



B B C
WRITERS

**ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023**



“It’s the BBC’s role to support and champion the very best new talent from the whole of the country. But more than that, we know that the success of the BBC in the global streaming age depends on harnessing the full creative potential of every single community and part of the UK. That means looking much harder to find the best new writers.”

Tim Davie
BBC Director General

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“Writers are the lifeblood of Drama and the discovery and development of the country’s next generation of television writers is a vital investment in the future of the BBC and the UK’s television landscape. I am proud of the work that BBC Writers continues to do and the key part it continues to play in pioneering the screenwriters of tomorrow.”

Lindsay Salt
Director, BBC Drama

BBC WRITERS

Welcome to BBC Writers



Jess Loveland
Head of New Writing for BBC Writers
& BBC Drama Commissioning

I'm thrilled to introduce this annual round-up of 2022/23 activity on behalf of BBC Writers.

It's been another busy year for our team and this report is packed with information about the talented writers we've had the privilege to work with across our writer development groups and initiatives. It's a joy to work with talented writers and creatives every day and to support them as they grow their networks and experience in the industry. As you read about our writers over the next few pages, I invite you to celebrate their hard work and successes with us.

The eagle-eyed reader will have noticed that 2023 brought with it a new name and a new look for our department. We had been called BBC Writersroom for 23 years, but a BBC-wide rebranding project provided the opportunity for us to re-evaluate whether our name was still working for us two decades after the department was first established. With the increasing adoption of the US TV drama writers' room system in this country our old name had been starting to cause a bit of confusion amongst our new writing audience. After some careful thought and consultation, we ultimately took the decision to drop the offending room from our name and rebrand as BBC Writers. We think this new name coupled with our fresh new look encapsulates who we are as a department, a vibrant and exciting home for writers at the heart of the BBC.

New name, new look but our mission remains the same to enrich the broadcasting ecosystem by discovering, developing and championing new and experienced writers across the whole of the UK.

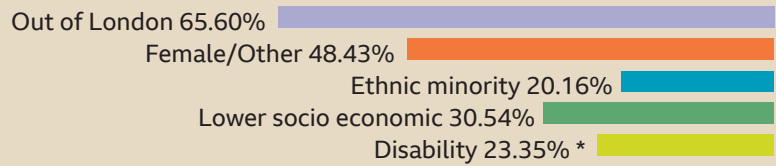
A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the seasoned writers, producers, and industry allies who graciously impart their wisdom to our writers, to our partners in Drama Commissioning and throughout the BBC for their enthusiastic support, and to every writer who entrusts their work to us.

MEET THE BBC WRITERS TEAM

THE YEAR IN STATS

BBC Writers takes the responsibility of monitoring our activity and writer development support seriously. Reporting in this way allows us to ensure we are truly reaching writers across the whole of the UK and helps us to identify future priority areas. We are pleased to present a break-down of 22/23 activity in stats.

DIVERSITY FIGURES FOR SUBMISSIONS (made during the reporting period)



5964

Submissions to our opportunities via our online submissions system in 2022-23.

110

Total number of writers we worked with in development groups this year.



71

WRITERS



13

WRITERS



10

WRITERS

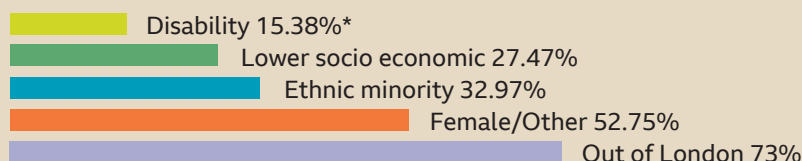


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WRITERS

The following **VOICES** groups took place in 2023: Scotland, North and Midlands (England), Belfast (Northern and Republic of Ireland hub), Wales, London, South (England).

DIVERSITY FIGURES FOR OUR GROUPS



Our figures are derived from the most up-to-date data available. This is taken from self-reported and optional monitoring forms. We can't guarantee a 100% return rate.

*The percentage for Disability includes submissions for our Writers' Access Group but not the resulting development group, which will be included in the next Annual Report.

BBC WRITERS OPEN CALL

The Start of the Writer's Journey

Open Call is the main talent scouting tool for BBC Writers. Each Autumn we make a callout to the nation's writing community for unsolicited scripts. Anyone aged over 18, who is a current resident of the UK or Republic of Ireland, is eligible to share their script with us via our bespoke e-submissions system.

A writer may only submit one script per year to the Open Call: their script must consist of at least 30 pages and should be either a Drama or a Comedy-Drama piece. However, it may be written for any medium – Television, Radio, Theatre or Film. Every single script will have at least its first ten pages read by our talented pool of freelance readers. We look for talented, diverse and distinctive voices to develop, rather than projects for production; and scripts that show initial promise receive a longer read.

In 2023, Open Call received almost 5,000 scripts – our largest number ever; and this annual callout is probably how we are best known to the UK writing community. It is often the starting point of a writer's journey with the BBC; we use it as a means to select up to 100 writers annually to take part in our Scripted and Voices writer development groups.

Our goal is to unearth the treasures, the page-turners, the new perspectives, the engaging dialogue and compelling, surprising characters. We want to find that special something that grabs our attention, pulls us into its world and makes us want to read on.

OUR READERS

Who reads your scripts?

Several thousand scripts are submitted to BBC Writers every year and we couldn't manage the scale and volume of reading without the vigorous work of our freelance readers. We work with a pool of around 25 experienced professionals (script editors, writers, producers, literary officers and lecturers), from a range of creative backgrounds and genres. The readers are demographically reflective of the make-up of the whole of UK society and are overseen by senior editorial personnel from the BBC Writers team.



“Sending my script in to the BBC Writers Open Call was one of the best decisions I ever made. I agonised over my script, making sure it was perfect, before sending it – but what happened next was beyond my wildest imagination – the script was passed up to BBC Drama commissioning and greenlit for production. Don't overthink it – don't procrastinate – write your best script and send it in, and who knows what might happen next?”

Billy Mager

Scripted 23 and writer of REUNION

**FIND OUT HOW TO SUBMIT A
SCRIPT TO THE OPEN CALL**

BBC WRITERS VOICES



In 2023 we worked with 71 talented new writers from right across the UK. We ran six dedicated Voices groups in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, with each group managed by the team in its local BBC Writers hub.

Over four months, the writers met weekly to complete an intensive programme of development, gaining insights into how the television industry works and taking part in expert masterclasses, craft sessions, roundtables and discussions providing participants with the core skills and knowledge to write successfully for television.

At the same time, the writers are forming a crucial peer network - in some ways just as important as the official workshop sessions - and this is supported through in-person meet ups within the local Voices groups.

Our Voices writers are encouraged to apply the learning to define and develop a new original series idea and work closely with the BBC Writers team to develop a professional series outline document which will act as a solid basis for their development of an industry-standard spec' script.

“It was the first time I’d worked with a script editor, and it offered me a new, more structured way of writing as well as the experience of receiving and incorporating feedback in various forms during the writing process. It’s also been very helpful when in meetings with development execs to be able to say that I’ve had a really positive, collaborative experience working with a script editor, preparing me for what’s to come!”

Kevin Shen

NFTS

NATIONAL
FILM AND
TELEVISION
SCHOOL



SCRIPT EDITING SUPPORT

Each year selected Voices writers gain script-editing support from trainee script editors via a collaboration with the National Film and Television School (NFTS) with the aim of developing their Voices projects to at least first draft script stage. The writers retain all rights in the resulting script and can submit it into our next Open Call or send it, as an example of their work, to agents or industry ahead of general meetings if they wish. Twenty Voices writers were supported through the partnership in 2022 and fifteen in 2023.

“Once the script was pitch ready, it was then snapped up for further development with Warp Films, and I know the BBC/NFTS scheme played a role in getting me there. I’ve often said that great scripts need great teams and I’ve been fortunate enough to have great teams throughout the script’s whole development. The NFTS scheme was truly life-changing and I only wish I could do it all again”

Alex Clarke

**BLOG: WRITING, MY NEGLECTED PASSION
- BY VOICES WRITER MARK WILLIAMS**

Six emerging writers group in Scotland, the North and Midlands of England, Northern Ireland, Wales, London and the South of England.

Scottish Voices: Rory D. Bentley, Jonny Blair, Maisie Chan, Eliza Gearty, Lewis Hetherington, James Ley, Daisy Jo Lucas, Grażyna McGroarty, Eve Nicol, Emma Ramsay, Jo Spencely

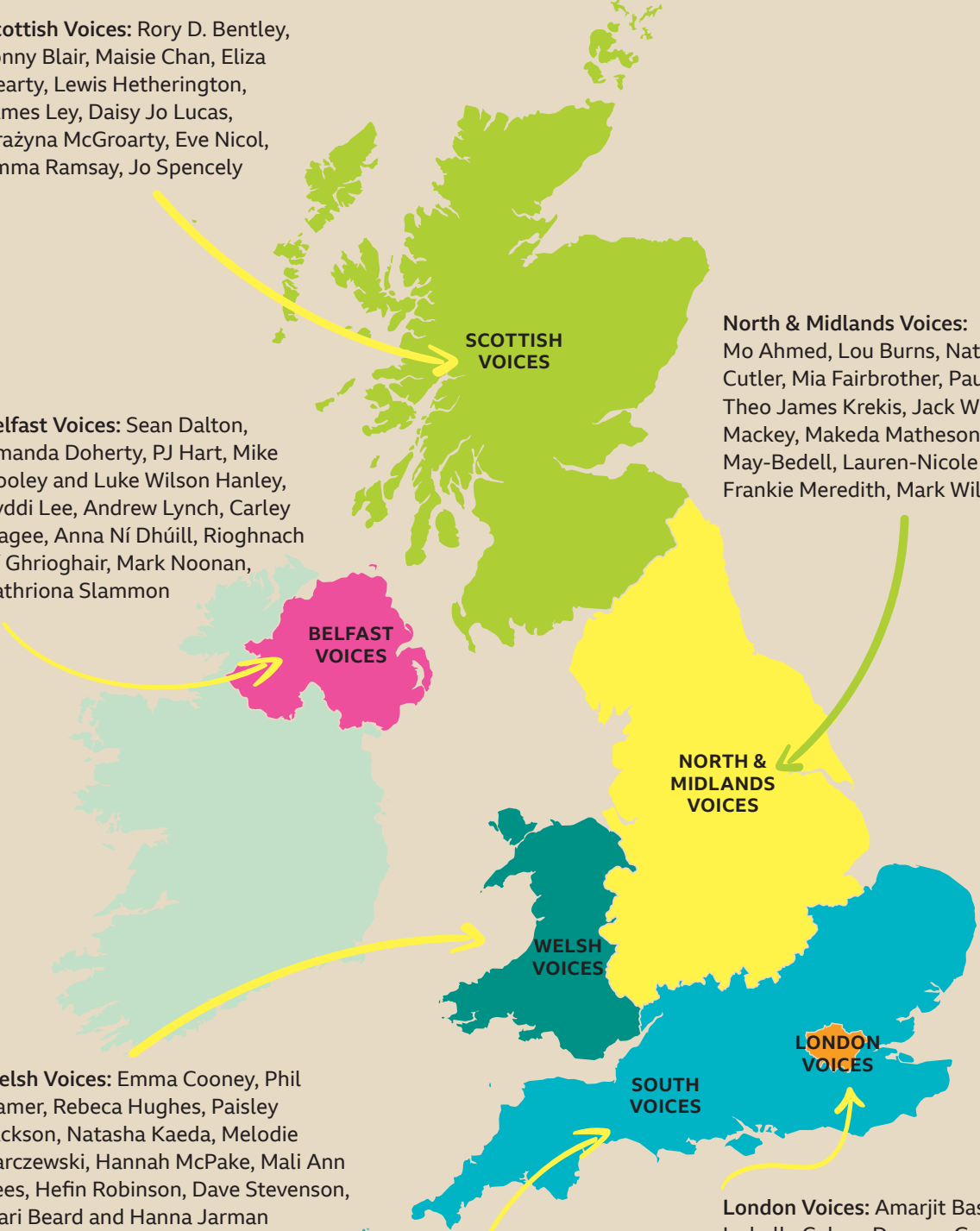
Belfast Voices: Sean Dalton, Amanda Doherty, PJ Hart, Mike Hooley and Luke Wilson Hanley, Byddi Lee, Andrew Lynch, Carley Magee, Anna Ní Dhúill, Rioghnach Ní Ghrioghair, Mark Noonan, Cathriona Slammon

Welsh Voices: Emma Cooney, Phil Hamer, Rebeca Hughes, Paisley Jackson, Natasha Kaeda, Melodie Karczewski, Hannah McPake, Mali Ann Rees, Hefin Robinson, Dave Stevenson, Mari Beard and Hanna Jarman

South Voices: Jason Barker, Lara Biller, Rob Cromwell, Florence Espeut-Nickless, Holly Fitzpatrick, Ramsey Hassan, Pelé Hearne, Paul Holbrook, Laura Horton, Harry Smyth, Courtney Wilkinson, Mo Yilmaz

North & Midlands Voices: Mo Ahmed, Lou Burns, Natalie Cutler, Mia Fairbrother, Paul Jones, Theo James Krekis, Jack William Mackey, Makeda Matheson, Harry May-Bedell, Lauren-Nicole Mayes, Frankie Meredith, Mark Williams

London Voices: Amarjit Bassan, Isabella Culver, Dwayne Gumbs, Rhianna Ilube, Eloka Ivo, Joe Kerridge, Hartley Lloyd-Pack, Nadya Menuhin, Himanshu Ojha, Pavan Patel, Helen Simmons, Jenny Takahashi Stark



BBC WRITERS

SCRIPTED

(formerly Drama Room)

2023 saw us working with another incredibly talented bunch of Drama Room/Scripted writers. These are the writers who cut through the fierce competition of the Open Call to take part in a year-long writer development scheme. The programme is designed to nurture emerging writers who demonstrate a distinctive, original voice and an understanding of the fundamentals of writing for television, but who do not have a professional television credit.

All writers on Scripted take part in regular craft and industry workshops and work with a script editor to write a new spec' script, They also have the opportunity to pitch for writing opportunities across the BBC. This year writers were invited to pitch for a short form audio drama commission on BBC Radio 3's The Verb.

MEET THE SCRIPTED WRITERS 2022/23

Following the Open Call submission window which closed in January 2022 the following thirteen writers were chosen to be part of Drama Room/Scripted for 2022/23:



Amy Arnold



Adam Bennett-Lea



Rhiannon Boyle



Sophia Chetin-Leuner



Mohamed-Zain Dada



Samuel Evans



Alan Flanagan



Daniel Katanchian



William Mager



Tom Mair



Nk'iru. Njoku



Michael Lee Richardson



Lily Seriki

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SCRIPTED GROUP



SCRIPTED TESTIMONIAL

“In classic writerly fashion, I have far too many words to explain how much I’ve loved my year being part of the Drama Room, and I really genuinely can’t believe it’s about to come to an end. The writers I have met during this programme are all extraordinary and have such unique voices that I’m excited to champion and see flourish. Our group chat has been a thing of beauty throughout - a place for communal meltdowns, unabashed mutual praise and promotion, and plenty of perfectly-placed memes. It has been a massive year for me personally and professionally, but to be here at the finish line with everyone else holding a completed spec’ script (okay that’s bending the truth slightly, but give me two weeks and a printer) feels pretty euphoric.”

Amy Arnold (Drama Room/Scripted 22/23)



THE VERB

The following four writers gained a commission to write a short drama for BBC Radio 3’s The Verb.

Amy Arnold (Voices 22 / Scripted 23)

Matthew Smith (Voices 22)

Karen Featherstone (Writers Access Group 22)

Alan Flanagan (Scripted 23)

“I love writing for radio because there’s this inherent weirdness to it, the audience with an ear cocked to their wireless (slash bluetooth headset) will pretty much sign up for anything, so it feels like a great space to explore genre stories. After getting the initial pitch accepted, I faced the agonising uphill battle of bringing an idea to life – only kidding (I don’t work down a mine), it was all smooth sailing with the wonderful producer guiding me through several drafts.”

Alan Flanagan (Scripted 23)



**BLOG: MY REFLECTIONS ON
BEING PART OF THE DRAMA
ROOM/SCRIPTED GROUP**

BBC WRITERS ACCESS GROUP

We're thrilled to announce the return of the BBC Writers' Access Group for its third iteration. The Writers' Access Group is a pioneering development programme designed to bolster and fast-track the career progression of the most promising deaf, disabled, and/or neurodivergent writers. We have worked closely with our friends and colleagues at TripleC DANC to make the programme open and inclusive for writers from the deaf, disabled and neurodivergent community.

Marking a new milestone, this year's group of writers was chosen through our first open access submission process. The writers taking part in the third iteration of the Writers' Access Group began their journey with us at the close of 2023, an announcement of the selected writers will follow later in 2024.

Over the course of an 18-month programme our new Writers' Access Group will meet regularly (in real life and online), for a series of masterclasses looking at story and structure, pitching and treatments, audience insights and craft skills, alongside hearing from A-list writers, script-editors, producers and BBC Drama Commissioners.

The writers will also receive introductions to other areas of the BBC such as Continuing Drama, Radio, Comedy, CBBC and CBeebies. All participants will work with a freelance script editor to define and develop a brand Drama or Comedy/Drama spec' script. As they graduate from the programme the writers will take part in a round of introductory industry meetings with production companies, agents and commissioners.

Applications for the next Writers' Access Group 25/26 will open in 2025.



“The more screenwriters like myself we have working in the industry, the more authentic, nuanced portrayals informed by lived experience we’ll see on our screens.”

Laurence Clark
(Writers' Access Group 2020/21)

SCRIPT ESSENTIALS WEBINAR SERIES

We received such an outstanding number of interesting scripts as part of the Writers' Access Group callout that we decided to run a monthly webinar series for those applicants who made it to the second stage of the reading process, but who didn't gain a place on the official programme. Over a six month period beginning in early 2024 we will be working with about 100 deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent writers on our new Script Essentials webinar series.

We hope these writing info sessions will help writers to further develop their craft skills and support them to complete a new original script which they can use to apply to the Writers' Access Group call-out when it returns in 2025.

THE WRITERS' ACCESS GROUP RETURNED FOR 2023/2024

AMBASSADORS



Jack Thorne:

"We need new disabled voices and that is why I'm delighted to be an ambassador of the Writers' Access Group and hopeful a creative revolution lies in their midst. Superstar talents are emerging all the time and I would love to find one from within the disabled community."

Rose Ayling-Ellis:

"I am thrilled to be an ambassador for this year's Writers' Access Group. When you have disabled people writing they will put in detail that nobody else would know unless you've actually experienced it. If anyone is feeling nervous about becoming a writer, don't feel nervous, just do it! Come join, write anything you can."



Ruth Madeley:

"I love the fact that this is open to people who don't have representation, who don't have the experience. There is such a wealth of diverse rich disabled talent within our community that have got stories out there that need to be shared."



READERS

For our Writers' Access Group open call, we wanted to ensure the majority of the readers reviewing the work identified as deaf, disabled or neurodivergent themselves. We ran a call-out for disabled readers and further expanded our regular pool. The new readers were mentored by some of our long-standing and experienced readers, and they are now reading across all of our opportunities.

BBC WRITERS PILOT

(formerly TV Drama Writers' Programme)

BBC Writers' most prestigious programme, Pilot is a unique initiative that gives talented emerging screenwriters a paid commission to write the first episode of a potential original series or serial for the BBC.

Every two years between 10 and 15 writers are partnered with some of the best independent production companies where they work together to define a new original television drama series and develop the pilot episode. As a paid commission, the aim is that the series or serial will be taken into full development by the BBC.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

Mentoring can be a powerful tool helping writers to develop both personally and professionally in their careers. We asked our Pilot 23 writers to share details of writers they would be interested in developing a mentoring relationship with and we were delighted to partner our ten emerging writers with inspiring established writer mentors.

The mentoring experience is designed to help the mentee writers gain professional insight and friendly support as they make the delicate transition to developing their own original series ideas and hopefully broadcast commissions. All writers receive three hour-long sessions with their mentors over the course of a six-month period.

Many thanks to our generous mentors for their kind support of the Pilot programme and our writers.



"It's been a pleasure and a privilege to mentor on the Pilot scheme. The industry is in a particularly tough place at the moment, which makes it even harder for new voices to break through, so I am thrilled to say that I was able to put my mentee up for a writing job with my recommendation, and he has won it!"

Emma Frost



"It's been an absolute pleasure being a part of the BBC Writers' Pilot mentor scheme. I've learnt so much talking to younger writers making their way in the industry and only hope I've imparted half the wisdom I've come away with. Film and TV are changing all the time and it seems vital for writers of different generations to share their vision and experiences and help each other navigate a business and art form that always throws up new challenges."

Hossein Amini

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME 2022/23

Writer

Mentor

 Izzy Mant	+	 Peter Straughan		 Jeffrey Aidoo	+	 Hossein Amini
 Danielle Ward	+	 Sarah Phelps		 Sorcha Kurien-Walsh	+	 Anna Symon
 Liv Hennessy	+	 Chris Chibnall		 Lawrie Doran	+	 Pete Jackson
 Noel McCann	+	 Emma Frost		 Tom Melia	+	 Danny Brocklehurst
 Ayad Andrews	+	 Neil Forsyth		 Angharad Elen	+	 Kayleigh Llewellyn

LOST BOYS AND FAIRIES

Lost Boys and Fairies is Daf James' first original screenplay for the BBC and is due to hit BBC One and BBC iPlayer in the summer of 2024. Daf developed the project with Duck Soup Films as part of BBC Writers' TV Drama Writers' Programme 2019 (the forerunner to Pilot). Daf had previously taken part in our first ever Welsh Voices development group.

"I've been on this journey through Welsh Voices that later turned into a relationship where I got onto the Pilot scheme. So I've had a really long relationship with the BBC. I think it's important to say, it's a long game!"

Daf James



WATCH DAF JAMES DESCRIBE HIS WRITING JOURNEY WITH THE BBC

THE BREAK

BBC
THREE

BBC STUDIOS
DRAMA
PRODUCTIONS



SERIES 6 CALLOUT

In 2023 BBC Writers completed the sixth series of The Break – a collection of short monologues written specifically for BBC Three and BBC iPlayer. For the majority of writers, this is their very first television broadcast credit.

As part of the Coventry City of Culture, BBC Writers had launched a bespoke group to work with the most promising talent in the area – Coventry Voices. Here we delivered industry insights and masterclasses as well as developing screenwriting skills with the group. Following the success of this, we made a callout to writers in the local area and – working closely with our industry partners in BBC Studios – we selected several writers to pitch ideas. Following this development period, four films were commissioned and completed, working out of BBC Studios Drama Village Birmingham. For our writers this was an invaluable learning process; and BBC Studios also used the project as a way to upskill new producers, directors and Heads of Departments making The Break a truly successful training ground for talent in the Midlands.



Katie Arnstein



Omar Khan



Laura Malone



Tal Davies

“This is my first commission, and I absolutely underestimated how eye-opening it would be. It’s easy to get stuck in your own little bubble when it’s just your written project, but seeing it come to life on screen was invaluable.”

Tal Davies

WATCH THE BREAK
ON BBC IPLAYER

HEAR FROM THE FOUR WRITERS
ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE

DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA



ENTER THE WHONIVERSE!

As part of the Whoniverse project to release archive from across the history of Doctor Who, marking the show's 60th birthday, BBC Writers has made available a huge catalogue of scripts from Doctor Who and related shows. These have been released with the generous permission of BBC Studios, Bad Wolf Productions and the writers involved.

Over 200 scripts are now available to read from writers including Russell T Davies, Steven Moffat and Chris Chibnall, from Doctor Who, Torchwood, Class and The Sarah Jane Adventures - with more to come!

DISCOVER THE WHONIVERSE SCRIPT COLLECTION

SCRIPT LIBRARY

Our online script library contains well-over 1000 scripts from across BBC TV, Film and Radio productions from the last twenty years. It is one of the most comprehensive broadcast script libraries available on the worldwide web.

The library is continually being updated, with recent additions comprising a new tranche of scripts from BBC Film, including the BAFTA-nominated Rye Lane and The Power of the Dog (ranked number 15 on a list of the "50 Best Films of the 21st Century (So Far)"). New from BBC TV drama are scripts including Blue Lights, The A Word, The Sixth Commandment, Wolf, Champion and many more.

VISIT THE SCRIPT LIBRARY

OPPORTUNITIES

The perennially popular Opportunities area of our website contains a continually updated listing of free-to-enter writing opportunities from the BBC and across the industry. These range from callouts for one-minute stage monologues through to opportunities for development in film and television. It is a vital resource for anyone considering developing their scriptwriting craft, with deadlines to meet and tangible chances to get their work in front of an audience, potentially leading to a first professional credit.

EXPLORE WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

WEB & SOCIALS

Following our successful rebrand and move to bbc.co.uk/writers our website remains the first port-of-call for most people in engaging with our work and our opportunities. This ranges from writers who are taking their first tentative steps into considering writing scripts to experienced, credited and/or agented writers who are investigating moving into or furthering their work in writing for broadcast.

Our aim through our output on digital channels is to speak to all these writers, regardless of their level of experience, by offering content and opportunities which help to demystify the industry and make it more accessible.


Our resources also include interviews and articles from writers, script editors, producers and other experts, who can offer support, help and advice.

Across our digital platforms we share news and opportunities, follow the journeys of writers who have been part of our development programmes, hear from the writers of the BBC's latest shows and respond to and adapt our offering according to feedback.

Our website reaches up to 100,000 monthly users. We have a social media presence on Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.


VISIT THE BBC WRITERS WEBSITE

FOLLOW US ON SOCIALS

 [TWITTER/X](#)

 [FACEBOOK](#)

 [INSTAGRAM](#)

 [YOUTUBE](#)

MORE ACROSS THE UK

OTHER SCHEMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ALFRED BRADLEY BURSARY AWARD

The Alfred Bradley Bursary Award is a £5,000 writing bursary for writers based in the North of England who are new to writing for radio. The award allows writers the opportunity to develop their script with the support of BBC radio drama producers and the chance of a Radio 4 drama commission.

The prize-giving ceremony took place at the BBC Audio Drama Conference at Leeds Playhouse in September 2023.

From 239 submissions, the finalists were:

Benjamin Bee (Writers' Access Group 23/24)

Chrissy Jamieson Jones (Winner)

Julie Skeat (Write Across Liverpool 2022)

Lee Thompson (Special commendation)

Chrissy Jamieson Jones' script, *Mouth*, won the award and has subsequently been produced for BBC Radio 4. Chrissy has taken a place on our *Voices 24* programme.



“I am stunned and delighted to have won the Alfred Bradley Bursary Award and can't wait to hear *Mouth* on the radio.”

Chrissy Jamieson Jones

[READ ABOUT THE WINNER AND RUNNERS-UP](#)

[LISTEN TO 'MOUTH' ON BBC SOUNDS](#)

KAY MELLOR FELLOWSHIP

Bradford playwright, Kirsty Taylor, was announced as the second Kay Mellor Fellow. The Fellowship was created in partnership with the award-winning Leeds writer Kay Mellor in 2019 and was first awarded to Bradford writer Kat Rose-Martin in 2020. It continues in memory of Kay, who passed away in 2022, with a new three year investment from the BBC, Leeds City Council, Rollem Productions and Leeds Playhouse. Kirsty is now taking part in our *Voices 24* programme as part of the Fellowship.



“Being awarded this Fellowship feels like a massive and timely next step for me. The opportunity to develop my ideas through the legacy of Yorkshire's iconic Kay Mellor who properly championed people like me, where my background, voice and experience is not only welcomed but embraced feels really special. I'm passionate about telling authentic stories about real people, so the support this Fellowship offers will really allow me to explore how I go about doing that to bigger audiences, in new and different forms with the critique that's crucial in taking my work to the next level. Buzzing.”

Kirsty Taylor

[BLOG: ANNOUNCING THE KAY MELLOR FELLOWSHIP](#)



EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTIVAL

In August we made our annual trip to Edinburgh for the Fringe Festival where we watched over 100 shows and connected with new writers from all over the country.

SCREEN FRINGE

We enjoyed collaborating with the Screen Fringe team and attending their networking events to meet writers and creatives attending the festival. We chaired an in-conversation Screen Fringe event with writers Nicôle Lecky (MOOD) and Richard Gadd (BABY REINDEER) talking about adapting their successful one-person shows to television.



2023 saw our second collaboration with the Popcorn Group on the Popcorn Writing Award which exists to celebrate fearless new work at the Edinburgh Fringe. We took part in the reading and judging process, as well as offering career support and advice to all of the 20 longlisted writers.

Dugsi Dayz was the recipient of the Popcorn Writing Award 2023, winning £3,000, support from Popcorn Group and BBC Writers. Written by Sabrina Ali, this hilarious and authentic exploration of friendship between Somali girls is a joyful and rebellious snapshot of British Muslim culture.

“Winning the Popcorn Award leaves me truly speechless. Just a year after writing Dugsi Dayz, I never imagined I’d be at the Edinburgh Fringe, let alone accepting the Popcorn Award. This achievement owes everything to my incredible directors and cast who breathed magic into Dugsi Dayz. Thank you all for making this journey unforgettable.”

Sabrina Ali



“Being in the final three meant the world to me, it also opened so many doors I would never have been able to find myself. I had a meeting with the BBC Drama Commissioning team, who were just marvellous. I had over twenty meetings with television production companies, and a lot of touring interest.”

Laura Horton (Breathless), 2022 Popcorn runner-up who was selected for our Voices 23 programme.

POPCORN AWARD 2023 WINNER AND FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

BBC WRITERS

WRITE ACROSS

BIRMINGHAM & THE BLACK COUNTRY

Following a successful pilot programme in Liverpool in 2022/23, Write Across is returning for its second iteration during 2024 with the focus on Birmingham and the Black Country.

We are looking for 12 exciting emerging voices from the region who have a passion for television and an ambition to learn more about writing for the medium.

Write Across Birmingham and the Black Country is led by BBC Writers in collaboration with Create Central and our programme partner organisations; Birmingham Rep; Script Sirens; Dudley Creates; Creative Black Country; and Black Country Touring.

We ran two free launch events in Birmingham and Wolverhampton in February 2024 attended by over 400 local writers and creatives. The programme will commence Summer 2024.



AMBASSADORS



Sir Lenny Henry:

“I’m really excited we’re getting this new opportunity for budding writers in Birmingham and the Black Country up and running. It’s backed by incredible local organisations that are all set to support fresh talent in turning dreams into reality.

It’s like the opening act of a blockbuster movie for the next wave of storytelling legends in the West Midlands!”



Maya Sondhi:

“The region is absolutely full of exciting talent and I can’t wait for everyone to see what Midlanders can do!”



Tim Davie, BBC Director General:

“We know this is a place that is incredibly rich in creative talent. It’s world renowned for great entertainment and storytelling.”



Kit De Waal:

“I’m absolutely thrilled that our collaboration with the BBC, as part of our wider partnership with them in the West Midlands, is paving the way for incredible opportunities for local talent. I’m eager to dive into those scripts, and to champion these talented writers as they embark on their career journeys.”



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE LAUNCH EVENT AT THE BIRMINGHAM REP

CLIMATE SPRING

In 2023 we worked with Climate Spring on their new Hot House opportunity - a development lab for scripted long form television and feature film projects about climate change, run in partnership with BFI NETWORK (made possible with National Lottery funding).

Writers were asked for ideas that explore climate change creatively by submitting a one-page pitch together with a sample script written for TV, Film or Stage. To support applicants, BBC Writers ran an online webinar offering advice on writing a compelling and impactful pitch document.

Five television ideas and one film idea were selected to take part in the three-month project development lab. The writers' work was shared with 60+ production companies, with active negotiations under way for further development.

Judy Upton and Maram Ahmed were two of the writers who took part in the lab and are now members of our Voices 24 cohort:

“The Hothouse Lab was a fantastic opportunity to develop a project that could make a difference. Josh from Climate Spring’s knowledge and advice helped underpin my thriller series with the latest science, and the resulting pilot script earned me a place on Voices 24.”

Judy Upton

“Climate change is such an important, pressing issue and one that is very close to my heart so when I saw that there was a development lab for scripted projects about climate change, I just had to apply. Being part of the Hot House development lab was transformational for my development as a writer. I learned so much about the development process and the feedback that I received from Josh at every step was incredibly insightful. My sessions with Celi (Commissioning Exec, BBC Writers and Drama) were equally invaluable as I learned more about the industry.

I think labs like these are so important as for too long, climate change discussions have focused on science, policy and neglected art which can also play a key role.”

Maram Ahmed



Maram Ahmed



Mahad Ali



Matt McDevitt



Jess Moore



Joana Nastari & Tommy Ross-Williams



Judy Upton

BLOG: CLIMATE SPRING DEVELOPMENT LAB PARTICIPANTS ANNOUNCED

EVENTS



PRODUCTION UNLOCKED

The team can often be found out and about supporting our BBC Academy colleagues' work with their Production Unlocked events across the UK. The events are designed to deliver a varied schedule of amazing free sessions for people who work in, or want to work in, the creative industries. In the past 12 months we have joined them at events in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow and Leeds.



JESSE ARMSTRONG IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN YORKE

In October we hosted a writer event at the BBC Radio Theatre in London with acclaimed writer, showrunner and exec producer Jesse Armstrong (*Succession*, *Peep Show*, *Fresh Meat*). Over 250 writers attended to hear Jesse chat to screenwriting expert, John Yorke, about his career, share writing tips and answer all our burning *Succession* questions!

[WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSE ARMSTRONG](#)



RTS STORY CONFERENCE IN LIVERPOOL

The Royal Television Society (RTS) in partnership with Culture Liverpool, Liverpool Everyman, WoWFEST and BBC Writers hosted the inaugural RTS Story Conference at The Liverpool Everyman Theatre. The day was a celebration of writing talent in the North West of England, offering panel discussions, masterclasses and an opportunity for some informal networking. Our Write Across Liverpool and Voices writers were invited to attend with some taking part in the event as guest panellists and contributors.

“The day was an amazing showcase and celebration of the talent we have in the North West, and truly inspiring for aspiring writers like myself.”

Paul Rigby (Write Across Liverpool; Scripted 23/24)

BBC COMEDY COLLECTIVE

BBC COMEDY FESTIVAL

In May we attended the second BBC Comedy Festival in Cardiff where we enjoyed chatting to new and emerging writers. We shared information about how BBC Writers can support the development of writers interested in comedy drama and we worked with our colleagues in Comedy as they introduced their new Comedy Collective cohort to industry.

[SEE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BBC'S INAUGURAL COMEDY COLLECTIVE](#)

[BLOG: WRITE ACROSS LIVERPOOL'S PAUL RIGBY WITH HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS FROM RTS LIVERPOOL](#)

The BBC Writers' team has been found running sessions, hosting panels and chatting to writers at the following festivals, events and conferences throughout the past year.

OUT & ABOUT

FESTIVALS + WRITER CONFERENCES



Aesthetica Short Film Festival (York)



Belfast Book Festival



BFI London Film Festival



Bolton Film Festival



Chapter Arts Centre – Opportunities in the Screen Industries (Cardiff)



Cinemagic, Belfast



Contains Strong Language (Leeds)



Creative Cities Newcastle



Dorset Festival of Scriptwriting



Edinburgh Festival - Screen Fringe



INK Festival (Suffolk)



Manchester Animation Festival



Nerve Centre – BFI Script Lab (Derry)



NFTS Finding Your Voice Pitching Sessions (Glasgow)



RTS Liverpool



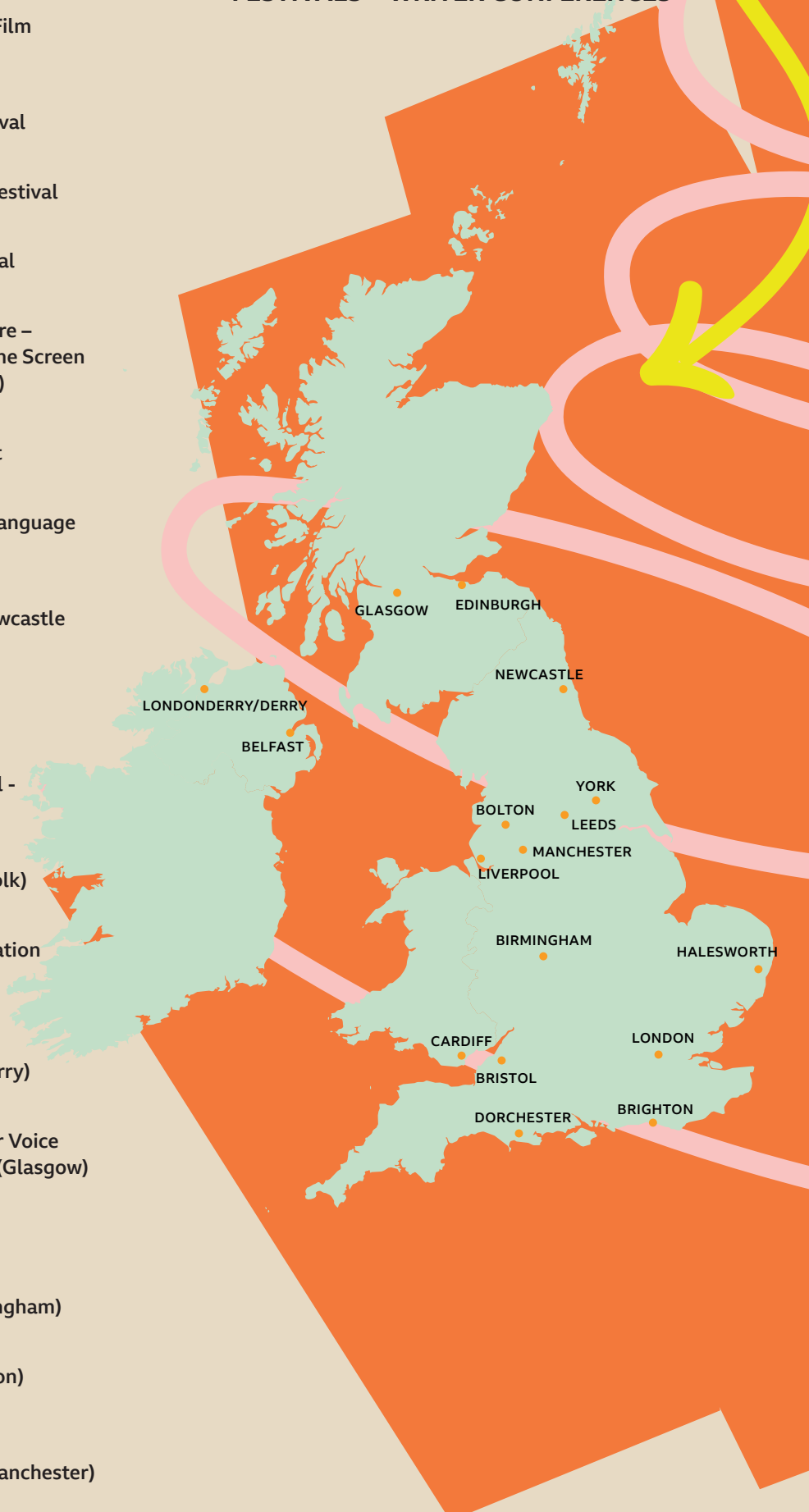
StoryTown (Birmingham)



Our Stories (London)



UK Muslim Film: The Networker (Manchester)



RECENT ALUMNI UPDATES

At the time of publication 16 recent alumni of BBC Writers have projects in active development on the BBC Drama slate, and 3 have projects in production (Cat Jones THE JETTY; Billy Mager REUNION; Daf James LOST BOYS AND FAIRIES). Lauren Sequeira's original series DOMINO DAY was broadcast on BBC Three in February 2024 (alumna of Pilot 2017).

A round-up of some of the updates and successes from our recent alumni.

SCOTLAND

James Ley – Voices 23; Scripted 23/24.

Alice Clark – Voices 22; Scripted 23/24.



Maryam Hamidi – Voices 2019; Scottish Drama Writers' Programme 21/22; wrote an episode on series 2 of VIGIL.

Anita Vettesse – Voices 2019; The Break; Scottish Drama Writers' Programme 21/22; wrote an episode of GRANTCHESTER (2023); RIVER CITY (2016 - 22).

James Price – Scripted 2018; Scottish Drama Writers' Programme 21/22; commissioned to write an episode for short form monologues series SKINT (BBC Arts/BBC Four).

Sarah Grant – Voices 24; Comedy Collective 23/24.

NORTHERN IRELAND



Noel McCann – Voices 2020; Pilot 23; contributed to the BLUE LIGHTS series 1 writers' room, subsequently commissioned to write an episode for series 2.

Matthew McDevitt – Voices 2019; Climate Spring's Hot House Lab 2023; original script PRESERVATION was on the Brit List 2023; contributed to the BLUE LIGHTS series 2 writers' room.

Oisín Kearney and Michael Patrick – Voices 2019; selected for the inaugural BBC Comedy Collective scheme in 2023.

NORTH + MIDLANDS

Laurence Clark - Writers' Access Group 20/21; original comedy pilot PERFECT premiered on Dave in 2022.

Billy Mager – Scripted 22/23; original project greenlit for production.

Nina Thomson – Write Across Liverpool 22; selected for Writers' Access Group 23/24.

Paul Rigby – Write Across Liverpool 22; selected for Scripted 23/24.

Julie Skeat – Write Across Liverpool 22; Alfred Bradley Bursary Award finalist 2023.

Sufiyaan Salam - Voices 22; winner of Merky Books New Writers' Prize; ScreenSkills + DANDI emerging writers' scheme.

Amy Arnold - Voices 22; Scripted 22/23; BBC Radio 3 Verb audio drama commission.

Matthew Smith - Voices 22; BBC Radio 3 Verb audio drama commission.

Karen Featherstone – Writers' Access Group 21/22; BBC Radio 3 Verb audio drama commission.

Alan Flanagan – Scripted 22/23; BBC Radio 3 Verb audio drama commission.

LONDON

Annalisa D'Innella - Writers' Access Group 18/19; SEX EDUCATION s4. ep6.

Archie Maddocks – Voices 2017 ; CRONGTON 10x25' adaptation of Alex Wheatle's children's books with New Pictures for BBC.

Bella Heesom - Pilot 20; SEX EDUCATION s4. ep7.

Daniel Rusteau – Voices 2020; Scripted 20/21; Pilot 21; wrote SUPERDAD, for the award-winning anthology series ON THE EDGE (BlackLight/Ch4); Daniel's play DISMISSED was at the Soho Theatre in Summer 2023.

Danusia Samal – Voices 2018; BODIES ep4, 6 & 7.



Emma Dennis Edwards – Voices 2018; Scripted 2019; Pilot 20; BOARDERS ep3; CHAMPION ep5; CONSENT original single drama.

COMING UP ON SCREEN



SOUTH

Florence Espeut-Nickless – Voices 2023; selected for Dancing Ledge's Screenskills HETV New Talent Scheme 2023/4. Recipient of the Film 4/Peggy Ramsay Playwrights Award 2024. Writer in Residence at the Bristol Old Vic.

WALES

Daf James – Voices 17/18 and Pilot 2019; original drama series LOST BOYS & FAIRIES, due to TX on BBC One Summer 2024.

Emily Burnett – Voices 19/20; writer/director of short film due to TX on BBC Wales and iPlayer 2024.



Rhiannon Boyle – Voices 18/19; an adaptation of her hit stage play of the same name, ANFAMOL was developed by BBC Studios and S4C. TX on S4C in September 2023.

Melodie Karczewski – Voices 2023; shortlisted for the BAFTA Rocliffe New Writing Competition.

Natasha Kaeda – Voices 2023; audio drama due to record in June 2024 for the BBC.

Leila Navabi – Voices 18/19; Edinburgh Fringe Festival debut 2023 musical comedy, COMPOSITION which later transferred to the Soho Theatre in London.

Tim Price – Voices 17/18; wrote the play, NYE, starring Michael Sheen at the National Theatre.

William Mager, REUNION:

The BBC has commissioned REUNION, an emotional thriller of revenge and redemption, which follows the journey of Brennan, a deaf man determined to right his wrongs, while unravelling the truth behind the events that led him to prison.

Produced by Warp Films, the four-part series for BBC One and BBC iPlayer, is written by William Mager, a deaf writer originally from Sheffield, who will also executive produce. It is set and filmed in and around Sheffield and Doncaster. It promises to be a milestone in inclusive storytelling, with the majority of the cast being deaf or using British Sign Language (BSL).

Billy applied to our Open Call back in 2022 with an early draft of the pilot for REUNION and was subsequently selected for our Scripted 23 programme. We're delighted that this story will be coming to audiences across the UK.

Cat Jones, THE JETTY:

BBC Writers' alumna, Cat Jones, also received an original series commission this year for her original new thriller THE JETTY. Produced by Firebird Pictures the series has been written and created by Cat for BBC One and iPlayer.



In the four-part series, for BBC One and BBC iPlayer, a fire tears through a holiday home in a scenic Lancashire lake town. Detective Ember Manning (played by Jenna Coleman) must work out how it connects to a podcast journalist investigating a missing persons cold case and an illicit 'love' triangle between a man in his twenties and two underage girls.

Cat first worked with BBC Writers when she won the 2011 Alfred Bradley Bursary Award with her audio drama, GLORY DAZED. She then went on to write FLEA one of three Original Drama Shorts for BBC Writers and BBC iPlayer in 2014. Her other writing credits include EASTENDERS, HARLOTS and WATERLOO ROAD.

Stef Smith, FLOAT:

Float developed out of an opportunity through BBC Writersroom Scotland for 10-minute pilots on BBC iPlayer. The first series went on to win the Best Short Form Series at Series Mania 2022 and Best Writer for Stef Smith at Series Fest 2022 and at the 2022 RTS Scotland Awards. Series Two of Float lands on BBC iPlayer on 29th March.

COMEDY

Although BBC Writers no longer develop comedy writing talent (this is now looked after by the BBC Comedy Commissioning team directly), we continue to celebrate our comedy alumni writers' successes. A brilliant example is **Bryce Hart** whose brand-new original sitcom, ONLY CHILD, has been recently announced by the BBC Comedy Commissioning team and BBC Scotland.

Bryce took part in our Comedy Room programme in 2016 and Voices 2019. Other opportunities BBC Writers were able to help him secure included, comedy sketch commissions from CBBC and BBC ALBA; residentials with River City and BBC Childrens; and a writer-in-residence opportunity with the Comedy Unit in 2017. In 2018 the Scottish Comedy Writers' Programme, a partnership between BBC Writers and BBC Comedy Commissioning, saw Bryce develop his original sitcom pilot BEEP with Happy Tramp North. BEEP was greenlit through BBC Scotland in 2021 and was BAFTA Scotland nominated in the same year.

BBC WRITERS

THE YEAR AHEAD

2023
2024

What we're looking forward to in the year ahead:

We will be selecting and working with our new **WRITE ACROSS BIRMINGHAM AND THE BLACK COUNTRY** writers. And we will be announcing a new region of focus for our third iteration of the programme.

We will be developing new spec' scripts with our third **WRITERS' ACCESS GROUP** and introducing them to industry.

Our **PILOT 24** cohort will be partnered with a new selection of indies to develop an original series idea to pilot episode stage. **PILOT 24 SCREEN**

SCOTLAND We will also be working with our partners at Screen Scotland supporting Scotland-based writers to take part in our Pilot programme.

OPEN CALL will be back in November 2024 looking for exciting new writers for our **VOICES** and **SCRIPTED** programmes.

We will be renewing partnerships with **CLIMATE SPRING** on their **HOT HOUSE LAB** and the **POPCORN NEW WRITING AWARD**.

And we will be working in partnership with organisations across the UK to expand our short form production offer for writers, directors and producers.



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