

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

Seeking exciting new voices in fiction writing from the East of England

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) is searching for ambitious fiction writers in the East of England who have the potential to become the next generation of bestselling novelists.

The Escalator Talent Development Scheme - which launched the careers of Michael Donkor, Megan Bradbury, Ruth Dugdall and others - aims to give a helping hand to talented writers who wish to reach the next level on their professional writing journey.

Ten successful applicants will win a year-long package of support including one-to-one mentoring from established writers, a residential retreat with tailored development workshops, peer support and a final showcase to agents and publishers.

NCW particularly encourages applications from writers who have not undertaken a formal creative writing qualification, or whom wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to benefit from this kind of support.

This unique opportunity is offered exclusively to fiction writers living in the Eastern region of England – Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Now in its twelfth year, Escalator has already supported over 100 writers in their creative projects, with many going on to sign with agents, publish and receive awards for their writing.

Past winners include Michael Donkor, author of *Hold*; Megan Bradbury, author of the acclaimed novel *Everyone is Watching*; Guy Saville, author of the international bestseller *The Afrika Reich*; Nicola Upson, Tim Clare, Susan Sellers, Kate Worsley, Ruth Dugdall and Padrika Tarrant.

Confirmed mentors for this year's scheme are Yvette Edwards, Danny Hahn, Anjali Joseph, Ross Raisin and Hayley Webster.

Chris Gribble, chief executive of NCW said:

'It's not easy to break into the world of being a published novelist, but Escalator can make the journey less challenging and a lot more fun!

‘Escalator offers the chance for talented new writers to work with professional writers, meet people in the industry and spend time focusing on their work in a supported and creative way.

‘It’s a very special programme that has seen huge success over the last ten years, bringing writers and stories from the East of England to national and international readerships.’

Ross Raisin is one of this year’s Escalator mentors. He said:

‘One of the trickier conundrums of starting out as a writer is that, over time, you will hopefully gain a small, willing team of skilled professionals to help you and your projects along their way – but at the outset, when you most desire that guidance, you are usually alone, writing into the dark.

‘A good mentoring partnership can be an invaluable way of bolstering the confidence and craft of a new writer, with the added boon for the mentor that it is a lot of fun observing a project, and a writer, gradually taking shape.’

Megan Bradbury is a former Escalator mentee whose debut novel *Everyone is Watching* was published by Picador in 2016. She said:

In 2013, Megan Bradbury won a place on Escalator and a Grant for the Arts to help fund the completion of her first novel. She said:

‘I have always believed in my writing and in this book but all the self-belief in the world won’t pay the bills or show you what to do next. The best solutions to these problems are money and an excellent mentor. Escalator provided me with both. With Cathi Unsworth’s mentorship, and with funding from Arts Council England, I was able to finish my novel. *Everyone Is Watching* will be published by Picador in June.’

The Escalator Talent Development Scheme is supported by Arts Council England and the Leverhulme Trust.

Applications are open now – deadline 5pm on Monday 29 October.

Further information can be found at <https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/escalator-2/> or by calling 01603 877177.

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Notes to Editors

1. Press enquiries to: Steph McKenna, Communications Manager, National Centre for Writing at steph@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk or 01603 877177
2. The National Centre for Writing is a literature development organisation based in Norwich, England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. NCW promotes great literature, inspires

communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. <https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/>

3. The Escalator Talent Development Scheme falls within NCW's remit as a Regional Literature Development Agency. For a full list of other RLDA's and the opportunities they offer emerging writers, visit: <https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/literature-organisations/>
4. The National Centre for Writing's key stakeholder funders are Arts Council England, the University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council.