



National Centre  
for Writing

# The Inside Story

A YEAR IN  
REVIEW  
2024—2025



# About us

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The National Centre for Writing (NCW) champions the development of writers, literary translators, readers and new writing, harnessing the power of storytelling to foster a thriving society and vibrant creative ecology locally, nationally, and internationally.

Based at the historic Dragon Hall in Norwich, NCW is a creatively distinctive and nationally connected centre of excellence. From our outstanding Grade I listed campus in the heart of England's first UNESCO City of Literature, we deliver tangible benefits to writers, literary translators, the literature sector, and our physical and digital communities.

As a hub for national and international literary exchange, NCW plays a central role in Norwich's dynamic literary landscape and contributes to the city's reputation as a world-class UNESCO City of Literature.



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# Contents

Welcome	06
Norwich UNESCO City of Literature	08
Our impact	12
At a glance	14
Artists & events	16
Live events	16
Writing talent & pathways	18
NCW Academy: life-long learning	24
Meet the World: the global stage	26
Digital collections: curating & creating	30
Creative communities	32
Children, young people, schools & libraries	32
Writing for wellbeing & connection	36
Volunteers	40
University of East Anglia: partnership & platforms	42
Funding & supporters	46
Our future	48
Thank you	50

# Welcome

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**T**hank you for taking the time to read our Annual Review, a snapshot of the work emerging from the National Centre for Writing and Norwich UNESCO City of Literature in 2024–25. This is the story of the thousands of writers, participants, and visitors we've supported and welcomed this year, both in our expanded Literature House and through our ever-evolving digital platforms.

Norwich's rich and collaborative ecology makes it a superb place to be a creative citizen, and you'll read here how we play our part with families and communities of all ages. We achieved 'Place of Sanctuary' status in 2024, recognising our commitment to inclusivity and support for people with refugee or asylum seeker status, and through sustained engagement through writing and story-making, we've built confidence, connection, self-expression and imagination in our youngest visitors and our oldest.

We're rooted in Norwich and open to the world: from our position in the east of England, we're proud to look outwards, bringing the world to Norwich and sharing Norwich with the world. This year we welcomed 31 writers and translators in residence to our cottage, from 12 different countries, and shared their words and ideas with international audiences of thousands via our Global Page platform. We forged global conversation and knowledge exchange via our International Literature Exchange programme. We delivered a new UNESCO City of Literature strategy for the city, devised in conversation with a wide range of civic stakeholders and citizens: this five-year plan will help us deliver on a shared 10-year vision to ensure Norwich's literary future is as bold as its past.

Here at NCW, we're creating the blueprint for what a 21st century centre for writing can do, on our doorstep and far beyond. Dragon Hall's story is one of resilience and reinvention, and with the 600th anniversary of this historic building on the vista of 2027, we're proud to be the stewards of its present chapter. By re-imagining and animating this place afresh — with a new podcast studio, writers' rooms, community kitchen and cottage — we're

ensuring it is fit for the future and open to all.

We're ambitious for our artform, committed to our mission to support writers and connect their work with readers and audiences, and galvanised by the opportunities and partnerships driving us into our next phase.

As you will read, our work is only possible thanks to the vast array of writers, partnerships, supporters, funders, communities and participants, our team, our volunteers, our board: we are indebted to their presence, support, enthusiasm, and commitment. It takes a constellation to build this universe, and I take great pleasure in thanking every single star.

Onwards!



**Peggy Hughes**  
Chief Executive

## Our Board of Trustees

**This year, we said farewell to several long-standing Trustees who have supported our work and vision over many years. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Sarah Barrow, Isobel Dixon, and Andrew Yuill for their dedication and contributions. At the same time, we are delighted to welcome our new Trustees: Kim Clayden; Ioannis Kalkounos, Programme Manager at Edinburgh Futures Institute; Catherine Little, Executive Director at Broadland Housing Association; Jeremy McNulty; and Prof Catherine Richardson, Pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of East Anglia.**

ESCALATOR FELLOWS 2024/25 AT THE LONDON LIBRARY © KASHIF HAQUE



PICTURE BOOK ADVENTURES AT THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



# Norwich UNESCO City of Literature

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**N**ational Centre for Writing is the Focal Office for Norwich UNESCO City of Literature — a city built on stories, filled with creative minds who believe that reading, writing and their lifelong benefits should be nurtured for everyone.

This UNESCO Creative Cities designation is both a lens and an inspiration for the activities you will read about in this Year of Review: opportunities for writers and literary translators; public events; life-long learning; podcasts and digital commissions; community partnerships; inspiring children and young people; connecting with schools and libraries; and opening the doors to England's first Literature House at our home, Dragon Hall.

## A vision for the next ten years

Following a calendar of celebrations marking ten years since Norwich's became England's first City of Literature (2012), 2024–25 focused on developing the city's literary vision with a range of partners, culminating in the creation of '**Writing the Future: Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Strategy 2025–30**'.

Developed through over **80 consultations** with creative and education partners, bookshops, libraries, publishers, and local authorities, the strategy will be delivered by the NCW in partnership with Norwich Business Improvement District, the University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council, and Norfolk County Council Library Services.

The strategy both celebrates Norwich's literary strengths and acknowledges its challenges. It provides a shared framework to unite the city's talents and resources, advocating for reading, writing, education, creativity, and placemaking.

Four strategic priorities aim to build on Norwich's international reputation as a hub for literary arts while ensuring fairer, broader access for people of all backgrounds, ages, and geographies. Collective action is central to the strategy, with organisations and individuals working together to nurture a culture of reading and writing for pleasure.

New initiatives announced include:

- A City of Literature Champions network of trained volunteers across Norwich, building on successful community-based reading and writing projects.
- The launch of a 'Creative Writing in the Community' PhD placement with the UEA.
- A refreshed campaign to animate the city's events and public spaces through partnerships with Norfolk Libraries, Norwich Business Improvement District, VisitNorwich, and others.

**'I want Norwich to be recognised for what it is: a centre of innovation and creativity, as well as a very historic and beautiful city to visit. We have a huge amount to be proud of, but we need joined-up action at all levels to unlock it'**

— ALICE MACDONALD MP, NORWICH NORTH, SPEAKING IN PARLIAMENT





CITY OF STORIES AURAL © VISTNORWICH



JAMES BRIDGE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO, ALICE MACDONALD, AMP, NORTH NORTH; PEGGY HUGHES, CEO OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING © DAVID KIRKCHAM, FISHEY IMAGES

## A year of literary life

Literary activity across the city reached its busiest and most vibrant level yet. **1,300+ people attended the City of Literature weekend** at Norfolk & Norwich Festival, programmed by NCW. **UEA Live** presented authors including Rebecca F. Kuang, Julia Armfield, and Nick Hornby, **TOAST Poetry** brought performances to multiple stages, and The Book Hive hosted a lively year-round programme, including the **Mannington Book Bash**. In its inaugural year the **Norwich Book Festival**, led by The Forum, animated multiple venues across the city.

From the Cathedral to coffee shops, pubs, and the lanes in between, pages were turned, keyboards clicked, and conversations flourished — a visible reminder of literature’s presence and the **1,000+ working writers and translators** who call Norfolk home.

Across the county, Norfolk Library Service supported **60,000 users**, with **9,000+ pupils** taking part in the **Summer Reads Challenge** — achieving up to 24% engagement in Norfolk schools, compared to just 9% nationally.

13

ARTS COUNCIL-FUNDED LITERARY EVENT PROVIDERS IN NORFOLK

(Arts Council England, data explorer)

14%

OF NORWICH RESIDENTS ATTEND LITERARY EVENTS ANNUALLY, AMONGST THE HIGHEST NATIONALLY

(Creative Policy & Evidence Centre)

£

NORWICH RESIDENTS SPEND THE MOST PER CAPITA ON CULTURE IN THE UK

(Norwich City Council, 'Action Plan for Culture')

**‘A grandfather named Kostiantyn with shaking Hands writes through rubble and ruin of a city he once knew**

**A girl named Evie writes because she has**

**hands and the eyes to see that she can’**

— EXCERPT FROM ‘A GIRL NAMED JULIAN’ BY EVIE PARKER HORNSBY

### It takes a village: Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Ambassadors

Norwich’s City of Literature status is strengthened by a vibrant network of Ambassadors— organisations and businesses that celebrate and promote the city’s literary life.

From writers, publishers, and bookshops to libraries, venues, and charities, Ambassadors bring literature into schools, stages, and streets, helping to ensure it remains central to Norwich’s identity.

Up to 100 organisations and individuals have access to communications resources, sharing their work as City of Literature Ambassadors. This enables them to grow shared audiences, attract new visitors and customers, and contribute to something truly distinctive about Norwich.

### Evie Parker Hornsby: Young Norfolk Laureate & Foyle Young Poet



Over the past year, young poet Evie Parker Hornsby has been an active participant in NCW’s youth programme Lit From The Inside and has received dedicated mentoring through her role as a Young Norfolk Laureate. During this time, she was commissioned to write and perform her poem ‘A Girl Named Julian’ for the launch of the new Norwich UNESCO City of Literature strategy.

Evie’s emerging talent has since gained national recognition: she was awarded a commendation in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, placing her among just 85 commended poets selected from more than 10,000 entries worldwide.

MO AND THE RED BALLOON AT NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL © LUKE WITCOMB



NORWICH BOOK FESTIVAL © LUKE WITCOMB



PAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE IN LEEUWARDEN © NATALIA BALANINA



# Our impact



## Artists

**353**

ARTISTS AND PRACTITIONERS ENGAGED

**122**

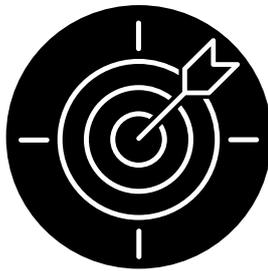
NEW COMMISSIONS

**31**

WRITERS AND TRANSLATORS IN RESIDENCE

**1,503**

ARTIST EMPLOYMENT DAYS



## Audiences

**11,417**

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE MEMBERS AND PARTICIPANTS

**3,019+**

FREE DROP-IN VISITS TO DRAGON HALL

**329,675**

TUNED IN TO DIGITAL PROGRAMMES

**43%**

OF TICKET BOOKERS FROM NORWICH

**31%**

OF TICKET BOOKERS ACROSS THE UK

**5%**

OF TICKET BOOKERS INTERNATIONALLY



## Reach

**76,064**

WRITING HUB VIEWS

**159,347**

WEBSITE SESSIONS

**53,712**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

**71**

STORIES IN THE PRESS

**25**

PODCAST EPISODES

**86,118**

PODCAST LISTENS



## Communities

**4,174+**

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED

**8,763**

ADULTS PARTICIPATING IN CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

**28**

VOLUNTEERS

**1,355**

VOLUNTEER HOURS

**90%**

AGREE NCW ENHANCES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN NORWICH

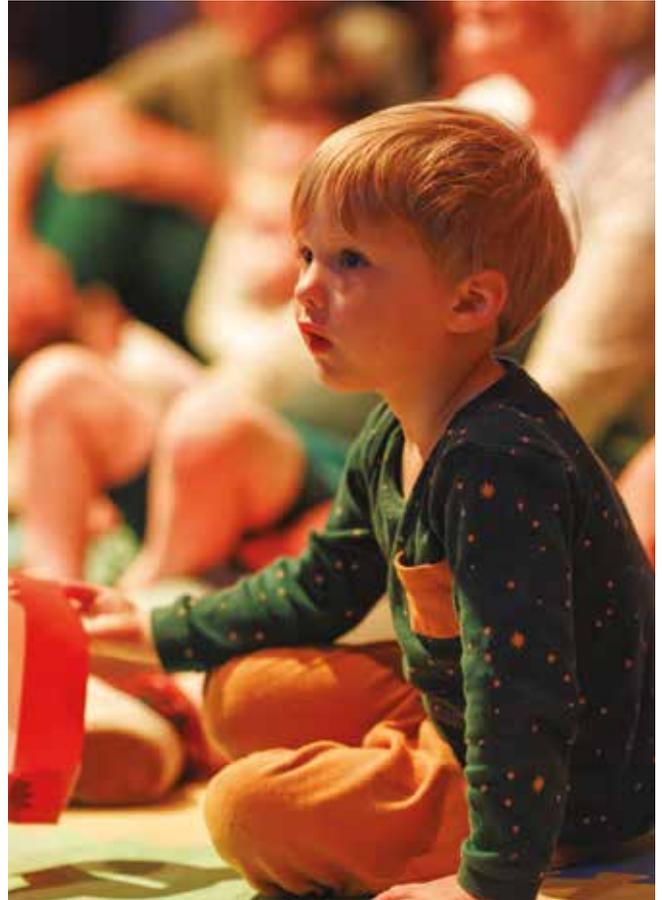
**92%**

FEEL NCW IS WELCOMING FOR EVERYONE

DARREN LEEDER WINS THE HISTORY & TRADITION AWARD AT THE EAST ANGLIAN BOOK AWARDS © ANDI SAPEY



PICTURE BOOK ADVENTURES AT THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



ESCALATOR NEW WRITING FELLOWS SHOWCASE AT THE LONDON LIBRARY © KASHIF HAQUE



# At a glance: April 2024–March 2025

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**T**his year marked a significant milestone as we completed the transformation of Dragon Hall into a cultural venue open to visitors, audiences, students, residents, readers, writers, and translators. As England's first Literature House, it provides a physical base that connects writers and translators with audiences and the wider UNESCO City of Literature network.

NCW at Dragon Hall now offers a year-round programme of events and initiatives alongside new facilities, including a Writers' Room with free, bookable desk spaces and access to our garden, giving writers the time and space to work. A redeveloped public entrance on King Street features a shop front, box office, and workshop space, welcoming visitors

to explore the building and Norwich's creative community. We also installed a podcast suite for recording and editing *The Writing Life* and upgraded our kitchen to support income generation and community programmes.

Open for free drop-in visits three days a week for over half the year, we have begun developing a community and visitor engagement programme that connects the building's past with its current and future uses.

Over the last twelve months, we commissioned new work from international writers in residence through Meet the World; led courses, workshops, mentoring, and resources via NCW Academy, including a popular new 30-day online writing challenge; and supported local readers and writers through projects such as the Real Living Wage Week poem, Young Poet Laureates, Wandering Words (a self-led literary walking tour), and Words of Welcome in local libraries. We have also continued to strengthen cultural connections in Norwich by delivering bespoke projects that increase opportunities for underserved communities.

Organisationally, we remain stable and vibrant, though like the wider creative sector, income generation through ticket sales and fundraising remains challenging. We continue to encourage participation and accessibility through Pay What You Can ticket options, free and low-cost resources, and community-based activities. For artists, we prioritise talent development and sector impact initiatives, including the Escalator Fellowships, Emerging Translator Mentorships, International Literature Exchange and international residencies across the UNESCO Cities of Literature network.

Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this exciting work, establishing Dragon Hall as a landmark cultural venue that roots the National Centre for Writing in Norwich while connecting us to the world.



THE SPECTACULAR SUIT AT THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



SARAH PERRY LAUNCHES ENLIGHTENMENT AT NORWICH CATHEDRAL © ANDI SAREY

# Artists & events

## Live events

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**W**e believe literature — whether reading, writing, translation, or storytelling — is a portal to new ideas, places, and voices. At the heart of our year-round programme are literary events that bring emerging and established writers to engaged audiences of readers, writers, and inquisitive thinkers.

Across the east of England, NCW hosted **48 in-person talks and performances**, creating rich encounters between those who read and those who write. From beneath the vaulted medieval beams of Dragon Hall, to cathedral roof bosses, sunny festival skies, and tented stages, audiences experienced inspiring fiction, memoir, non-fiction, poetry, theatre, and the creative spaces in between.

2024–25 opened with a standout event at Norwich Cathedral, where Sarah Perry chose NCW to launch her latest novel, *Enlightenment*. In May, **1,061 attendees joined 15 events** during the **City of Literature weekend**, part of our ongoing partnership with the Norfolk & Norwich Festival. Highlights included an international edition of **Page Against the Machine**, produced with local independent bookshop The Book Hive and sister Cities of Literature Wrocław, Nottingham, and Leeuwarden.

Summer brought dynamic poetry and literary experimentation, featuring **Bad Betty Press**, the **European Poetry Festival**, and Daljit Nagra at Lowestoft's **First Light Festival**. We also celebrated the legacy of literary giant and translation trailblazer W. G. Sebald, founding director of the British Centre for Literary Translation.

Autumn invited keen minds to explore challenging forms and big ideas, with events including an evening with Ali Smith in partnership with the University of East Anglia, and a night of climate fiction at Dragon Hall. We showcased some of the finest new voices from the east of England and beyond during the inaugural **Norwich Book Festival** and staged *More...Ghost Stories by Candlelight* in collaboration with HighTide. The year of headline events concluded with Emma Healey — Norwich resident, Sunday Times bestseller, Costa First Novel Award winner, and UEA alumna — launching her latest novel, *Sweat*.

**48**  
LIVE TALKS OR  
PERFORMANCES DELIVERED

**81%**  
NET PROMOTER SCORE

**92%**  
OF ATTENDEES WANTED TO  
'SEE MORE THINGS LIKE THIS'

**83%**  
FELT INSPIRED BY  
THE EVENTS

**96%**  
ENJOYED THEIR VISIT

**11,417**  
IN-PERSON AUDIENCE  
MEMBERS AND PARTICIPANTS

**'The Bad Betty Showcase was an excellent event, beautifully curated and very welcoming'**  
— AUDIENCE MEMBER

AUDIENCES IN THE SPIEGELTENT FOR THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



DIANA EVANS ON STAGE AT DRAGON HALL © NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING



PAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE AT THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



SUBVERSIVE WOMEN EVENT AT NORWICH BOOK FESTIVAL © LUKE WITCOMB



# Writing talent & pathways

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**T**hrough collaboration and innovation, NCW leads Norwich and the east of England as a premier UK hub where writers and writing thrive. We provide vital support for writers and literary translators at every stage of their careers, commissioning and producing new work while offering platforms and funding for artists to develop and share their creativity.

The literary industry is competitive, and while talent is everywhere, opportunities are not. NCW bridges that gap through year-round digital and in-person programmes, including residencies, exchanges, mentoring, and workshops, creating pathways for literary artists from all backgrounds. In 2024-25, we engaged **353 artists and practitioners**, including **31 writers and translators** in residence, and commissioned **122 new works**.

## Escalator New Writing Fellowships

The Escalator New Writing Fellowships are an annual programme celebrating East Anglian writers whose voices are underrepresented on UK bookshelves. Offering unpublished fiction writers a transformative opportunity, the programme provides professional mentoring, networking, and industry skills sessions, equipping writers for the realities of a career as an author.

Described by one alumnus as a 'kitemark of quality,' the Escalator Fellowships are widely respected by publishing professionals across the East of England and nationally. In 2025, we expanded support to **ten Fellows** for the first time since the pandemic and reinstated an industry-focused London showcase event at The London Library.



PHOTOGRAPHER & WRITER ALI SMITH

## 'If you want to support culture, then Escalator will practically guarantee a return'

— GEORGE HARRISON, ESCALATOR ALUMNI & AUTHOR OF SEASON

### Alumni Spotlight

Muti'ah Badruddeen (pictured below) is a Nigerian writer exploring African and Muslim womanhood. Her debut self-published novel *Rekiya & Z* and short fiction have already achieved numerous accolades. During Escalator, Muti'ah's novel in progress, *A Bowl of River Water*, was shortlisted for the Women's Prize Discoveries 2025. She said: 'There are opportunities you don't let yourself believe you could get, even as you apply for them. I am blown away by the thought that the story that began with me honouring my grandmother's life was considered worthy of the shortlist.'

### Escalator: 20 years of impact\*

**57%**

PUBLISHED

**42%**

AGENTED

**70%**

IMPROVED LITERARY NETWORKS

**30%**

HAVE WON LITERARY AWARDS

**51%**

PAID TO PERFORM AT FESTIVALS

**85%**

FEEL MORE CONFIDENT IN WRITING

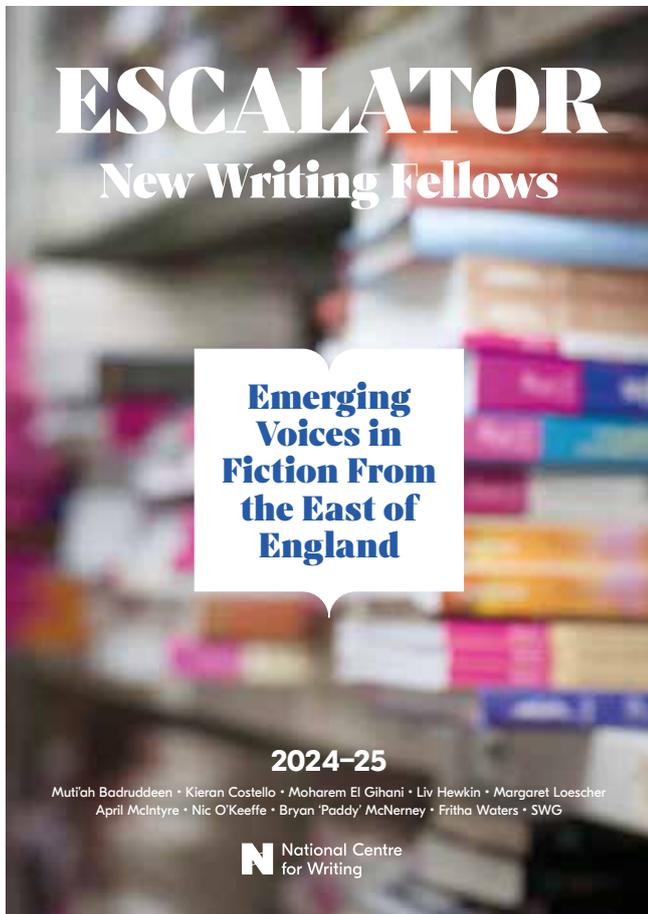
**100%**

STILL WRITING

**76%**

FEEL ESCALATOR HELPED OVERCOME BARRIERS TO THEIR WRITING GOALS

\*Survey of 2005–2023 alumni



**ESCALATOR**  
New Writing Fellows

**Emerging Voices in Fiction From the East of England**

**2024–25**

Muti'ah Badruddeen • Kieran Costello • Moharem El Gihani • Liv Hewkin • Margaret Loescher  
April McIntyre • Nic O'Keefe • Bryan 'Paddy' McNerney • Fritha Waters • SWG

**N** National Centre for Writing



MUTIAH BADRUDDIEN, ESCALATOR FELLOW

## East Anglian Book Awards

The East Anglian Book Awards celebrate the books and writers who have been shaped by, and have helped shape, the literary culture of East Anglia. A long-standing partnership between the *Eastern Daily Press* and the National Centre for Writing in association with the University of East Anglia, the awards shine a spotlight on the region's vibrant literary scene.

The 2024–25 awards marked the seventeenth year of this celebrated programme, which has showcased over **200 titles and 150 authors to date**. In 2024, a celebratory event was hosted at Dragon Hall, where **19 shortlisted authors** across six categories attended a networking reception before sharing their work with over 100 attendees. Four category judges were UEA staff or alumni, alongside more than half of the shortlisted authors.

*Wild East*, the soaring debut YA verse-novel by Ashley Hickson-Lovence, was crowned Book of the Year.

## Emerging Translator Mentorships

The Emerging Translator Mentorships (ETM) offer **eight language-specific mentorships** each year for UK and international translators working into English. In 2024–25, we also offered a mentorship strand dedicated to D/deaf, disabled, or neurodivergent translators in any language for a second year.

Mentees receive bespoke guidance to refine their manuscripts and convene at NCW, the London Book Fair, the London-based Assembly of Literary Translators, and two online industry weekends featuring talks and workshops.

Over the year, alumni and mentors achieved significant success, including multiple publications and debuts. Highlights include Kotryna Garanasvili and Daisy Rockwell contributing provocations on translation for *Words Without Borders*; Kate Webster and Deborah Smith shortlisted for the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation 2024; Jeremy Tiang winning an Obie Award; Sean Gasper Bye receiving a PEN Translates award; and Victoria Issa Yacoub being shortlisted for the inaugural PEN Presents x International Booker Prize for her translation of *The Light* by Palestinian author Israa Kalash.

# 100%

of emerging translators:

- ...DEVELOPED CONFIDENCE
- ...ACCESSED NEW OPPORTUNITIES
- ...IMPROVED NETWORKS
- ...GREW CAREER KNOWLEDGE

**‘I am so grateful to East Anglia for the permission it has given me to be a writer and to experiment and explore with this story that hopes to capture the magic and literary prowess of this region’**

— ASHLEY HICKSON-LOVENCE, AUTHOR OF *WILD EAST* (BOOK OF THE YEAR, EAST ANGLIAN BOOK AWARDS 2024)

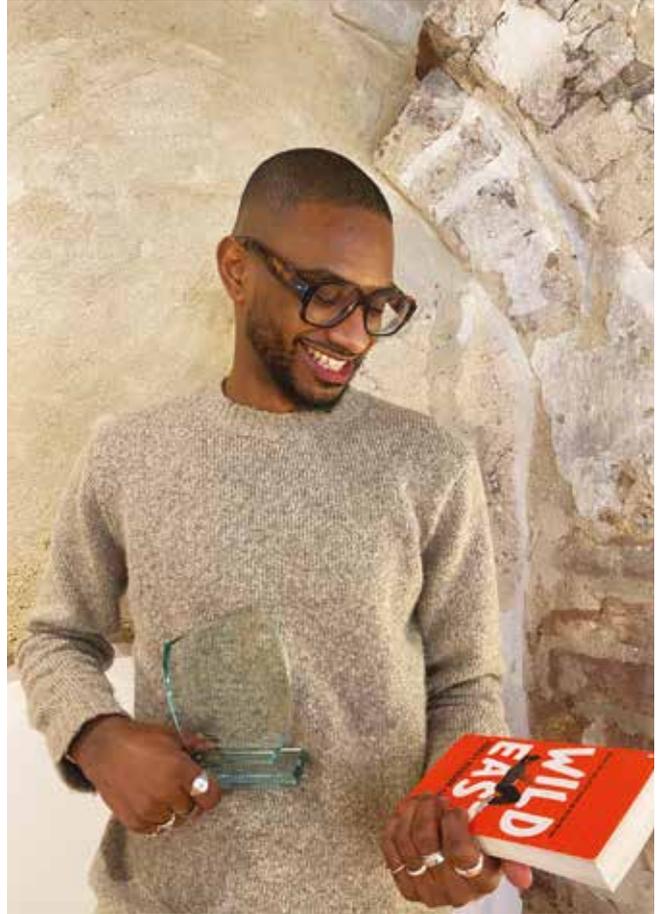
**‘Everything I experienced and learned truly feels like a gift that keeps on giving — so much of what was shared by the more experienced translators continues to resonate and sink in’**

— JILLY BONG, 2024–25 MENTEE TRANSLATING FROM CHINESE TO ENGLISH

SEAN G. BYE, EMERGING TRANSLATOR MENTEE © RANDI BYE



ASHLEY HICKSON-LOVENCE WINS BOOK OF THE YEAR AT THE EAST ANGLIAN BOOK AWARDS 2024/25



TRANSLATOR ILLY BONG AND HER MENTOR, JEREMY TIANG © ANDI SAREY



## Partnerships and collaboration

We stand alongside national and international partners who share our vision for a more equitable literary landscape — one where new writers, literary translators, and those who support them are nurtured and connected.

This year, we coordinated the Literary Translation Centre at the **London Book Fair**, the UK's leading symposium for translation professionals. Across **three days of talks, alongside nine partner organisations**, we explored both the craft and structures of literary translation at the UK's largest book event.

We also launched the latest iteration of a decade-long partnership with British Council called the **International Literature Exchange (ILX)**, bringing **32 literature professionals** worldwide together to learn, exchange expertise and experience, devise collaborations, and build international networks. The programme also showcased the ILX10: a selection of **ten exciting, dynamic, and thought-provoking early-career writers** based in the UK whose work has the powerful potential to speak to and engage with global literary audiences. The list, which showcases writers of prose, poetry, creative non-fiction, and those working across intersections of form, was curated by the UK Cities of Literature.

Regionally, we collaborated with the University of East Anglia to present the digital **BCLT Summer School**, delivering workshops and plenary events to **458 translators** from around the world.

**‘My goal has always been to be a part of conversations that resonate across borders. This programme will give me a platform to engage in political dialogues with my contemporaries who have very different experiences and perspectives to myself’**  
— **AFSHAN D'SOUZA-LODHI, ILX10**



LUCY HOLLAND

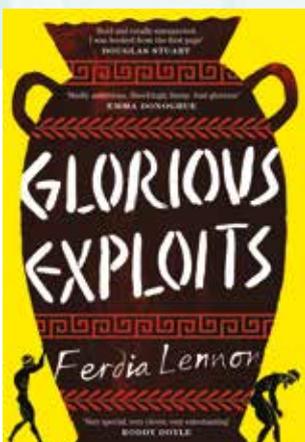
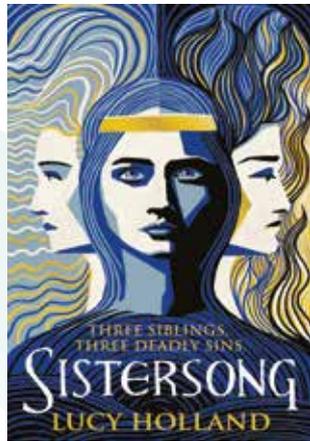
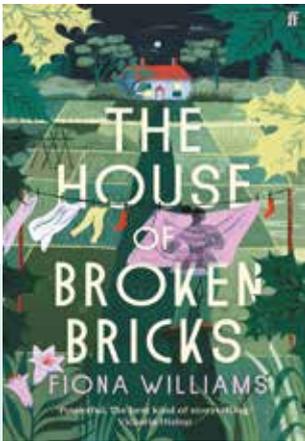


TICE CIN © DILLON KALYABE

AFSHAN D'SOUZA-LODHI @VOUCEFHADIAZI



DEREK OWUSU



AYANNA LLOYD BANWO © STUART SIMPSON - PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE



# NCW Academy: life-long learning

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**N**CW Academy is our home for aspiring creative writers, and anyone interested in the craft and industry of writing. Offering a mix of free and paid resources, including workshops, tutored courses, mentoring, and more, NCW Academy supports writers at every stage.

In 2024–25, our life-long learning opportunities expanded to include new genres and formats: six-week courses, evening sessions, one-off workshops, online resources and the launch of a 30-day writing challenge in March 2025. Delivered bi-monthly, **The Writing Life Challenge** offers 30 original writing tasks in written, video, audio, and visual form for just £1 per day, enjoyed by over **581 writers** to date. We also commissioned new self-paced online courses which were enjoyed by **2,009 students**.

NCW has partnered with the University of East Anglia for many years to deliver online tutored creative writing courses. Across terms of up to 18 weeks, students receive regular one-to-one feedback on their writing from award-winning tutors and industry experts. In 2024–25, we ran **28 online tutored courses for 363 students**. **31 UEA alumni** contributed to NCW Academy, bringing experience and insight from a world-leading institution for creative writing tuition.

## What our students say

**97%**

HAVE HAD A POSITIVE OVERALL EXPERIENCE

**97%**

FEEL THEY HAVE IMPROVED THEIR WRITING SKILLS

**98%**

WOULD RECOMMEND TO FRIENDS OR FAMILY

**88%**

RATED GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY

This personalised guidance, rarely found in online courses, offers tailored insights that elevate both the learning experience and the quality of students' writing. In a crowded and competitive market, the combined reputations of NCW and UEA serve as a hallmark of quality, setting Academy apart from commercial alternatives.

Since early 2024, a generous grant has allowed NCW Academy to expand the range and formats of its courses and workshops. New six-week short courses offer focused tuition and expert guidance over a shorter period at a lower price point, covering themes such as editing, starting a novel, mastering the first person, and nature writing.

Alongside these, we delivered a year-round calendar of **13 workshops and masterclasses for 179 writers**, exploring specific areas of genre and craft, including memoir, comedy, short stories, and non-fiction. Tutors included UEA alumni Rosie Andrews and Emma Healey, bringing expert insight and industry experience to every session.

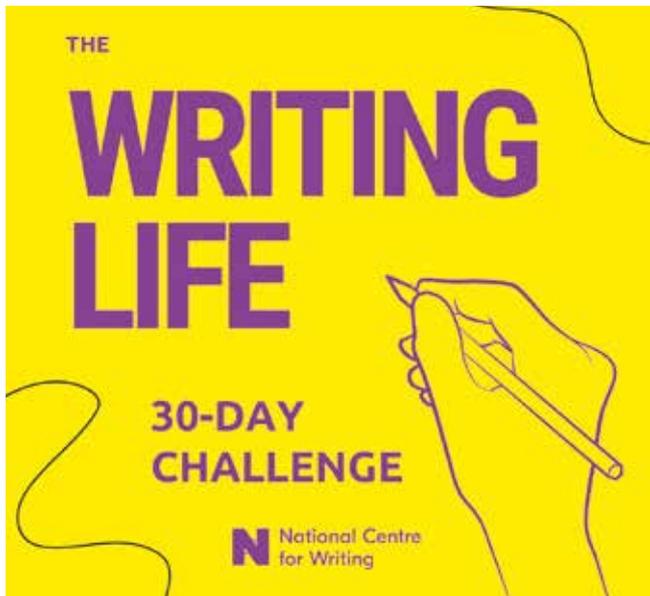
**'I found it to be a brilliant step-by-step framework for writing. Well-paced, clear instructions, helpful back-up material and all at an amazing price'**

— PARTICIPANT, THE WRITING LIFE CHALLENGE

DAVE RUDDEN



IAN NETTLETON © ANDI SAFEY



JINI REDDY © LUCY KANE



SANFANU BHATT TACHARYA



ONECHUKWU NZELU © ALEX DOUGLAS



# Meet the World: the global stage

**M**eet the World is the home of NCW's work on the international stage. Rooted in Norwich UNESCO City of Literature, but with a global reach, we are proud to collaborate with writers, translators, and organisations from many languages and cultures through online events, residencies, and new writing.

## Residencies

We run one of the UK's leading literature residency programmes. Since 2018, **more than 70 residencies** have taken place at our dedicated cottage at Dragon Hall, and in 2020 we pioneered a new form of virtual residency in response to the pandemic. International partnerships and collaborations are central to this work, particularly through the UNESCO Cities of Literature network and beyond.

Residencies provide writers and translators with the time and space to immerse themselves in their craft and pursue ambitious projects. International residencies are especially valuable, enabling creative exchange across literary traditions, networks, and readerships. For translators, they offer deep engagement with another language and culture, enriching both their practice and perspective.

**'Funded residency time is the best thing that can be offered to translators and helps remedy some of the issues within the industry'**

— NADIYAH ABDULLATIF,  
MAURITIAN TRANSLATOR

**'A horizon-broadening insight into some rather amazing minds!'**

— AUDIENCE MEMBER, THE GLOBAL PAGE

**31**  
RESIDENCIES

**12**  
INTERNATIONAL

**12**  
COUNTRIES  
REPRESENTED

In 2024–25, our residency partnerships spanned the UNESCO Cities of Literature network, public funders, leading literature venues such as Passa Porta, and the pan-European RECIT network of translation houses. Through these collaborations, we welcomed international writers and translators to Norwich and connected them with local institutions, artists, and audiences. At the same time, we created pathways for UK talent to access global opportunities, including residencies for Yassmin Abdel-Magied at in Brussels and Kate Brook in Québec City of Literature.

Closer to home, the **Visible Communities** programme offers dedicated residencies for UK-based literary translators from diaspora backgrounds and lesser-translated languages.



## Bogs & Broads: A Norwich–Tartu Collaboration

UK poet Penny Boxall and Estonian writer–translator Maarja Pärtna took part in an NCW-led exchange between the UNESCO Cities of Literature in Norwich and Tartu. Their residencies inspired new work for Tartu's Prima Vista Literary Festival and culminated in Bogs & Broads, a live poetry event at Dragon Hall exploring the shared landscapes of Norfolk and Estonia's wetlands.

WRITER, PRODUCER & CAMPAIGNER SIANA BANGURA © CHLOE DEAKIN PHOTOGRAPHY



RESIDENT TERROLD YAM WITH ASSOCIATE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR KATE GRIFFIN IN NORWICH



RESIDENTS PENNY BOXALL AND MAARIA PÁRTHA VISIT HICKLING BROAD





SOIE AND CHRISTINA NG, WRITERS IN RESIDENCE



RESIDENT NADYAH ABDULLATIF



RESIDENT LEON VERRAEST © MARIANA SA



# Digital collections: creating and curating new work

**W**hether working with community groups, young people, aspiring writers, or established literary translators, NCW produces and presents a wide range of creative output. This includes commissions and curated work, **The Writing Life** podcast, learning resources, articles, and the **World, Meet Norwich** series.

In 2024–25, our commissioned work comprised **39 original writing commissions, digital and print publications, 25 podcast episodes, and six video broadcasts**, reaching audiences across Norwich, the UK, and internationally.

**63,422**

YOUTUBE VIEWS

**94,336**

UNIQUE WEB VISITORS

**35,282**

E-NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

**86,118**

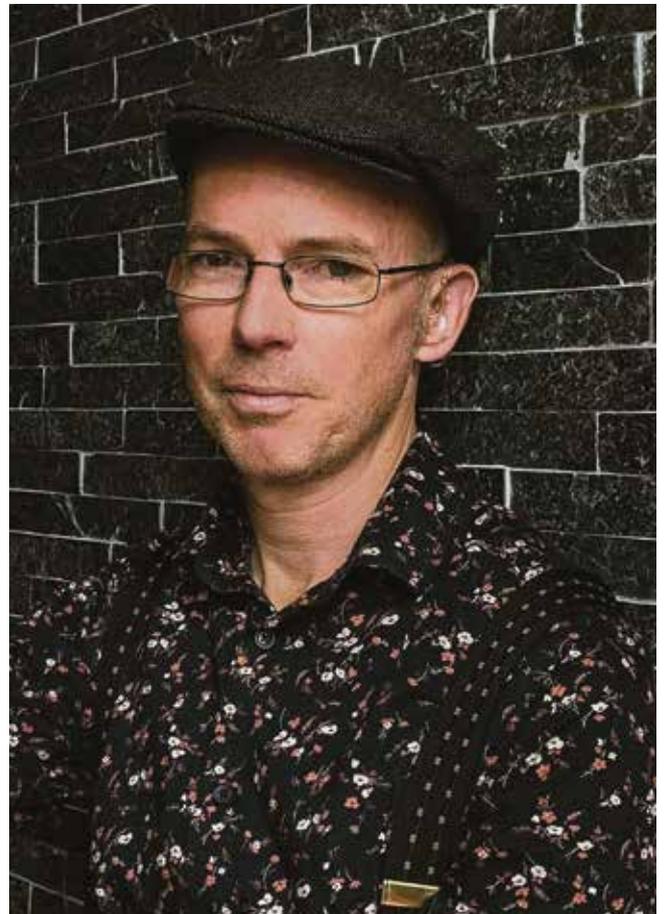
PODCAST LISTENERS

**53,713**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS



NCW ACADEMY TUTOR MELISSA FU © SOPHIE DAVIDSON



NOVELIST & NCW PATRON JON MCGREGOR

## The Writing Hub

Launched in summer 2023, The Writing Hub is NCW's platform for showcasing new work across media, from commissions and learning resources to reflections on Norwich by international residents and young people, and creative explorations of Dragon Hall's heritage. In 2024–25, **132 new pieces** were presented, reaching **79,009 readers**.

Highlights from the year included:

- Curated reading lists celebrating events such as Pride Month, Halloween, and publications by Norwich-based writers.
- Writing tips and place-based reflections from artists in residence in Singapore.
- Practical advice on building a writing routine, complementing the launch of The Writing Life 30-Day Challenge.
- Profiles of British writers engaging with global themes, selected by UK UNESCO Cities of Literature for the International Literature Exchange.

## Wandering Words

Wandering Words is a dynamic physical and digital walking tour of poems inspired by locations across Norwich UNESCO City of Literature. In 2024, two new commissions by Cat Woodward and Martin Figura were added.

2,000 physical maps were distributed at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, inviting visitors to explore Norwich's historic streets and experience poems in situ, while 1,155 digital listeners engaged with the trail online. The project was highlighted by VisitEngland and VisitBritain, showcasing Norwich's poets and literary heritage to a wider audience.



## The Writing Life

The Writing Life is NCW's fortnightly podcast for writers, exploring craft, career pathways, and inspiration. Guests include writers and industry professionals, sharing insights on theme, structure, routine, language, character, and genre-specific techniques.

Complementing NCW Academy and our year-round events, the podcast is produced in a new studio at Dragon Hall. In 2024–25, we released **25 episodes featuring 31 guests**, amassing **86,118** listens. Popular episodes included 'Advice for emerging writers' with Benjamin Johncock & Megan Bradbury and 'Developing your creative practice' with writer and producer Julia Bird.

**'I must tell the news  
– it's Spring!**

**Look, here is the fragrant  
winking woodruff,**

**there the loveage  
waxing lush, and**

**high in the yew a haughty  
blackbird: chuff chuff chuff.**

**I am a sprightly thing,  
a secret note**

**dropped from Nature's  
catalogue.**

**You are a lucky man, Bishop.**

**Can you speak? Arise,  
I'll instruct you.'**

— EXTRACT FROM 'CUCKOO CONVERSES  
WITH A BISHOP' BY CAT WOODWARD

# Creative communities

## Visitors, children, young people & schools

---

**T**his year, Dragon Hall reopened for free drop-in visits from Easter onwards, welcoming **3,019 visitors**, from local neighbours and families to international tourists. School groups also brought the building to life, animating its history and transforming it into a living Literature House filled with stories, writing, and community connection.

Writers now have new ways to call Dragon Hall home. Our free **Writers' Room was booked 912 times**, filling 74% of available slots and providing a quiet, supportive, and collaborative space for creative work.

**90%**

OF VISITORS AGREE THAT  
NCW ENHANCES A SENSE OF  
COMMUNITY IN NORWICH

**92%**

OF VISITORS FEEL  
NCW IS WELCOMING  
FOR EVERYONE

To further foster a sense of community, our free monthly **Dragon Hall Socials** brought together over **453 writers and creatives**, creating opportunities to connect, share ideas, and celebrate a love of books. Increased engagement with Dragon Hall has also benefited the surrounding local economy: **20% of visitors shopped in Norwich**, and **24% visited a café, bar, or restaurant** alongside their visit.

**'I really liked how just enough support was given and how we had a choice if we wanted to share or not'**

— YOUNG WRITER

**'Free - so great for financial accessibility. Super friendly and informative staff. Amazing building. My daughter loved it!'**

— VISITOR

**'Really appreciate having the dedicated space to write at Dragon Hall - booking a room meant I could discipline myself to write regularly... very motivating to be writing alongside others'**

— WRITERS ROOM USER

**40+**

ARTISTS WORKED WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**4,174**

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED

**18**

WORKSHOPS AT DRAGON HALL REACHED 308 YOUNG LEARNERS

**576**

YOUNG WRITERS EXPLORED FREE, SELF-PACED ONLINE COURSES

## Children & families

NCW uses words, stories, and reading to build confidence, self-expression, communication, and creativity from an early age, encouraging families to engage with Dragon Hall and cultural spaces more broadly. These accessible activities are significant in Norwich, a designated 'cold spot' for social mobility (Social Mobility Index, 2016). Furthermore, 11 of 13 wards are below the national average for reading and writing attainment at KS2 (Norwich City Council). NCW is one of many regionwide collaborators working to address these long-standing educational and social challenges.

This year, our family programme expanded to include **22 free Family Open Days** during school holidays, offering workshops, play, and activities across the building and garden. Visitors experienced evolving trails and written resources — many co-created with young people and community groups — providing fresh perspectives on the building and its stories. The garden has become an essential part of this welcome, offering much-needed green space in a Norwich ward identified by Friends of the Earth as lacking such provision.

## Young people

Our year-long engagement programme, **Lit From the Inside**, brought together **13 young people aged 14–17** for a year of creativity, collaboration, and behind-the-scenes experiences of working in an arts organisation. Participants staged an open-mic-inspired performance at Dragon Hall for 45 friends, met and worked with 14 writers and creative professionals, and attended inspiring events with authors R.F. Kuang and Val McDermid. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: **100% of the cohort reported that the programme increased their awareness of potential cultural careers** and helped them feel more connected to Norwich's cultural life.

Each year, up to two young people aged 16+ who entered the **Young Norfolk Writing Prize** are invited to become **Young Norfolk Laureates**. This year's Laureates, Evie Parker Hornsby and Lottie Vinson, received one-to-one mentoring from poets James McDermot and Shannon Clinton-Copeland and opportunities to share their work publicly. Both participated in Lit From the Inside, with Evie Parker Hornsby commissioned by NCW to present a poem celebrating Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature status.



FAMILIES ENJOY CREATIVE ACTIVITIES AT DRAGON HALL © LUKE WITCOMB

## Schools

Our work with schools creates meaningful creative experiences both in and beyond Dragon Hall for pupils of all ages. Designed to nurture confidence and enjoyment in playing with words, our programmes support curricular aims including vocabulary development, reading fluency, connection, and wellbeing. In 2024–25, we **engaged with 82 education providers**, from primary and secondary schools to SEN providers and home school groups.

### Grace Murray: Young Ambassador to published author

As a Young Ambassador in 2018, Grace Murray visited Krakow and Barcelona — both UNESCO Cities of Literature — refined her writing through mentoring, and met numerous authors, including interviewing Margaret Atwood. She went on to study English, won the anacreofstories playwriting competition, and received Penguin's WriteNow award in 2023. Acclaimed as 'blisteringly talented,' her debut novel, *Blank Canvas*, will be published by FigTree in 2026.

**'Facilitators were thoughtful, kind, curious and supportive. Pitched perfectly to engage and not overwhelm... sensitive to the wide range of social and emotional difficulties the students'**

— TEACHER

**'This opportunity has made me realise that I'm not too young, I'm not too inexperienced and I'm not too loud. I'm a creative, and I am extremely grateful that I understand that now'**

— WINNER OF THE YOUNG NORFOLK WRITING PRIZE 2024



GRACE MURRAY, YOUNG AMBASSADOR



YOUNG NORFOLK WRITING PRIZE © ANDI SAPEY

**16**  
SCHOOL  
WORKSHOPS

**30**  
TEACHERS  
PARTICIPATED  
IN WORLD  
OF WORDS

**126**  
DISCOVER  
ARTS AWARDS  
UNDERTAKEN

For nine years, the **Young Norfolk Writing Prize** has invited young writers from across the region to get writing in any genre. Eligibility widened to include 10-year-olds for the first time, through to age 18. We actively encouraged applications from young people who identify as neurodivergent, and entries could be created at home or in schools.

**140 entries were received from 57 schools**, with **26% of entrants identifying as neurodivergent**. Neurodiverse ambassadors from All Saints Lessingham School contributed to the judging process, ensuring the award reflected a broad range of voices and experiences.

Winners celebrated their work at a prizegiving event hosted at Dragon Hall, featuring readings from winning writers, and a live performance from poet Cai Draper.

### World of Words

NCW's World of Words residency in West Norfolk expanded to eight schools in King's Lynn and the surrounding area, offering fully funded professional development for educators, inschool workshops, and offsite visits to Dragon Hall, King's Lynn Guildhall, and the Stories of Lynn Museum. The programme connects young people to the stories and heritage on their doorstep — and beyond.

This place-based approach has also brought educators together, fostering positive learning environments for reading and creative translation, while encouraging appreciation of local heritage and multiculturalism across the region. One teacher called it 'incredibly inspiring, cannot wait to put everything into practice in the classroom.'



SCHOOL VISIT TO DRAGON HALL

# Writing for wellbeing & connection

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**R**esponding to community consultation, the proven impact of literature on personal confidence, and priorities in the Norwich UNESCO City of Literature strategy, NCW delivers creative programmes for two key beneficiary groups: older people and refugees, asylum seekers & migrant communities.

Operating from Dragon Hall, across the city, and online, these programmes are co-designed with participants, keeping their priorities at the centre. Activities celebrate storytelling and story-making, wellbeing, enjoyment, connection and confidence.

## A Place of Sanctuary

NCW provides support for individuals beyond initial resettlement and entry-level ESOL, helping them gain skills, confidence, and social connections while exploring or rekindling their creative writing practice. Our goal is to enable participants to lead more creatively, culturally, and intellectually fulfilling lives in Norwich.

**254 people** participated in activities supporting global communities and resettled individuals, including:

- Taster creative writing and English language classes at English+.
- Refugee Week events, featuring two community feasts for residents, participants, and writers.
- Zainab Project nutrition and storytelling course in NCW's community kitchen, pictured.
- Family drop-in days welcoming refugee and asylum seeker families, in partnership with New Routes and Norwich's Sanctuary Ambassadors.
- Writing workshops at Dragon Hall, enriching English+ ESOL provision by using the building to inspire spoken and written English.

In late 2024, NCW was awarded **Place of Sanctuary** status, recognising our commitment to inclusivity and support for people with experience of migration.

Looking ahead to 2025–26 and beyond, we will expand support for resettled individuals with creative interests, expanding opportunities for peer exchange, learning and performance. Collectively, participants will build or rebuild writing networks and practices.

## Inclusion in schools & libraries

**A Day of Welcome**, launched in 2019 as a local initiative for Norfolk schools, promotes a culture of inclusion and understanding for people seeking sanctuary. It is now a national initiative. NCW produced a summer reading list for KS1–KS4, which was shared with **over 550 schools nationwide** and featured in the *Guardian*.

Launched in autumn 2024, **Words of Welcome** is a Norfolk library poetry exchange celebrating multiculturalism and the county as a place of sanctuary. In collaboration with Creative Arts East and Norfolk Library Service, NCW commissioned poets George Szirtes and Marjorie Lotfi to create two poems, which were then translated into Arabic, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, and Ukrainian. All **47 Norfolk libraries** displayed the poems on postcards, inviting visitors to take them home and respond with their own words of welcome – published in a beautiful anthology.

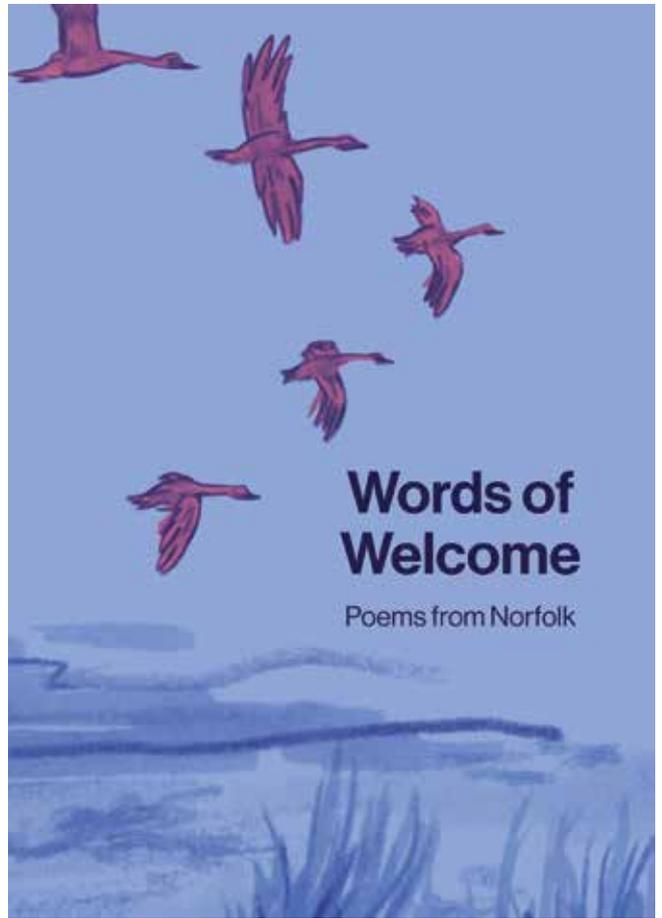
**‘Schools want to help their pupils make sense of refugee migration. Taking part in A Day of Welcome supports them to do that in an age-appropriate, constructive and meaningful way’**

**– JAKE ROSE-BROWN, NORFOLK SCHOOLS OF SANCTUARY LEAD**

© A DAY OF WELCOME



THE ZAINAB PROJECT USES DRAGON HALL'S REFURBISHED COMMUNITY KITCHEN © NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING



19

ACTIVITY SESSIONS LED

182

OLDER PEOPLE ATTENDED

84%

LEARNT NEW SKILLS,

93%

RATED THE EXPERIENCE 8+/10

## Older people

From February 2025, residents aged 60+ were invited to **Drop-in & Write sessions** at Dragon Hall. These ongoing, free sessions provide a relaxed and supportive environment for self-led or guided writing, enabling participants to connect with like-minded individuals while exploring their creativity.

These programmes show that older people's stories can be shared in many forms — on the page, in fabric, or through food — preserving histories while fostering connection and community.

**A Life Written**, our life writing programme for older people, focused on LGBTQ+ participants. **Sixteen people aged 60+** took part in a ten-week course exploring memoir and storytelling, led by illustrator David Shenton and author Karen McLeod, with support from student volunteers from Anglia Ruskin University.

In partnership with Cloth of Kindness, **Stitch Your Stories** invited older people to sew words and memories into fabric. Across five sessions, participants created a collective textile that was displayed in a final exhibition. The work was moving and deeply personal, demonstrating how creativity in later life can foster connection and pride by celebrating lived experiences.

Our new **Savour & Share** programme used the NCW community kitchen as a space for reminiscence, cooking, and storytelling, **engaging seven older people**. Recipes and food memories became prompts for conversation and writing, with taste and smell unlocking stories of family, home, and belonging. This offered a gentle, welcoming introduction to creative writing. A resulting 'scrapbook' of recipes, memories and interactive activity prompts was shared with older people's providers across Norwich in late 2025.

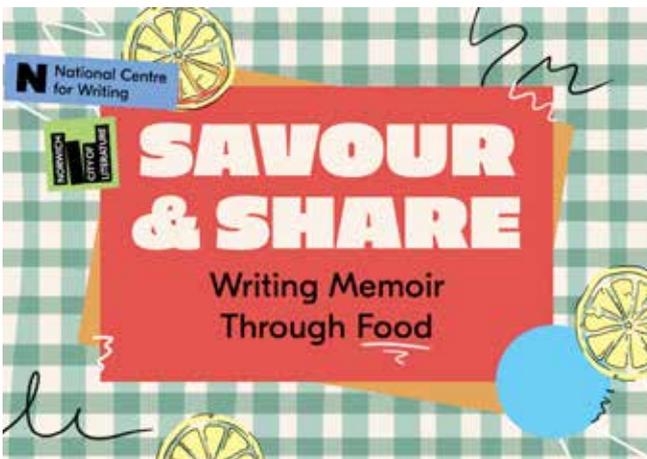
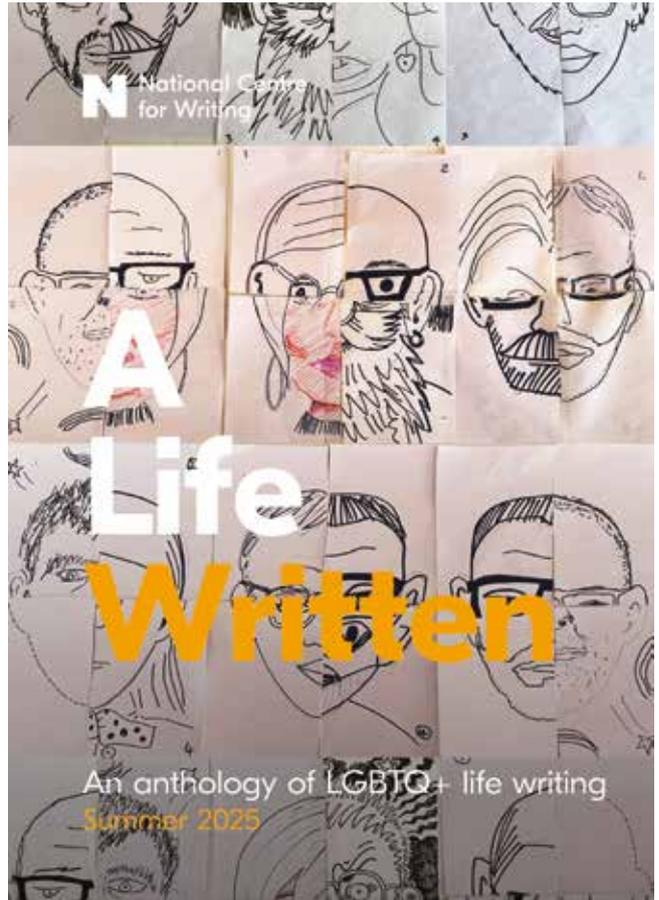
**'I appreciate the inclusiveness that I experienced as a 90-year-old with a disability. I am treated as "normal"'**

— SAVOUR & SHARE PARTICIPANT



A LIFE WRITTEN PARTICIPANTS WITH NCW STAFF © EAST OF ENGLAND CO-OP COMMUNITY CARES FUND

SAVOUR & SHARE PARTICIPANTS © NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING



STITCH YOUR STORIES © NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING



# Volunteers

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## Volunteers

2024–25 marked the first full year for **28 volunteers** supporting NCW programmes, assisting with events, community workshops, and welcoming visitors at the Welcome Desk and Writers' Room.

**The Story Makers** — a group of **14 creative volunteers** from diverse backgrounds — concluded their time with NCW in summer 2024, launching 'A Tapestry of Tales', a multimedia exhibition bringing King Street's history to life through real and imagined stories from the 15th to 20th centuries. A second generation of **16 new Story Maker volunteers** has recently joined, promising fresh stories for visitors at Dragon Hall and online. Meanwhile, our dedicated **Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers** continued to lead warmly received monthly free tours, sharing the building's rich history with the public.

**'I grew up in a council estate and I looked at NCW and I thought, this is not a 'me' place, then getting to know the place and people, volunteering... You come here for free, this is opening up now!'**  
— VOLUNTEER

## Volunteer impact

**28**

VOLUNTEERS

**1,355**

HOURS CONTRIBUTED

**94%**

CONFIDENT THEY WILL CONTINUE VOLUNTEERING

**86%**

DEVELOPED NEW SKILLS

**92%**

MOTIVATED TO DO CREATIVE THINGS IN FUTURE

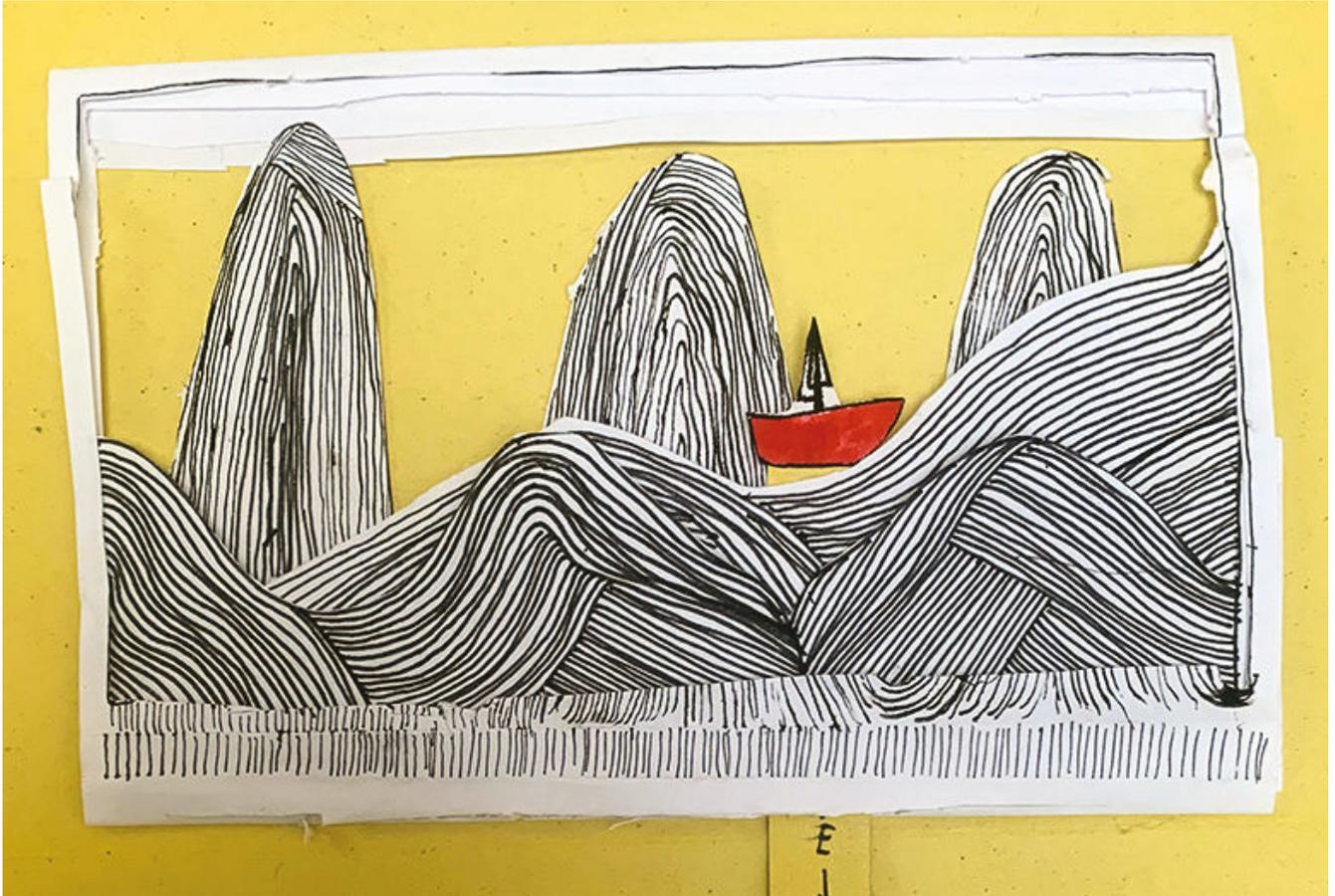
**88%**

FEEL PART OF THE COMMUNITY

**'When I am gone, I leave generous citizens with purse to live, lending what to debtors owe: Ask money of any and they shall give it. By the cottage, I leave a persons, to write books and alter their contents so that one may find stories whispered in every fastened stone. For you: most treasured reader, I leave the door, unlocked, to step inside Dragon Hall.'**

— EXTRACT FROM 'THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF AGNES PALMER' BY LUCYL HARRISON, STORY MAKER

THE BOOK OF DRAGON HALL BY NA OIRIOLUAIN, STORY MAKER



THE STORY MAKERS © ANDI SAPEY



# University of East Anglia: partnership & platforms



**T**he University of East Anglia (UEA) has long been a key partner of the National Centre for Writing and Norwich UNESCO City of Literature. With its pioneering role in creative writing education, Norwich attracts and retains professional writers — the most common creative profession in the region, with **1,035+ writers in Norfolk** (Creative Policy and Evidence Centre).

UEA drives innovation through its continuing excellence in creative writing, leadership in literary translation via the British Centre for Literary Translation, and the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts further brings creative expression and storytelling to new audiences through question-led exhibition programming.

In 2024/25, UEA and NCW continued our partnership across placemaking – through the City of Literature designation, creative career pathways, publishing, delivery of NCW Academy tuition and collaborative events.

**‘I volunteered for three of the ‘Savour & Share’ sessions and found them fascinating. As a PhD student from another culture, there are few opportunities to engage so deeply with the everyday lives and memories of local people’**

## Collaborative events

In 2024–25, NCW and **UEA Live** delivered a rich programme of collaborative events, including new book launches for Ali Smith and Emma Healey on campus. Both authors have strong UEA connections: Smith as a former Writing Fellow, City of Literature Visiting Professor (2012–13), and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate (2016); Healey as a 2010 Creative Writing MA graduate and Norwich resident.

As partners of the inaugural **Norwich Book Festival**, NCW and UEA welcomed **22,000 visitors** to Norwich for a fortnight of live events. Across **40+ live events** throughout the year, we presented **16 UEA-affiliated thinkers as panellists, speakers, or chairs**, alongside **30 alumni**, including Waterstones Debut Fiction Prize winner Ferdia Lennon.

In partnership with the British Archive of Contemporary Writing and CreativeUEA, we commemorated literary translation pioneer W.G. Sebald, hosting an audience at Dragon Hall on his birthday to celebrate *Shadows of Reality: A Catalogue of W.G. Sebald’s Photographic Materials*, with readings by contributors, friends, and colleagues.

Beyond public events, Dragon Hall provided a space for students and staff to meet, create, and connect. Over the year, NCW offered 10 discounted or free events for UEA, including student hustings, New Writing Live, and a workshop and exhibition with the UEA Publishing Project celebrating *Logo Rewind: Merchant’s Marks of Norwich*.

Students at the start of their creative journeys regularly attended NCW events as audience members and built new networks through the monthly **Dragon Hall Social** for writers.

NICK HORNBY AT UEA LIVE © DAVID KIRKHAM, FISHEYE IMAGES



UEA ZIGGURATS © ANDRÉS GARCÍA



### British Centre for Literary Translation

NCW and UEA continue to play a leading role in the UK and international literary translation ecology through the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT).

In 2024, the co-hosted **BCLT Literary Translation Summer School** was delivered online, guest curated by Mayada Ibrahim, a literary translator based in New York with roots in Khartoum and London. The programme welcomed **92 translators from 23 countries** to participate in panels, symposia, and keynotes. NCW-led sessions included Publishing Literature from Taiwan (nine sessions) and a lecture on *Don Quixote* with Shadi Rohana, a pioneer of Mexican-to-Arabic translation. Further intersections included three workshops for BCLT students with NCW residents: Selva Almada, Booker Prize 2024 shortlisted author described by UNESCO Courier as 'one of the most powerful voices in Argentine literature,' and two authors from Flanders, Charlotte Van Broeck and David Colmer.

### Talent pathways and student experience

NCW's year-round programme continues to enrich the experiences of students and alumni in Norwich, providing regular opportunities to connect with creative peers and professionals through events, social gatherings, and talent development initiatives. All events now include Pay What You Can or concession options, ensuring that cost is never a barrier to participation.

In partnership with the UEA Student Engagement team, NCW offers annual internships and placements, including **two paid positions in our Programming and Communications teams** during the spring to support the City of Literature Weekend at Norfolk & Norwich Festival. Beyond formal placements, interns and other UEA students regularly join NCW as Duty Managers, assisting with event delivery and volunteering.

Our long-standing collaboration with the UEA Publishing Project and Strangers Press continues, including the release of a new series of five chapbooks featuring writers and translators from Taiwan. Marketing collaborations with UEA Live and CreativeUEA through printed brochures and reciprocal promotion continue to help NCW reach wider audiences.

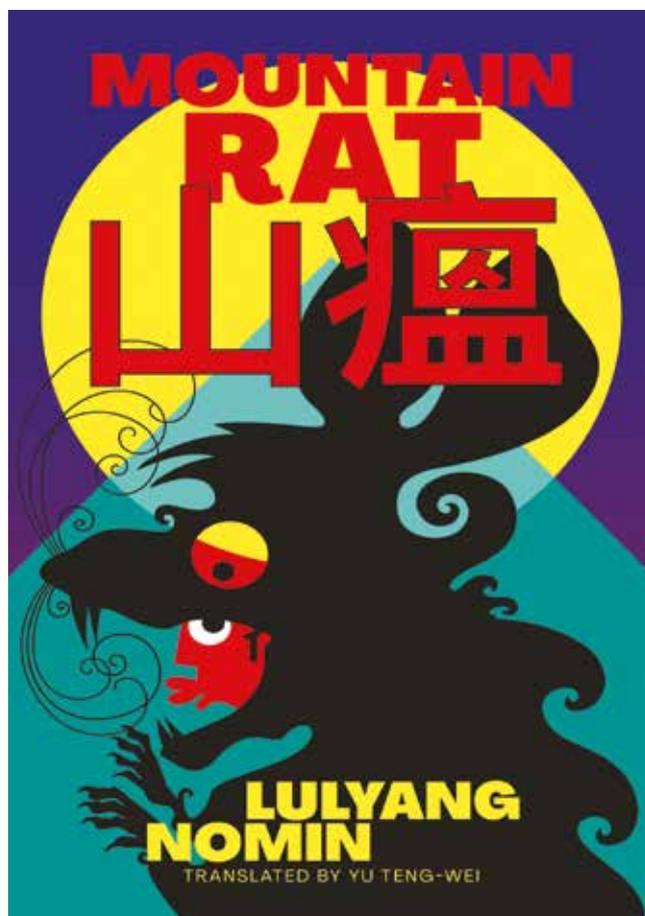
### Norwich UNESCO City of Literature

Since Norwich was designated England's first UNESCO City of Literature in 2012, UEA has been a key stakeholder, co-delivering the successful bid with NCW (then Writers' Centre Norwich) and **Norwich City Council**. The university has since supported a vibrant literary ecology through teaching, events, and engagement.

In 2024–25, UEA played a central role in the development of 'Writing the Future: Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Strategy 2025–30' (p.26):

- CreativeUEA represented within the vision group, meeting quarterly throughout strategy development.
- Pro Vice-Chancellor of Arts and Humanities, Professor Catherine Richardson, presenting at the launch event alongside Stephen Fry, Alice Macdonald MP, local authority, and UNESCO UK representatives.
- 14 UEA organisations or schools engaged through group or one-to-one consultations.
- Strategy informed by, and contributing to, UEA's 'Creativity in Action' framework for Arts, Culture, and the Creative Industries.

UEA has taken a pioneering role in delivering the strategy's ambitions, including the launch of a funded City of Literature 'Creative Writing in the Community PhD', strengthening pathways between academic research, community engagement, and literary practice.



FERDIA LENNON © CONOR HORGAN



MAKE YOUR MARK: A FREE EXHIBITION HONOURING THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF NORWICH'S MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS MARKS



# Funding & supporters

The passion of ticket buyers, visitors, artists, and donors makes everything we do possible. In a year of ongoing political, economic, and societal uncertainties for the cultural sector, every contribution — big or small — truly matters.

Our core partners **Arts Council England, Norwich City Council**, and the **University of East Anglia** have underpinned our work since 2000, united by a shared vision for a national centre for literature and writing rooted in Norwich, connected to the region, and open to the world. Their support is complemented by **Norfolk County Council Arts Grants** and a wide network of trusts, foundations, embassies, and institutes at local, national, and international levels.

We extend special thanks to the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and National Lottery players, whose support enables a wealth of free heritage engagement opportunities at Dragon Hall, and to **Norwich Freeman’s Charity** for supporting free drop-in family days throughout 2025.

**The Reeves Award** joined the **Laura Kinsella Foundation** in providing critical three-year grants to two named Escalator New Writing Fellows.

## Venue hire at Dragon Hall

**71**  
TOTAL VENUE HIRES

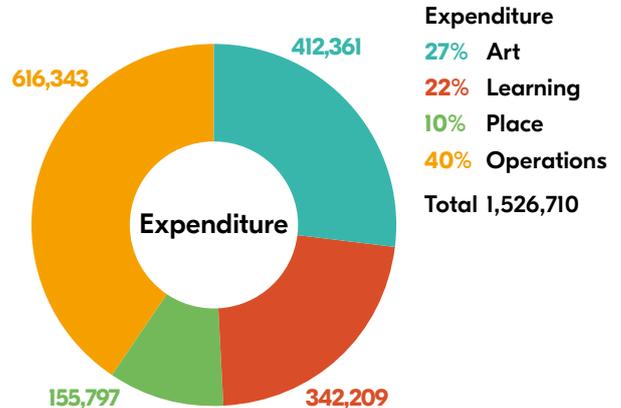
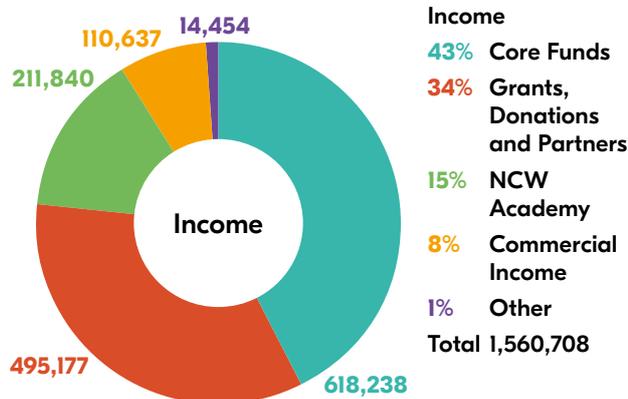
**29**  
COMMERCIAL

**14**  
WEDDINGS

**28**  
COMMUNITY & CHARITY

**The Linbury Trust** brought the joy of writing and the comfort of a safe creative space to marginalised local communities, and at the close of the year, we were delighted to secure a major award from **The Hawthornden Foundation**.

We are also grateful to individual supporters, friends within the **Supporters’ Circle, Society Members**, our international **NCW Alumni** network of advocates, and every visitor who uses our shop, bar, or makes an onsite donation. Others support emerging fiction writers directly by purchasing prints or contributing to our annual Escalator campaign.



PLACE: MAINTENANCE AND INVESTMENT IN DRAGON HALL. OPERATIONS: DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING COSTS, CORE STAFFING. ART: ARTISTIC PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING LIVE EVENTS, RESIDENCIES AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT. LEARNING: EDUCATION AND OUTREACH FOR COMMUNITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE, SCHOOLS, FAMILIES ETC.



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING AT DRAGON HALL © LUKE WITCOMB

# 2026: The National Year of Reading

As we enter 2026, National Centre for Writing and Norwich UNESCO City of Literature joins a UK-wide campaign led by the Department for Education and the National Literacy Trust to address the steep decline in reading amongst children, young people and adults. Find out more at [goallin.org.uk](http://goallin.org.uk).

FAMILY ACTIVITIES AT THE CITY OF LITERATURE WEEKEND © LUKE WITCOMB



**‘Reading is the foundation of a successful life – the key to unlocking potential, strengthening social cohesion, enhancing wellbeing and boosting skills.**

**‘Working closely with schools, families, libraries, communities and partners across the country, we will make reading a shared national mission – because every child, no matter their background, deserves the best start in life and every adult deserves to get the best out of life’**

**— JONATHAN DOUGLAS, CEO OF THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST**

# Thank you

**We are incredibly grateful to all our donors, supporters, partners, and stakeholders. Without their ongoing support, our work would be significantly diminished and, in many cases, would not exist at all:**

## Founding Partners

Arts Council England  
Norwich City Council  
Norfolk County Council  
University of East Anglia

## Major Funders (2024-2026)

Hawthornden Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
The Linbury Trust  
National Lottery Heritage Fund

## Stepping into Dragon Hall (2022-2024)

2016 Anne French Memorial Trust  
Arts Council England  
The Geoffrey Watling Charity  
The Lady Hind Trust  
National Lottery Heritage Fund  
Norwich City Council  
Norwich Freeman's Charity  
The Timothy Colman Charitable Trust  
The Wolfson Foundation

## Recent programme funders

Amazon Literary Partnership  
Anglian Ruskin University: Safe & Inclusive Communities Fund  
Anguish's Educational Foundation  
Arts Council KoreaArts Society  
Audrey Muriel Stratford Charitable Trust  
Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society  
Bacon Charitable Trust  
Black Writers Guild  
British Centre for Literary Translation  
British Council  
Card Factory Foundation  
Charles Littlewood Hill Trust  
Charles Wallace India Trust  
City Fibre Community Fund  
Deborah Rogers Foundation  
Educational Foundation of Alderman John Norman  
East of England Co-op Community Cares Fund  
FarLit (Faroese Literature)  
Fenton Arts Trust  
Flanders Literature  
Francis W Reckitt Arts Trust  
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## British Centre for Literary Translation: Summer School 2025

Arts Council England, Danish Arts Foundation, Flanders Literature, LTI Korea, Polish Book Institute, Polish Cultural Institute, ProHelvetia, Translators Aloud

## National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall capital funders, 2015-2018

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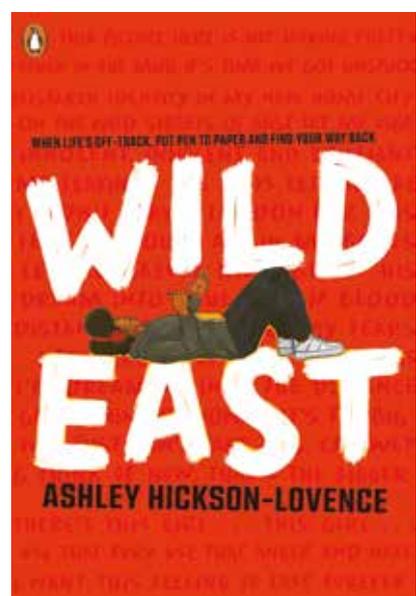
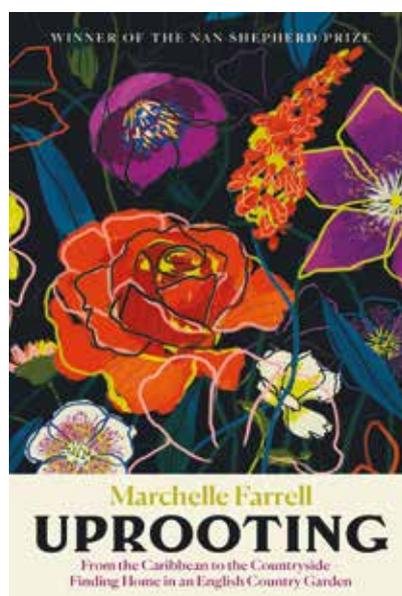
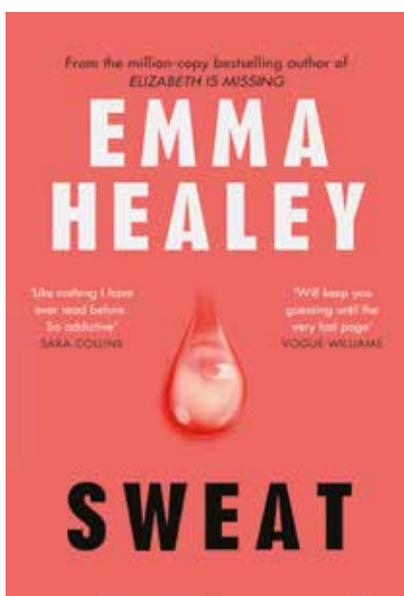
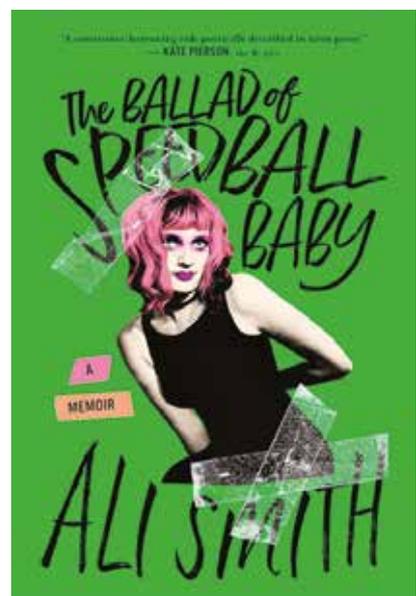
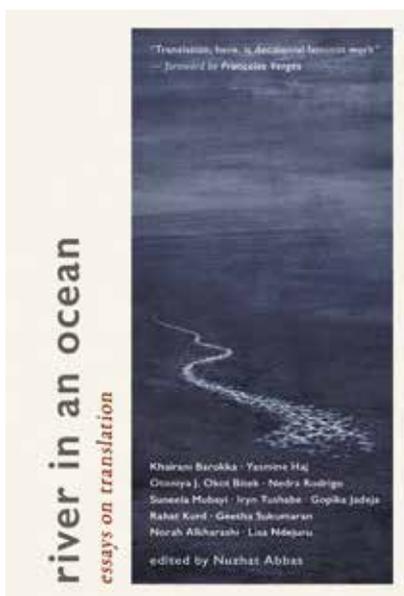
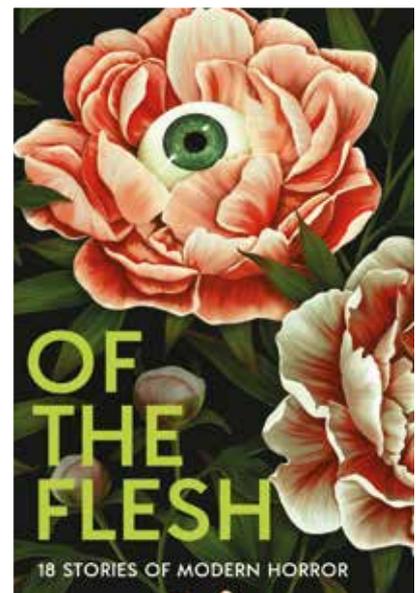
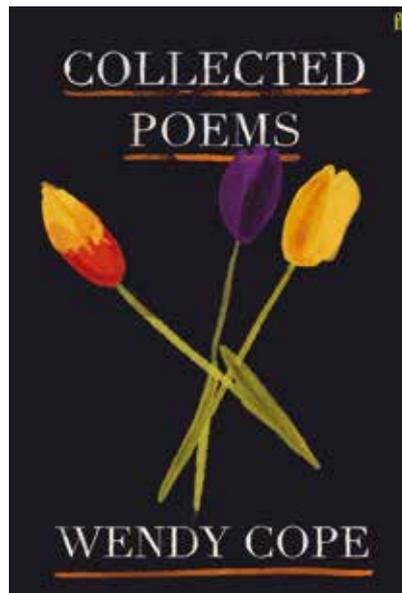
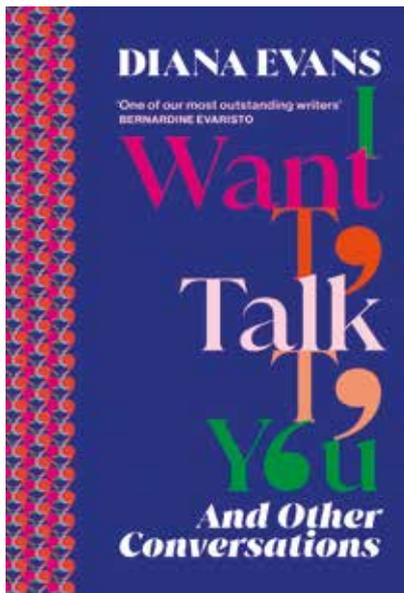
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European Poetry Festival  
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Norwich has 63 fellow UNESCO Cities of Literature worldwide, part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network of 408 cities.

A continued thank you to NCW's **staff, volunteers and Trustees.**

With gratitude to the **Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers**, past and present, for their dedication to preserving, sharing and helping reimagine Dragon Hall's heritage over many decades.





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