

N National Centre
for Writing

NORWICH
CITY OF
LITERATURE


unesco
Member of
the Creative Cities Network

WORK WITH US

Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer

Application pack

February 2026

Thank you for your interest in the National Centre for Writing as we begin our search for a new Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer.

Rooted in Norwich and open to the world, we're a writing development agency with a local, national and international footprint, committed to the transformative power of stories for personal, social and community development.

Our year-round programme offers opportunities to connect, learn and be inspired through innovative collaborations, events, festivals, residencies and activities for writers, literary translators and readers. From in-person and online events at our [Literature House](#), to digital explorations and commissions in the [Writing Hub](#), and in projects that support new voices and new stories, we help create ways to respond to the rapidly changing world of writing. We offer courses, public events, and community projects which invite participants to fully engage in the power of literature and its ability to transform their lives.

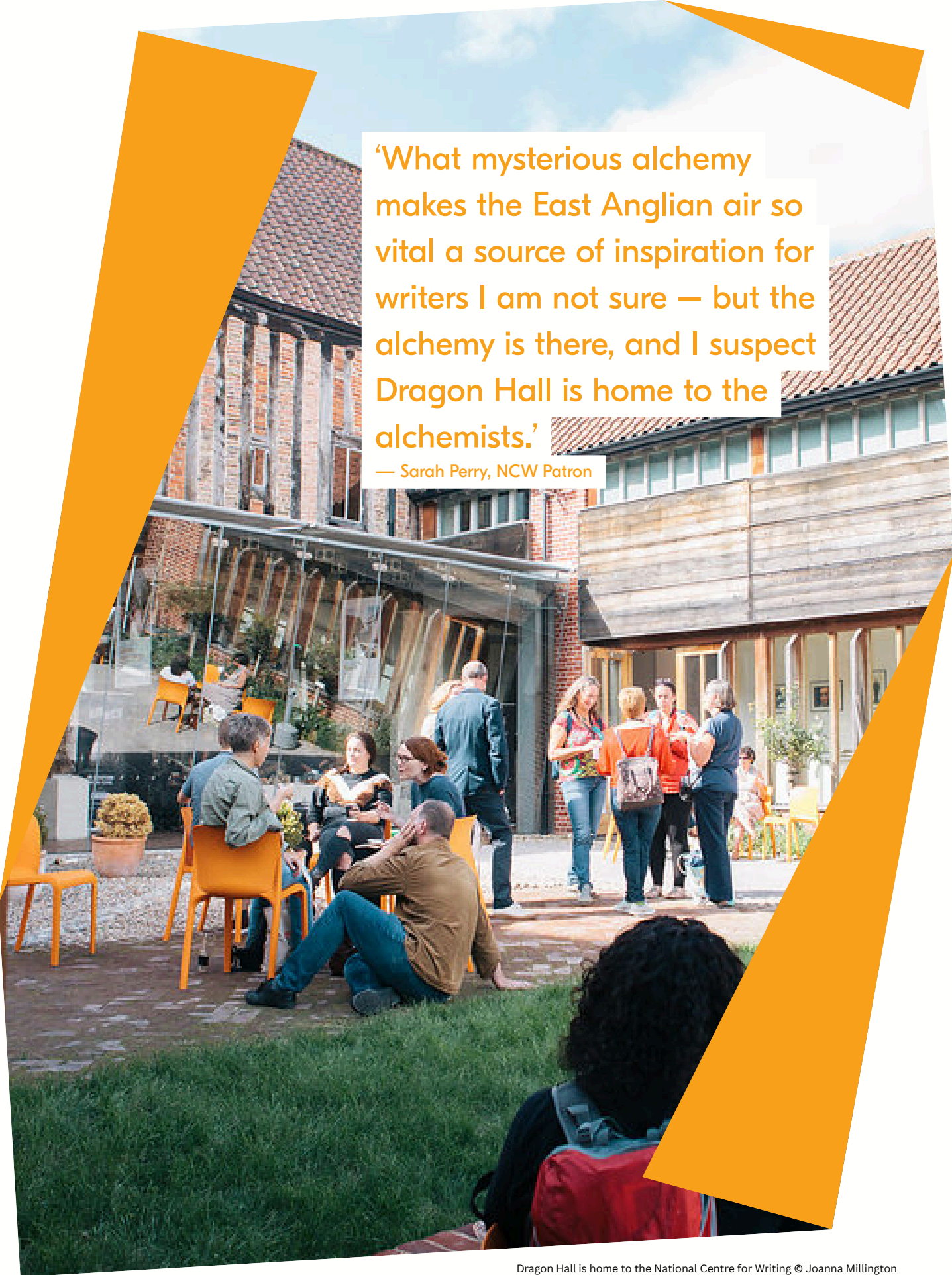
We are now seeking an outstanding individual to lead us, as our new Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer, into the future.

We are seeking someone to develop and set our strategic course, lead the excellent team already in place, build and maintain relationships with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, and ensure our financial resilience to enable the National Centre for Writing to continue to achieve our aims and ambitions for generations to come.

If this role sounds like it's the right opportunity for you, then we very much look forward to hearing from you.



Alan Waters
Chair of the Board



‘What mysterious alchemy makes the East Anglian air so vital a source of inspiration for writers I am not sure — but the alchemy is there, and I suspect Dragon Hall is home to the alchemists.’

— Sarah Perry, NCW Patron



About the National Centre for Writing

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) is a dynamic Literature House for contemporary writing, housed in the Grade-I listed medieval Dragon Hall, located on the historic King Street on the banks of the Wensum River in the heart of [Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature](#). This landmark venue consists of a 120-seat venue for live events, workshop spaces, a podcast studio, community kitchen, and accommodation for writers' residencies, as well as office space for our core team of 18 staff members.

NCW exists to inspire connection, resilience and understanding through writing, literary translation, reading and the exploration of ideas. We are a place for the exchange of stories. NCW is a creatively distinctive, nationally networked and financially resilient centre of excellence that delivers benefits to writers, literary translators, the literature sector, and our physical and digital communities.

Founded as New Writing Partnership in 2003 and becoming Writers' Centre Norwich in 2008, the organisation is a leading voice in the UK and international literature sector as well as a key member of Arts Council England's group of seven regional writer and literature development organisations.

Since our founding in the early 2000s, National Centre for Writing has grown into an important landmark in the UK's literature sector and a thriving cultural centre for Norwich and our region. We are the focal office for Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature status (recognised in 2012) and continue to play a vital part in the cultural, civic and economic life of the city and county.

In summer 2018, NCW was launched with the redevelopment of Dragon Hall following a significant capital redevelopment project. We are an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). We hold close strategic partnerships with the University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council.

An Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation

NCW has been a regularly funded organisation of Arts Council England for its entire history, dating back to when it was established as the New Writing Partnership. It continues to be a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in the current extended funding cycle through to 2028. An NPO, funded by [Arts Council England](#) (ACE), plays a key leadership role in delivering the national cultural strategy (Let's Create) by fostering creativity, promoting inclusivity, and driving artistic excellence. These organisations are long-term investment partners responsible for enhancing local, regional, and national arts, while ensuring good governance and accountability for public funds.

The key roles of an Arts Council NPO include:

- **Strategic delivery:** Delivering on ACE's 'Let's Create' strategy (2020–2030) and its three key outcomes: Creative People, Cultural Communities, and a Creative & Cultural Country.
- **Investment principles implementation:** Embedding the four Investment Principles – Ambition & Quality, Inclusivity & Relevance, Environmental Responsibility, and Dynamism – into their operations.
- **Sector leadership & stability:** Acting as pillars of the cultural sector, supporting local economies, and providing stability for arts and culture in communities across England.
- **Accountability & governance:** Maintaining high standards of governance, financial stability, and public reporting, with boards responsible for fulfilling funding agreements.
- **Data & digital advancement:** Engaging with the Digital Culture Network to improve digital skills, data usage, and audience reach.



Linton Kwesi Johnson performs at First Light Festival in Lowestoft © First Light

Norwich UNESCO City of Literature

NCW is the Focal Office for [Norwich UNESCO Creative City of Literature](#) and takes on the role of Local Office Director. As an organisation we are responsible for leading the strategic implementation of the UNESCO designation at the local level. This function bridges the gap between the municipality, local creative sectors, and the international UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). In Norwich this role involves developing and managing the city's five-year strategy and action plan, fostering partnerships, and coordinating international cooperation initiatives to place culture at the heart of sustainable urban development.

A UCCN is a designation for cities that commit to placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their local development strategies while collaborating internationally. The network, established in 2004, covers eight creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, Music, and Architecture.

A UCCN plays a key role in placing culture, creativity, and innovation at the core of sustainable urban development, fostering economic, social, and environmental progress. Member cities cooperate internationally to share best practices, promote local industries, increase cultural participation, and advance the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Key roles and responsibilities include:

- **Integrating culture into planning:** Embedding creativity into local development strategies to foster sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities.
- **International cooperation:** Sharing knowledge, best practices, and experiences with other cities in the network to foster innovation.
- **Economic development:** Strengthening the production, distribution, and dissemination of cultural goods and services, which drives job creation.
- **Social inclusion:** Enhancing access to cultural life and promoting participation, particularly for marginalized or vulnerable groups.
- **Action plan implementation:** Submitting regular reports and adhering to action plans that demonstrate a commitment to the UCCN mission.



Our aims

NCW is a driving force in the literature sector, with a focus on building, sustaining and diversifying the country's literary ecology. We work across three strategic priorities – Art, Learning, and Place – to support writers and translators, connect with audiences and push the boundaries of what our artform can do. We create opportunities for writers and literary translators and support a diverse and vibrant literary ecology (**Art**). We seek to increase the range and depth of opportunities to participate in and benefit from creative writing, reading and literary translation (**Learning**) and to improve the cultural, social and economic ecology of Norwich and the region helping to create a more attractive place to live, work and visit (**Place**).

Our values

- We are committed to an **inquisitive** approach to our artform and our engagement with artists, audiences, new work, and new ways of working;
- We are a **collaborative** friend to all our colleagues, partners, and communities;
- We provide a **welcoming** home for writing, in person, online and internationally;
- We are **accountable** to all stakeholders, audiences and the planet;
- We are built on strong foundations and are dedicated to a **resilient** future.

Our current and future priorities

- Marking 10 years of the National Centre for Writing in 2027.
- Facilitating community and artist development opportunities to ensure that we make the assets available to us – both physical and virtual – available to the communities around us physically and virtually.
- Creating opportunities for writers, translators and readers to meet, connect and thrive.
- Developing Dragon Hall, via a Conservation Management Plan and other opportunities, to ensure it is a truly inclusive and accessible space and that it best tells NCW's story, particularly looking ahead to the building's 600th anniversary in 2027.
- Activating our [UNESCO strategy](#) (2025–2030) with city partners in the coming years.
- Evolving [NCW Academy](#) – our online and in-person creative writing courses – to ensure it is fit for purpose within a competitive market.
- Continuing to develop and embed our commercial offer via a dynamic and evolving data-led marketing plan for weddings, parties and corporate hires, with targets which will contribute to our financial resilience.
- Continuing to work in partnership with Arts Council England as a cornerstone of the National Portfolio in the 2023–2028 investment period, and applying to be part of the portfolio for 2028.
- Reviewing and renewing our business model to ensure we can rise to the challenges of recent years and thrive in the future.
- Building on the learning of recent years with a renewed sense of commitment to our core audiences and communities both online and in person.

Purpose of the role

As Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer, you will provide inspirational strategic, artistic, financial and team leadership to retain NCW's reputation as a centre for national and international literary exchange. You will ensure that NCW at Dragon Hall remains creatively distinctive, nationally networked, and financially resilient.

You will focus on the strategic development of the organisation, creating and promoting a vision which achieves the highest standards of artistic, community and business practice. You will apply outstanding organisation and management skills to lead on business planning and change management.

You will work closely with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to maintain a clear strategy to deliver expectations to the organisation's stakeholders, partners and audiences and will lead a senior team responsible for programme delivery, communications, development, HR, operations, venue management and income generation.

You will set and lead a culture of inclusivity across the whole organisation, advocating for NCW's work with staff and the wider world.

You will also have the opportunity to develop the role around your strengths, and we encourage you to bring new ideas and ways of thinking to shape the future of NCW.



‘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.’

— Lottie Vinson, Young Norfolk Writing Prize 2024 Winner

Duties of the role

Leadership & strategic vision

- Provide leadership in the delivery of NCW's vision and mission ensuring that the business plan is regularly reviewed and reported to the Board and stakeholders.
- Provide a framework for the ongoing evolution of NCW's vision and mission to ensure its relevance and future at Dragon Hall and as a crucial part of the city of Norwich.
- Hold, articulate, and drive the organisation's artistic vision and operational strategy, ensuring financial sustainability, compliance, and delivery against Arts Council England's leading strategy (currently 'Let's Create').
- Work with SMT to develop and implement the NPO Business Plan, ensuring alignment with ACE Investment Principles.
- Provide dynamic and effective leadership of SMT and wider staff.
- Maintain awareness of risks and changes in the external environment that affect the organisation; plan for and implement changes to mitigate risks.
- Ensure key policies and processes are in place to support senior staff to develop strategy and good practice in the areas of artistic quality, equality, inclusivity, diversity, professional development, audience development, business management, and environmental sustainability.
- Act as ambassador and advocate for NCW at the most senior level with partners, funders, and other key stakeholders including Arts Council England, UEA, Norwich City and Norfolk County Council.
- Ensure all systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of NCW's work and achievements against business objectives and targets
- Manage the preparation and submission of the mandatory UNESCO UCCN Membership Monitoring Reports , currently every four years but under review.
- Act as the primary point of contact between the local municipality, the UNESCO Secretariat, and other cities in the network.

Artistic

- Work with the Head of Programmes & Creative Engagement in developing and assuring excellence within the artistic programme and supporting cross-team working on organisation-wide artistic evaluation.
- Lead the development of our strategy to deliver an outstanding artistic programme alongside commercial and development strategies that together will create a sustainable business model for years to come.
- Build strong creative relationships and partnerships locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, seeking at all times to implement Arts Council England's Investment Principles into our work.
- Support the development of a locally and regionally valuable Learning & Participation Strategy with the Head of Programmes & Creative Engagement, ensuring NCW is a partner in and represented at all relevant learning and engagement partnerships.

Income generation

- Drive revenue growth by capitalising on NCW's artistic and program-led initiatives across box office sales, products, and services.
- Provide leadership of NCW at Dragon Hall as a commercial venture and oversee the development of a trading company to maximise the value of the capital asset and protect the Grade I-listed campus.

Arts Council (NPO) Relationship & Compliance

- Act as the lead relationship manager with Arts Council England, ensuring all data, monitoring, and performance targets are met.
- Report regularly on progress against the funding agreement to the Board.
- Embed the four Investment Principles (Ambition & Quality, Inclusivity & Relevance, Environmental Responsibility, Dynamism).

Partnerships, advocacy & stakeholder management

- Be confident and skilled in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and partners.
- Work with SMT, in particular the Head of Communications & Development, to develop and manage NCW's key external relationships, including those with major stakeholders – Arts Council England, University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council, national and international cultural diplomatic bodies, Regional Literature Development Agencies, and Patrons.
- Look to develop new partnership and funding relationships to augment NCW's work.
- Develop NCW's presence and reputation across literature and the wider arts and cultural sector in the region, nationally, and internationally through active participation in events, strategic and delivery groups, conferences and festivals.
- Cultivate senior relationships with the private sector and charitable donors/sponsors to create and sustain capital and revenue programmes.
- Represent NCW through publicity opportunities and media interviews.

Financial


- Oversee the financial management of NCW, fostering a shared culture of financial discipline to ensure that costs are controlled, income is maximised, and all taxation, VAT, and Statutory Reporting requirements are met.
- Oversee the preparation of annual operating budgets, management accounts and all other financial records with the Head of Finance in line with Business Plan priorities.

Financial (cont.)

- Work with the Head of Communications & Development and the Development Manager to create a robust fundraising strategy and work with the wider SMT to ensure it supports, informs, and speaks to NCW's vision and mission.
- Take an active role in fundraising for the organisation including leading on the development and delivery of major statutory bids including to Arts Council England and other major funders.

Operational management, governance and HR

- Work with the Head of Operations & Commercial and other key staff to ensure NCW embraces best business practice in all HR, IT, and administrative matters.
- Ensure inclusivity and diversity is centred and practically delivered across the organisation.
- Engage collaboratively with the Board to fully utilise their skills, diversity of lived experience and networks to further the aims and purpose of the organisation as well as supporting Board recruitment and effective succession planning.
- Work with the SMT to ensure the organisation fulfils its legal, statutory, and regulatory responsibilities.



‘Norwich’s status as a UNESCO City of Literature is both a recognition of its rich literary heritage and a commitment to its creative future.’

— Hazel Edwards, South East Area Director, Arts Council England

Who we are looking for

We are looking for someone who has a **dynamic, forward-looking, collaborative and inspirational leadership and working style**, and who would enjoy the opportunity to shape the future of NCW and the literature sector in the UK and beyond. We are looking for an individual who thinks strategically, is comfortable working with partners and stakeholders both inside and outside of the organisation, and who has a passion for the work NCW is doing at Dragon Hall and online. You will be someone who can build trust, lead, and inspire others through your communication style, someone who can develop and implement a creative vision, identify new ways of generating income and who can interrogate business models to ensure financial resilience.

You will have an understanding derived from your own experience of the local, regional, national and international ecologies within which NCW is operating. Your experience and knowledge will include a working understanding of the complexities of running an organisation that is both a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Ideally you will have held a Chief Executive or equivalent leadership role before, within an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, and you should have an understanding of the challenges involved in operating a cultural venue and managing commercial activities within the creative and cultural sector. Your understanding of NCW's work and values, your capacity to lead and inspire, and your ability to work with the Board and SMT to deliver a robust and financially literate strategy are the most important things that will be considered.

Most importantly, you will be someone who is passionate and ambitious about the role of literature and the written word as a catalyst for change and a means of connecting people and exchanging ideas. You will have experience in artistic curation, and be comfortable in and with the artform.



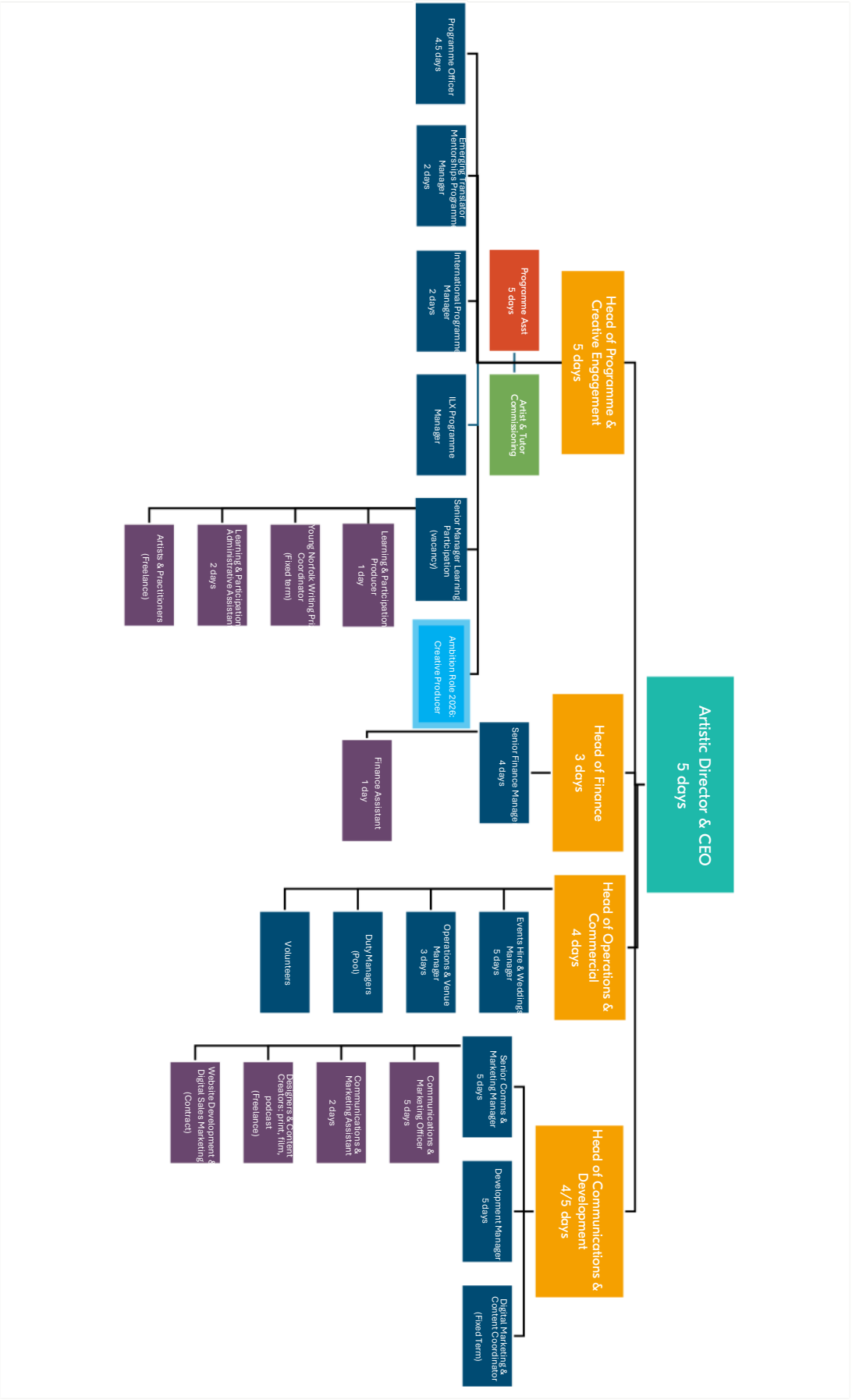
Michael Donkor introduces the Escalator Fellows at the London Library Showcase © Kashif Hague

Person specification

- Confidence and demonstrable capacity in strategic and business planning, financial management, development and income generation and operational oversight within the cultural sector.
- A detailed understanding of how arts and cultural organisations work, an interest in literature and previous organisational, artistic, and operational experience.
- A high level of understanding of diversity, equity, access and artistic excellence in the arts and cultural sector, how these areas intersect within the context of Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy, and how to implement policies and strategic plans to implement them across NCW.
- Demonstrable capacity to support, develop and lead highly functioning teams, balancing commitment to organisational goals with personal development.
- Experience in building, cultivating, and maintaining relationships, partnerships with key stakeholders across the arts, third and private sectors.
- The ability to build consensus and tailor communications to stakeholder and other groups through clear and persuasive oral and written skills.
- Strong analytical skills to assess and break down complex programmes and strategies to organisational and team delivery plans while meeting organisational and individual targets and stakeholder expectations.
- Understanding of corporate governance and engagement, and the ability to deliver organisational change from staff to Board level.
- Ability to adapt behaviour and working style to meet changing conditions, new challenges or new information and retain a focus on values and people at all times.
- Respond creatively to NCW's vision and mission and support a holistic organisational approach to delivering that vision and mission.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

At NCW we are committed to equality of opportunity in all our activities and employment practices. We actively encourage people from a variety of backgrounds with different experiences, skills and stories to join us and influence and develop our working practice. In taking positive action around diversity, we will prioritise interviews to applicants who self-identify as Global Majority and/or disabled and who have demonstrable experience of leadership within a cultural organisation. If you self-identify as having this background and experience, please state so in your application form as outlined in the next section.



Terms & conditions

Reports to: Chair of the Board.

Contract: Permanent.

Working hours: Full-time (we are open to a conversation about flexible working for this role during the interview process. This might include varied hours, part-time options or job shares).

Standard working hours are 7.5 hours per day between 9am and 6pm but we are open to conversations around flexible hours during the interview process. Due to the nature of the role some evening and weekend work will be required, as well as some national and international travel. We operate a Time Off In Lieu policy for this.

Location: As of June 2023, all staff work at least 75% of their contracted time at our offices at Dragon Hall, 115–123 King St, Norwich, NR1 1QE (unless otherwise stated in their contract) with up to 25% of their time able to be worked from home. We offer relocation assistance.

Benefits: Relocation assistance, Contributory Pension Scheme, Season Ticket Loan, Cycle to Work Scheme, Equipment and support to work from home effectively, training and development tailored to your level of experience, mental wellbeing support.

Salary: £63–65,000 per annum (full time).

Annual leave: 25 days per annum plus 8 public holidays. 5 days of paid annual leave must be taken over the Christmas/New Year period.

Expenses: You will be reimbursed for all reasonable travel, accommodation and other expenses which are wholly, exclusively, and necessarily incurred in relation to the performance of your duties and responsibilities, in line with NCW's expenses policy. Assistance towards any relocation expenses may be available.

‘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





Val McDermid meets audience members at the Harriet Martineau Lecture © Luke Witcomb

How to apply

To apply for the position, please submit an application form and equal opportunities monitoring form from our website [here](#) to Amanda Salmon, Head of Operations and Commercial at amanda@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk.

If you would like to receive this information in an alternate format, please contact Amanda.

We guarantee first round interviews to candidates who identify as having a disability and/or as Global Majority and who have demonstrable experience of leadership within a cultural organisation. If you see yourself as someone who meets these criteria, please say so in your application form.

If you would like to have an informal conversation to learn more about the organisation and the role, please contact CEO Peggy Hughes at peggy@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk. These conversations will not influence our selection process.

Closing date for applications: 10am, Tuesday 7 April 2026.

Interviews

First round interviews will take place on **Monday 20 April 2026** at Dragon Hall, with NCW board representatives as well as a representative from Arts Council England. This will involve a tour of the building and the chance to meet the wider staff team, an exercise with a selected group of staff members and an interview with Board representatives led by the Chair or Deputy Chair.

If needed, a second interview will take place on **Monday 27 April 2026**.

Please indicate on application if you aren't available for either of these dates.



‘So great for financial accessibility. Super friendly and informative staff. Amazing building. My daughter loved it!

— Visitor

National Centre for Writing is supported by:



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