within out-of-school contexts, it's a good idea to provide an additional person to support young people through their emotional journeys. When running clubs within schools, there should be an additional person equipped to deal with and navigate the pressures of the school environment.
- Finally, it's critical for us to find a way to work together to develop and enhance and provide financial support for those already doing great work in this area. Without resources we cannot achieve our creative ambitions and we cannot provide sustained support for young people.

Following on from our two-year process of research and development, we are now moving towards the

completion of a suite of models and resources that will enhance creative writing provision in schools and communities across the country. All of these resources have their roots in practitioner experience and expertise. As we draw to the conclusion of this programme of work, there is still an opportunity to contribute through our final Call for Evidence. The knowledge, experience and expertise of the wider writer-in-education community has informed our work so far, and will continue to be crucial to our ability to meet our goal of sustaining access to – and enthusiasm for – writing as an exploratory, playful and inclusive practice.

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## I'D LIKE TO GET INVOLVED: FAQs & NEXT STEPS

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### Why do we need your help?

In our conversations with writers and educators thus far, there's one thing that most people agree on: writing for pleasure should be at the heart of any attempt to inspire young writers. We want to create a writing habit for the nation that's about imagination and inclusivity. From this starting point there should be viable options and expert support on hand for young people who want to continue and sustain their practice of writing. To enable this vision to flourish we are gathering, consolidating and sharing evidence so that our approach is grounded in real experience and expertise.

### Your opportunity to contribute – the Call for Evidence

The best way to make a contribution to the work of Paper Nations is through our Call for Evidence. We launched the Call in April 2018 and it will remain live until 1 August 2018. To participate, please visit [www.papernations.org](http://www.papernations.org) and request a form. This means you still have time to join our effort and ensure that your experience and expertise is included in our project.

The Call is a simple questionnaire to give writers and writing practitioners (teachers, community artists, etc.) the opportunity to share their good practice, their process and their thoughts about creative writing with young people in schools and communities.

### How long will the Call for Evidence take to fill in?

The Call for Evidence asks a good number of questions

and will take 30 minutes to one hour depending on how much detail you wish to provide. It is detailed because we want to make the most of the opportunity we have to bring together the best knowledge, practice and insights so that we can have a lasting impact on the creative writing ecology. As an alternative, you can send us an email to [writers@papernations.org](mailto:writers@papernations.org) and we will conduct an interview over the phone or other conferencing setups.

### **Will I be credited for my involvement?**

Answers to the Call will be anonymized, unless you specify you want to be quoted. If you are taking part as a case study, you or your organization will be directly named and credited.

### **What will my contribution help create?**

Using our research and work to date, coupled with this Call for Evidence, we will create resources that will support creative writing throughout the country. The resources will include:

- A *benchmark* that describes good practice principles. This is intended as a resource for anyone who wants to design and deliver a creative writing project or programme with young people. The benchmark will be freely available on the NAWE website from November 2018, and will sit alongside the creative writing benchmarks for undergraduate and postgraduate creative writing on the NAWE website. You can see an example of a benchmark there.
- A series of *case studies* exploring how some of the best creative writing tutors and programmes in the UK put these principles into action. These will be published in 2018 in NAWE's magazine *Writing in Education*.
- An overarching report and guidebook that packages all of the resources together. This will include the *benchmark*, the *case studies* and the *wheel*. We are calling the overarching set of resources the *Writer Development Canvas*. This final set of resources will be authored by Professor Bambo Soyinka et al and will be made available from bookstores and online (final date to be confirmed).

### **Tell me more about the Writer Development Canvas?**

The Writer Development Canvas (WDC) is a *sourcebook* for educators who want to develop or commission writing support programmes for young people. A core aspect of the WDC is the *benchmark* outlining good practice principles in writer development, to be published in October 2018. We want the benchmark to reflect the experience and knowledge of expert writing tutors and organizations across the UK. We've already consulted with over 700 individuals and organizations. But, if your voice has not been heard, it's not too late to get involved. By completing the Call for Evidence, you can make a contribution to the final creative writing benchmark.

### **What is a benchmark and why are they important?**

Benchmarks describe and compare good practice in the development and teaching of subjects or creative initiatives. They are not intended to be prescriptive; rather, they are reference points and guides to good quality. Benchmarks are a common tool within education and the arts. They can be used by anyone who is planning or delivering any kind of creative intervention, activity or course to ensure that they are using evidence-based good practice to inform their work and to check their progress. In artistic projects in particular, benchmarks help individuals and organizations assess and improve their practice.

Following NAWE's Creative Writing Benchmark Statement of 2008, the first ever official Subject Benchmark Statement for undergraduate creative writing courses was published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2016, and there is now a Creative Writing Research Benchmark (NAWE 2018); both are available on the NAWE website. As yet, there is no benchmark for creative writing in schools and/or informal learning contexts. Through the work of Paper Nations, with your help, we intend to change that and to place creativity at the heart of writing education for young people.

### **Can you indicate some expected features of the benchmark?**

The benchmark emphasizes writing for fun, and sees writing as an exploratory, playful and inclusive practice.

It explores principles of writer development across four domains:

1. Creating space to explore writing
2. The art of writing
3. Reading and audiences
4. Inclusivity, Diversity and Innovation

The benchmark takes a spiral form, like a flavour or colour wheel – enabling the educator or learner to revisit the same domain over a number of years with increasing complexity and depth.

For example, the first domain focuses on helping the young writer to develop habits that will enable them to explore writing for fun and, hopefully, continue their exploration through their lifetime. At the entry, primary level of experience, the expectation is that the learner will start the practice of writing in a notebook. After many years of experience, we expect that the writer will have established their own way of creating space and time to do their creative work; they may have joined a group of fellow writers and have more awareness of the wider traditions of literature within which their own writing sits. Every writer's journey through the spiral is different, dependent on their own inclinations and interests.

As the Call for Evidence continues and as we respond to its findings, the four domains of experience that we have identified might change before publication. But for now they offer a useful guide to our thinking and findings so far.

**I'd like to review the benchmark in detail and offer my expertise. Is that possible?**

In the final stages of the project, we will set up a committee to review the benchmark. If you want to express an interest in getting involved, you can email us at [writers@papernations.org](mailto:writers@papernations.org). Advisers will be selected on the basis of experience with the aim of creating a spread of expertise across the community.

**The project has evolved a lot. Can we expect further changes?**

Yes, it is likely that there will be further changes. Our process throughout has been intentionally agile – an

approach which involves listening, responding to findings and allowing room for new insights to emerge. Please expect further changes to the content, form and even titles of our proposed outputs. If you think that we have missed something or not got something right then please get in touch. The only things that will remain constant are the values of exploration, play and inclusivity because if we change these values then we lose the heart of our project.

**What other consultation work has Paper Nations been involved in up to now?**

We have held consultation events and undertaken grounded research in our school and community projects. We're supporting smaller research projects as part of our work to explore more detailed areas of practice. Our most recent consultation event at the NAWE conference in late 2017 has helped to shape the questions that we are asking now. Earlier in 2018, we launched an audit to help us understand the creative writing *provision* that exists for young people, families and communities across the country. Our work is being evaluated by an independent organization, LKMCo.

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## CONTRIBUTE NOW

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Our 2016-18 programme of work is now coming to a close. Our goal has been to work together to enhance provision for young writers across the country. To achieve this we are making one last call to hear from you – writers of all ages and members of all communities, as well as writers and teachers working in the art of writing. Here is how you can get involved:

The *Dare to Write?* Platform is going live this summer. Visit [www.daretowrite.org](http://www.daretowrite.org) to see what's happening and pass on information to your writing communities.

The foundation of the Writer Development Canvas, the **Call for Evidence**, is open until 1 August 2018. If you have something to contribute we hope that you will take the opportunity to share your practice, experience and ideas. For more information about the Call for Evidence, please visit [papernations.org/call-for-evidence](http://papernations.org/call-for-evidence).

For more information about Paper Nations' work or to get involved, please contact us: [writers@papernations.org](mailto:writers@papernations.org)

With your help, we can make sure that the best expertise, knowledge and experience is at the heart of what we produce. We look forward to continuing this conversation online and seeing you at the NAWE conference in November.

## Notes

1. Contributors to the Young People's Award include Bambo Soyinka, Jane Bluett and Janine Amos. We have also discussed the award with Trinity University and with the Children's University to explore how we can link the Award to their existing frameworks.

2. These sessions have been delivered by author Steve Voake from the Creative Writing Faculty at BSU with support from Dr Nick Sorenson at the BS Institute for Education at Bath Spa University as a "Writing Ambassadors Training Scheme" for teachers, writers and writing tutors.

3. The CWiS programme includes First Story. This finding from LKMCo relates both to the work of First Story and Paper Nations.

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## Credits for this article

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