

WIGTOWN FESTIVAL COMPANY REGIONAL MENTORING PROGRAMME:



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is mentoring according to Wigtown Festival Company?

“Mentoring is a process through which someone with expertise and experience in your field of work chooses to support you in a time of transition” (from *The Write Guide* by Martin Goodman and Sara Maitland).

More specifically, our mentoring scheme is designed to support the professional and creative development of local writers in Dumfries & Galloway who have identified a developmental need. The scheme is a way of encouraging writers to gain confidence in their abilities, to explore options around how and what they might write, and to engage with ways of developing their writing in the future.

Who is eligible to apply for the programme?

If you are resident in Dumfries & Galloway and can demonstrate a commitment to writing, you are eligible to apply. No history of publication is required, but evidence should be shown of a reasonable quantity of work already undertaken (e.g. three to four chapters of a novel; several short stories/poems; or a strong synopsis, character outlines and first chapter). This is so that the mentoring process can be effective in terms of development and progression. You do not need to be a new writer as long as you can demonstrate a developmental need.

Mentoring is open to writers of all ages (14+) and we do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or on any other basis.

If I have already been on the Wigtown Festival Company’s mentoring programme in the past, can I apply again?

Yes, if a developmental need can still be demonstrated. However, please be advised that priority will be given to first-time applicants. Likewise, if you have applied before but have not been successful, there is no restriction on reapplying.

What kind of writing does the programme cater for?

The programme is open to writers working in any medium or genre (e.g. fiction, non-fiction, poetry, playwriting), and appropriate mentors will be found to accommodate those forms of writing currently represented on the scheme. If you are not sure whether we can accommodate your work, please ask at the Wigtown Festival Company office (details below).

What should I include in my personal statement?

It's always nice to find out a bit about you, your personality, your writing and what your immediate creative plans are. Specifically, it would be helpful to know what you'd like to achieve by taking part in the mentoring scheme, and if there is a particular kind of support you might be looking for. This will ultimately help us to match you with an appropriate mentor.

What kind of writing sample should I submit?

Send us something that showcases your writing in the best way. This doesn't need to be the first chapter of a book, but could be a particularly dramatic section, for example. Please don't send us too much material, or pieces of writing that are very different in terms of style or genre, as this can be confusing for the selection panel in terms of working out what kind of support would be the most helpful to you and it may affect your chances of being selected. Bear in mind that sometimes selecting one small piece of writing can go a lot further than submitting large amounts of material.

If you work in different genres and would like more than one piece of work to be considered for mentoring, we would advise you to submit a separate application for each piece of work. Submit as many applications as you like and each application will be assessed individually according to its own merit.

Who are the Wigtown Festival Company mentors?

We will match you up with an established, professional writer who can accommodate you in terms of the support needed, your particular developmental goals, and the genre/medium in which you write. We will go local wherever possible in order to facilitate face-to-face meetings (so long as they adhere to current government guidelines) and to support the Dumfries & Galloway writing network. However, if a suitable locally-based mentor is not available, or if there is a particular preference to do so, we will look further afield for the best possible match, bearing in mind relevant transport links and ability to travel. If there is a particular writer you'd like to work with, please let us know in your application. We can't promise we'll be able to connect you up with them, but we can certainly ask the question!

How are the applications assessed?

Applications will be assessed anonymously by a small selection panel, which will include writing practitioners and industry professionals. The panel will change regularly so that personal preferences do not become entrenched.

Applications won't be scored against each other as such, although younger writers (aged 14-25) will be assessed alongside others in their peer group to ensure a fairer process. Selection each year is based on finding a good balance between talent, potential and developmental need across the programme, and also on finding a balance in genre and media.

We won't necessarily select the most polished material either. We choose our mentees based on whether we believe mentoring will prove to be a useful experience for the selected writers. This could be someone who is completely new to writing and looking for a bit of direction or it could be someone who is at the stage of seeking advice on how to approach a publisher.

How does the scheme actually work?

The mentoring typically takes place within a recommended 3-month time period, during which there are at least 2 meetings between mentor and mentee along with an assessment of the mentee's work. Meetings can be held online or in person (subject to government advice at the time). During this period, the mentor will also issue a report to the mentee with advice on development.

How should I prepare for my mentoring?

The key things you can do to prepare are to (a) make sure you have a substantial body of work that is ready to share with your mentor and (b) clear adequate space in your calendar to make time for your meetings and any follow-up work that might be required during the process.

A less obvious thing to do is to prepare yourself emotionally to share your work with your mentor and to make sure you're open to accepting feedback. Writing can be a very personal process and it's important to undertake the mentoring scheme at a time when you're prepared for constructive comment and to hear someone else's perspective.

You should also have a clear idea of what you would most like to gain from the mentoring and make sure at your initial meeting with your mentor that you are both clear about goals and expectations.

A good book to read to help you prepare for your mentoring, whether you're a prospective mentee or mentor, is *The Write Guide: Mentoring; The Essential Handbook for Emerging and Established Writers*, by Martin Goodman and Sara Maitland. A copy can be borrowed from the Wigtown Festival Company office, depending on availability.

Does the mentoring need to be carried out with face-to-face meetings?

We believe that one-to-one mentoring provides an excellent opportunity for writers. While normally we would encourage you to have at least one face-to-face meeting during the course of your mentorship (subject to government advice at the time), we recognise that the ability to do that is not always straightforward and meetings can instead be conducted online. Participants are also welcome to use email and telephone calls to contact their mentor. We can advise on and facilitate online meetings where needed.

Do we need to stick to the framework outlined in the mentoring agreement?

No, the mentoring programme is supposed to be flexible. However, for some people there can be a tendency to become over-reliant on the mentorship and so we definitely do not recommend that it becomes an open-ended arrangement. With this in mind, you can adapt the framework and format according to your own needs as long as it fulfils the key requirements of an assessment/development plan of the mentee's work and does not go beyond what can reasonably be expected for the fee paid to the mentor. We would suggest an upper limit on the number of meetings is agreed between mentor and mentee at the beginning of the mentorship so that both parties are clear about expectations.

Can we continue our arrangement beyond the formal mentoring period?

Unless an extension has been agreed with Wigtown Festival Company, if mentor and mentee decide to continue their partnership informally beyond the 3-month mentoring period, this would be by separate arrangement between them and would no longer form part of Wigtown Festival Company's mentoring scheme, nor would Wigtown Festival Company be liable to cover the cost of any additional mentoring fees or expenses.

Who do I talk to if I need additional support during my mentoring?

You can either discuss this directly with your mentor or contact Isla Rosser-Owen (Cultural Producer) at the Wigtown Festival Company office (isla@wigtownbookfestival.com) if you're part of the 26+ scheme or Andy Stewart (Children and Young People's Officer) if you're on the 14-25 scheme. We will do what we can to accommodate any particular support needs you might have.

What to do in the event of one party pulling out of the mentorship?

We would normally expect mentorships to be completed, however we do accept that occasionally there are unforeseen circumstances that mean it's not always possible. If you find yourself unable to complete your placement on the scheme, please contact the Wigtown Festival Company office as soon as possible and we will see if there is anything we can do to resolve the situation (e.g. by agreeing an extension or deferral).

What happens once I have completed the mentoring?

You will probably want a period to refocus on your writing project with a fresh perspective, during which you can apply what you have learned from your mentoring experience.

However, your mentor can also provide you with details of local writing groups, courses, arts organisations, reading/performance space, and other relevant opportunities to help you with your next steps. Details can also be obtained from the Wigtown Festival Company office.

As part of your mentoring award, we also offer you the option of a free place at our annual Writers' Gathering D&G, which is a day of workshops that takes place each spring aimed at networking and continuing professional development.

Can I keep in touch?

We would love to hear about how your writing progresses and any news you might have as your career as a writer develops. As a participant of the scheme, you may also be invited to submit a testimonial, case study or blog posting to our website.

Who do I contact if I have any queries?

If you have any general queries about the mentoring programme, please direct your queries to the Wigtown Festival Company office: mail@wigtownbookfestival.com or 01988 403222.