

# THE WRITING SQUAD



**CHAIR OF THE BOARD  
RECRUITMENT PACK**

**OCTOBER 2024**

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## PHOTOS

Cover Linnae Abraham & CJ Simon in Malika Booker's introduction for Squad 11

2 Rory Thorp in a 1-1 with Core Team member Stevie Ronnie

3 Squad writers Jasmine Simms & Charlotte Carrick with dancer Izzy Brittain in our Dance Transports project with Ella Mesma & Kayo Chingonyi at Yorkshire Dance

4 Board members Hannah Robertshaw & James Varney with Squad writers Olivia Blyth & Vivienne Burgess at a board consultation day

5 Guruleen Kahlo & Annie Dabb write with plasticine in our Disney workshop led by Emma Adams

6 Mack Sproates & Matt Ingram devise a sketch at Jeremy Dyson's Writing the Funny Stuff workshop

9. Musician Jasmine Simons, Conductor Joe Chesterman-March & Squad writer Riley Bramley-Dymond rehearsing a new piece in our collaboration with the No Dice Collective.

10 Writer Lydia Allison edits with photographer Lizzie Coombes on our street Writing workshop with Lizzie & Andrew McMillan.

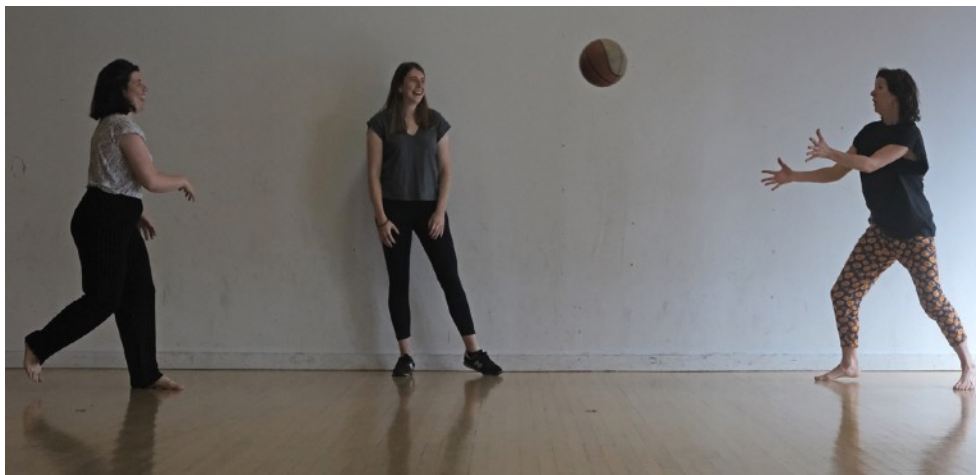
Are you passionate about new writing? Do you love to read, watch and listen to new work? Are you willing to blend your experience with new styles, new ideas and the changing needs of young artists? Do you want to help us create the next generation of writers in the North?

As current board members' terms come to an end, the Writing Squad is looking for a new chair to help shape our future.

As Chair, your role would be to:

- establish a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Director, including regular contact to maintain an overview of the Writing Squad's activities
- provide strategic leadership for the delivery of mission, values and activities of the organisation while ensuring that the Writing Squad is in sound financial health with systems in place to manage people, activity and be legally and financially accountable
- ensure the board is efficient and effective and that the board is refreshed through recruitment, reflecting the balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to fulfil their role and reflect the interests and needs of writers in the Squad
- ensure that meetings are well-planned and chaired, and that constructive relationships exist with and between the Board, the Core Teams and Squad writers
- play an outward-facing role and foster external relationships in the interests of the organisation: acting as an ambassador and spokesperson when required, supporting fundraising, building and maintaining close relationships with key funders and the independent and commercial new writing sectors.

You don't necessarily have to have a literature, or even an arts, background. You may have specific professional skills, or have a more general experience of organisations and communities.



*"My experience of chairing the Writing Squad board has only been positive and I've really enjoyed and valued my time working with Steve and board members. It is certainly not a one way street in terms of contribution and I have got so much out of being part of this brilliant organisation. I look forward to board meetings, we make sure all voices are heard and healthy debate is encouraged. Being an advocate for the Writing Squad in my working life has been a real pleasure."*

*Sophie O'Neill , Writing Squad Chair*

# BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

## Board Member Duties and Responsibilities

- contribute to the strategic direction, policy, objectives and targets of the Writing Squad
- take an active role in preparation and approval of our business plan
- make sure we maintain a clear vision and strategic direction
- ensure we act in accordance with the law and within the power of our Memorandum and Articles of Association ...
- ... and in accordance with all other legal requirements, such as health and safety, data protection and employment laws, and with any regulatory requirements
- line manage the Squad Director.
- ensure that the Squad's activities are effectively monitored and that we respond to feedback
- ensure ongoing personal and professional development of our Core Teams to reflect best practice
- safeguard the Writing Squad's financial stability, including approval of annual accounts, annual budget and advice on major resources
- promote and advocate for the Writing Squad



## Qualities and Experience Desired

- an interest in the arts and new writing
- a commitment to talent development
- transferable experience from either the public or private sector
- objectivity, fairness, integrity, wisdom, discretion and good judgement
- strategic and creative thinking, independent judgement and the ability to focus on practical issues
- effective advocacy and communication skills
- an understanding of good governance, community building and/or people management

## Time Commitment

Time commitment equates to 2 days a month although occasionally more may be required. We meet four times a year, twice in person and twice on Zoom. In addition time is needed to absorb board papers, see Squad activity or attend an away day.

Currently our in person and online meetings take place 15.00-17.00 on a Wednesday.

Board members serve a three-year term with maximum extension of three years.

## Eligibility

The Writing Squad is a company limited by guarantee and you would be a registered director at Companies House. The law places certain restrictions on becoming a company director, you cannot be under 16 years of age or disqualified under the Company Director's Disqualification Act 1986. There is more information on being a company director from [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) [here](#).

Although being a Writing Squad board member is not a public appointment, the seven principles of public life as defined by the Nolan Commission are applicable to this role: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

**While the role is voluntary, the Writing Squad covers any costs relating to travel, training, access and other expenses board members may incur to attend meetings or Squad activity.**



*"As a publishing professional, I've found my time on the board of the writing squad a rewarding and enlightening experience - the pool of british talent that agents and editors draw from would be severely limited if it wasn't for the development and support of initiatives like the writing squad, nurturing and supporting at an early yet crucial stage in young artists' lives."*

*Angelique Tran Van Sang, Board Member*

# HOW TO APPLY

Please write to us telling us

- what you would bring to the role
- why you want to be part of our future
- what first influenced your passion for reading and/or writing/talent development

Please send us a CV too. **Please send these to Steve Dearden at [steve@writingsquad.com](mailto:steve@writingsquad.com)**

The deadline to apply is **Friday 29th November 2024.**

We plan to interview prospective candidates.

This is the timescale:

29.11.24	Closing Date
w/c 9.12.24	Interviews & Decision
w/c 16.12.24	Second interviews
22.1.25	In Person Board/Core Team Meeting and cross over with current Chair

The Writing Squad is committed to equality and creating an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect. As a creative organisation based in the north of England, developing the writers of the future and creating new work now, we want to reflect and support the plurality and difference of the people who live or are from here.



*"I sometimes refer to the board as the brain of the organisation, it's where we reflect on what we do, process feedback and listen to outside influences. Our commitment to 50% of the board always being made up of Squad writers means that we can shape the future round the needs of our community."*

*Steve Dearden, Squad Director*

# ABOUT THE WRITING SQUAD



The Writing Squad exists to create the next generation of writers in the North.

We provide workshops, 1-1 support and investment for young writers and literature activists.

Our initial programme is for writers aged 16-22 who live, work or study in the North of England and we continue to offer writers and literature activists writing and professional development.

We are building a community of artists who make new work together and support each other's development.

What we offer is shaped by the constant renewal of the needs, ambitions and circumstances of our writers, whom we encourage to create self-sustaining communities.

We take Squad writers seriously as writers, artists and activists, they just happen to be young.

Our support is rigorous and for the rest of their writing lives.

We seek out projects which bring in income, but also provide our writers with experience and employment.

Since 2001 we have worked with 277 writers, many of whom have gone on to be published, have productions staged, plays broadcast and films made. At the last count, 20% make their living as writers or in the cultural industries, a further 28% are beginning to make a name for themselves and/or earn some of their living as writers and activists.

Grads have gone on to win significant prizes, be published by indie and mainstream publishers, commissioned by broadcasters, produced by national and regional theatres and work for commercial and subsidised cultural organisations. Some have set up their own organisations or collectives.

However we measure success by whether the writers we work with achieve what they set out to, we celebrate those writers who go on to use writing in their not arts work, or for their physical and mental health, as much as those who win prizes.

The Writing Squad is a national portfolio organisation of Arts Council England, and is a company limited by guarantee.

## THE TEAM

We contract a Director, Steve Dearden, four days a week, a Co-ordinator, Libby Williamson, one and a half days a week, have a Core Team of Malika Booker, Emma Adams, Katie Hale and Stevie Ronnie providing one to one support for roughly 35 days a year, and we bring in freelancers to deliver our workshop programme.

An uplift from the Arts Council in our last settlement enabled us to recruit Squad Grads to a time-limited programme which increases our capacity and gives them more extended experience of writer development, they are CORE2: Jessica Wood working with Steve and Libby, and Helen Bowell, Georgia Affonso and Kym Deyn supporting our writers for 45 days over 18 months. Running our interdisciplinary support is COREx: Jamal Gerald and Lydia Hounat for 20 days each.



## **HOW DO WE WORK?**

The Squad is a virtual organisation. We have no offices, we work from home and wherever we are, holding workshops in places like hotels, libraries, arts centres and universities and we meet for one to ones in libraries and coffee shops or on Zoom. Building for us is a verb not a noun. Although we recruit in the north we work with our writers wherever they are in the world.

A great deal of our activity relies on technology and social media. We communicate electronically, we are a paperless organisation, we value information and its rapid dissemination among our writers, we use X, Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok to build the Squad community, Facebook, email, text and Eventbrite to communicate within that community. We communicate externally through our website and an occasional Mailchimp newsletter.

As well as one to ones between writers and our core team - we have two or three core team meetings a year, four board meetings and many workshops – virtual workshops and meetings held in the evening, day-long workshops held on Saturdays in cities across the North and the occasional residential weekend.



## HOW ARE WE LED?

The Writing Squad is an ethos rather than an ego led organisation, driven by the constantly changing ambitions, needs and circumstances of our writers.

We have a strong set of values and recognise that the members of our Core Team all bring different strengths and work in different ways.

We are a slow organisation, committed to long term relationships and, unless we feel they need a nudge, we don't put pressure on Squad writers, we are there when they need us for the rest of their writing lives.

50% of our board will always be made up of Squad writers. We also have an On-Board Experience scheme giving a year long opportunity to find out what being on a board entails. Though, in meetings, you wouldn't be able to tell an On-Boarder apart from full board members.

Some of the best things we do have come from criticism of things we have done wrong, not well or not at all. We take evaluation seriously, and just as we do with our writers' work, we encourage, respect honest and open feedback, then act on it.

*"I've learnt so much from being on the board, and seeing what goes into making The Writing Squad what it is. I've loved being behind the scenes, being able to make suggestions and problem solve. I now feel more confident to step into leadership roles in the future."*

*Beth Westbrook. On Board Experience Squad Writer*



*"Being part of the Writing Squad board has been a really interesting and enriching experience. Whilst I don't work within a literature context, the Squad's work around championing talented young people and creating cultures of support has really resonated with me. One of the things I value about the Writing Squad board has been the openness and honesty, cultivated in meetings. It feels like challenge is well received and that there is genuine interest in evolving the organisation in response to the needs of those it serves."*

*Hannah Robertshaw, Board Member*

# FURTHER INFORMATION

Please do get in touch with Steve or Sophie if you want any further information.

You might also find it useful to have a poke around our site, especially:

Our directory of Squad writers, not everyone has a profile and not everyone keeps theirs up to date, but our writers do get work through here. We often get enquiries from people wanting to work with Squad writers and being able to offer them alternatives, Squad writers who fit their needs, make sure we don't always recommend the same people.

We call this our crazy list, all or most of the places Squad writers have been published, performed, produced, broadcast, worked, interned and the companies <https://www.writingsquad.com> and projects they have set up.

There is more about our core offer here and you can find more about our projects, some in house and some with partner, here.

Our aim is for other people to publish and produce our writers, however occasionally we do share their work in our online magazine PUSH.

We also share their books and recordings on our Bookshelf, share their films on our Player, and recently board member Gregory Kearns has been interviewing Squad poets on our Squadcast!



[www.writingsquad.com](http://www.writingsquad.com)

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