

Comparative Study of New Writing Support in the UK

Liz Ryan

<i>Preface</i>	1
Introduction	3
Summary of Research Findings	4
I. What Playwrights Network Organisations Look Like	7
II. What Playwrights Network Organisations Do	23
III. Delivery Partnerships	44
IV. Going Forward	45
V. Conclusions and Recommendations	46
VI. Next Steps	50

About the author:

Liz Ryan is a broadcast and commissioned radio playwright. In 2002 she became Chair of Script Yorkshire and then, in 2007, with the permission of the Charity Commission, she moved from a trustee role into a one-year Administrator post with the organisation funded by the Arts Council. She was an elected member of the Board of the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society for five years (2002-2006) and holds the Institute of Directors' Diploma in Company Direction.

Preface

In late 2006 Script Yorkshire learnt of the success of its ACE Yorkshire 'Routes To Sustainability' Grants for the Arts application. The overarching aim of the project – now nearing completion – was to map out a sustainable future for the organisation in order to make the case to potential sponsors, including the Arts Council, for an appropriate level and type of funding.

This study of new writing support agencies has been intended primarily as a benchmarking exercise, enabling Script Yorkshire to distinguish its own best fit model for new writing support in the Yorkshire context and to develop our programme of work. It identifies a variety of possible models, areas of activity and funding levels across the UK.

Unless otherwise stated, all data has been obtained via a standard questionnaire circulated to Playwrights Network organisations (Appendix 1). Italics and speech marks indicate a direct quote lifted verbatim from a questionnaire -- cleansed of idiosyncrasies of grammar and spelling. Italics alone mean the organisation in question has not, when given sight of it, challenged a statement made by me about their activities. Where there was no response, or an incomplete questionnaire was returned, information was taken from the Network member's 2006-7 annual report and accounts and other published documents -- 2006-7 being the most recent complete data set available. This data was then followed up in phone and email exchanges. Many thanks to Sarah Dickenson and Jonathan Meth of writernet, Chris Bridgman at North West Playwrights, Catherine Edwards (Script), Fintan O'Higgins (TWP), Chris Taylor (New Writing South), Paul Bourne (Menagerie), Sian Summers (Sherman Cymru), Julie Ellen (Playwrights Studio, Scotland), Hanna Slatne (Tinderbox), Nina Steiger (Soho Writers' Centre) and the team at New Writing North (especially Catherine Robson) for their information, feedback, patience and support. Dr Penny Grubb, chair of the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, offered valuable additional academic perspective. Any errors that remain are entirely mine.

Though the primary purpose is to assist Script Yorkshire in mapping out a sustainable future – this is very much a working document – the study will also be circulated within the Playwrights Network and externally to interested parties such as the Arts Council. I hope it will prove a handy digest of organisations in the UK that support and encourage new writing for performance whilst aspiring to operate at a regional strategic level. It must, however, be emphasised that as far as SY is concerned we do not believe in or advocate a single, 'right' method of new writing support. Different organisations will inevitably choose to put their effort behind different approaches that might, or might not, be applicable or desirable in other regions.

Liz Ryan
July 2008

Introduction

Script Yorkshire (SY) is a registered charity and membership organisation. Membership is accessibly priced at £40 waged and £20 unwaged per annum. It is the ACE Yorkshire region's only support and advocacy organisation for committed playwrights and scriptwriters which operates at a region-wide and strategic level. Please visit our website at www.scriptyorkshire.co.uk for information about upcoming events and the range of benefits we offer to members.

The Playwrights Network (PN) is a loose affiliation of regional organisations which work to develop playwrights (and sometimes writers in other media too) across the UK. It is curated by Jonathan Meth and Sarah Dickenson of writernet, a UK-based charitable organisation with a national remit to “provide dramatic writers with the tools they need to build better careers and redefine the culture in which they work” (www.writernet.co.uk).

At the time of writing, the Playwrights Network consists of the following organisations:

Name	Arts Council Nation or Region	Questionnaire response
New Writing North	ACE North East	No.
North West Playwrights	ACE North West	Yes.
Script	ACE West Midlands	Yes.
Script Yorkshire	ACE Yorkshire	n/a
East Midlands Theatre Writing Partnership	ACE East Midlands	Yes.
New Writing South	ACE South	Yes.
Menagerie	ACE East	Yes.
South West New Writing Network	ACE South West	Yes.
Sherman Cymru	Arts Council of Wales	Yes.
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	Scottish Arts Council	No.*
Tinderbox	Arts Council of Northern Ireland	Yes.
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre	ACE London	No.*
Writernet	UK	Yes.

* But provided published documents and answered questions by phone and email.

With the sole exception of the South West New Writing Network (SWNWN), each is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, governed by a board of trustees. The SWNWN is, in the words of co-ordinator Sarah Dickenson “a project, not an organisation.” It is a partnership between writernet and Theatre South West, the federation of strategic locality plans for theatre in the region.

Summary of Research Findings

The Playwrights Network is a loose affiliation of regional organisations which work to develop playwrights (and sometimes writers in other media too) across the UK. It is curated by Jonathan Meth and Sarah Dickenson of writernet. Please go to: <http://www.writernet.co.uk/php/map.php?id=294&ID=> for a clickable map of Playwrights Network organisations.

The organisations identified by Jonathan and invited to join the Network vary by size of income, level and type of Arts Council support and scope of activity. There are three broad templates of organisational structure in the regions:

- The theatre – new writing companies identified as operating in a strategic way to serve an entire region. Menagerie Theatre (ACE East), Sherman Cymru (Arts Council of Wales), Tinderbox Theatre (Arts Council of Northern Ireland), Soho Theatre and Writers Centre (ACE London).
- The membership organisation – in which the members are key to the governance of the organisation, with the power to elect and remove trustees. Script Yorkshire (ACE Yorkshire), New Writing South (ACE South).
- The ‘Agency’ -- an independent charitable organisation established as the result of some strategic thinking. New Writing North (ACE North), Script (ACE West Midlands), East Midlands Theatre Writing Partnership (ACE East Midlands), Playwrights Studio, Scotland (Scottish Arts Council), North West Playwrights (ACE North West).

The South West New Writing Network is a *project* hosted by writernet to serve the ACE South West region in response to the perceived lack of strategic support for new writing. Writernet itself maintains a strategic overview of new writing provision across the UK, and works in different ways at different times, for example in the South East through its Hydroponic programme around cultural diversity, to support Script in the West Midlands as it undergoes organisational refocusing, and in Yorkshire by setting up the Yorkshire Theatre Writing Network, bringing playwrights and cultural operators together from across the region.

New Writing North (NWN) is the leviathan of regional writing support agencies with annual income in 2007 of £605,789. A more typical income range for agencies and membership organisations in that year was between £185,442 (East Midlands Theatre Writing Partnership) and £61,534 (Script) with the level of Arts Council funding tending towards 55%-70%. Patterns of funding were complex and difficult to disaggregate. However, **the proportion of income derived from Arts Council sources is less significant in determining the long-term stability of a PN organisation than the success with which it has embedded additional long-term funding partners.** This was the key finding of the study and the only real exception was New Writing South (NWS), for whom a variety of self-generated income sources fulfilled this function.

Script Yorkshire is the only PN organisation not to have dedicated office space – perhaps as a result of this the proportion of its income devoted to staffing costs is at the higher end of the scale. Two organisations had an online searchable writers’ database (*Pirandello* at NWS and *Talent Pool* at writernet) with the rest holding writers’ contact details electronically in-house, sometimes together with their script reports. Four offered significantly useful, open-access information resources for writers on their websites (NWN, NWS, Soho and writernet). The rest made a half-hearted stab at this (perhaps via a links page) or limited themselves to information about their own activities. With two exceptions (North West Playwrights and NWS) hardcopy newsletters have disappeared. NWP, TWP and Menagerie are the only PN organisations not to issue regular e-bulletins but all send emails to writers on their lists from time to time.

Soho, NWP, TWP, NWS, Menagerie, Playwrights Studio Scotland, Sherman Cymru and Tinderbox all regard their script reading service as an important entry point for writers into their development programmes; with the exception of Soho, they handle 100-300 submissions a year. Mentoring schemes are common but low volume and usually the mentees are selected or emerge as candidates via their participation in other development work. These progression routes – **by which a writer can move between script feedback, tailored workshops, access to showcases and performance, mentoring and perhaps ultimately a commission** – are typical of the way the most confident PN organisations operate. Competitions, bursaries and prizes are rarer and only really kick in once an organisation has reached the point where it can access corporate, ‘branded’ sponsorship. Annual new writing festivals are a popular way of showcasing new work and most regions have one.

Targeted outreach provision is aimed at schools, young writers (18-25) and “the third sector” (i.e. community organisations, with particular emphasis on the voiceless and excluded) though not every PN organisation is active in every category. **Once again, the most successful model of provision seems to involve a range of targeted and open access projects which feed into invitation-only workshops, showcases, mentoring etc when talent is identified.**

Overwhelmingly, the favoured way of working was to deliver programmes of activity via partnerships. For example: “*During the year 2006/7 we worked in partnership with Brighton and Hove Council’s Celebrating Age Project, the Global Grants Project, the Specialist Schools Trust, Farnham Maltings, Literature Training, the Nightingale Theatre Brighton, BBC Southern Counties Radio, Times newspapers, Jubilee Library Brighton, University of Sussex, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Guildford, Writernet, Blatchington Mill School, NAWE.*” NWS

PN organisations were active in a wide range of international projects and partnerships in 2007. And NWN, Menagerie, Sherman Cymru, Soho and Tinderbox either published play scripts themselves or worked with publishers such as Oberon to do so.

Finally, it was noticeable that the organisations that lacked RFO status (writernet, Menagerie and Script Yorkshire) placed correspondingly greater emphasis on the importance of self-generated income – as did NWS which has only just acquired

RFO status. But every single PN organisation which responded to the questionnaire cited 'funding' as the key issue facing them.

Clearly then, there is no coherent national approach with regard to new writing support agencies and the type of support a promising writer will be able to access is very much dependent on a postcode lottery. It might, therefore, be desirable to have a stronger lead from the centre via an ACE new writing strategy.

Clearly this study has merely scratched the surface on the issue and much work remains to be done. Script Yorkshire, as an organisation, takes seriously its commitment to "widening participation in the writing for performance and broadcasting industries by all sections of the community" and is therefore bound to regard this patchy and unequal provision with some concern. Going forward, a potentially interesting piece of research, able to take into account the feedback and opinions of writers themselves, might be commissioned by the PN Network in partnership with an academic institution, national professional writers' organisations such as the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society and the government's "Big Research Programme."

PART I: WHAT PLAYWRIGHTS NETWORK ORGANISATIONS LOOK LIKE

1. Playwrights Network Organisations

The organisations identified by Jonathan Meth and invited to join the Network vary a great deal by size of income, level of Arts Council support and the scope of their activity in supporting writers, as Fig. 1 makes clear.

Intriguingly, PN organisations' own estimates of the size of population they served were sometimes substantially out of line with those of the Office of National Statistics. (Arts Council national bodies and regions are largely coterminous with National Statistics nations and regions e.g. the Arts Council of Wales serves the geographical area of Wales).

2. Models of New Writing Support

Three broad templates of organisational structure can be identified:

a) The Theatre

A theatre dedicated primarily to the production of new work and with a strong, new writing development arm. PN organisations that fall into this category are:

Menagerie Theatre (ACE East)
Sherman Cymru (Arts Council of Wales)
Tinderbox Theatre (Arts Council of Northern Ireland)
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre (ACE London)

There are numerous theatres in the UK that perform new writing, but these companies have been identified by Jonathan Meth as operating in a strategic way to serve an entire region e.g. by holding an annual new writing festival that has developed a significant regional impact (Menagerie) or by being in unique regional possession of a Literary Manager (Tinderbox).

Whilst most of the theatres in this group (e.g. Menagerie) have evolved into their strategic role over time, the odd one out is Sherman Cymru which was formed in April 2007 out of a merger between Cardiff's Sherman Theatre and Sgript Cymru, Wales's dedicated new writing organisation.

Soho Theatre claims an additional national and international role via its location at the heart of the capital and a free script-reading service for scripts in English from anywhere in the world. But it combines this with the intensely local remit of The Westminster Prize.

b) The Membership Organisation

Two PN organisations have a membership element:

Script Yorkshire
New Writing South

In addition, North West Playwrights (NWP) still has a tiny subscription element. Writernet is moving away from a subscription (trading) model towards being wholly grant-funded but in 2006-07 still derived £8,349 from this source.

In a membership organisation (Script Yorkshire, NWS), the members are key to the governance of the organisation, entitled to attend the AGM and with the democratic power to elect trustees. It is this active participation by the bedrock of the region’s dramatic writers that bestows legitimacy.

Script Yorkshire’s dependence upon self-generated income via subscriptions/membership fees is unique amongst PN organisations. However NWS had a variety of ingenious minor sources of self-generated income, including membership fees, which between them amounted to £15,824.57 (almost 20% of its total income).

	Total Income 2007	Membership charge in 2007	membership Income	%
Script Yorkshire	£17,929	£35 waged, £15 unwaged, company	£5,261 (dramatic writers only)	29.3%
New Writing South	£81,359	£35 waged, £20 unwaged, company	£4,063 (includes non-dramatic writers)	5.0%

Investigating NWS in more detail the most significant sources of earned income were: a) a one-off fee from Oxford Brookes University for incorporating the pre-existing *Pirandello* writers’ database into their website; b) fees from festivals, library services etc for supplying branded NWS workshops, and c) a modest operating surplus of between 20% and 35% generated by the education programme. However this operating surplus barely covered the additional administrative costs of running the project itself and there was certainly no financial contribution (profit) to the wider organisation. (phone conversation with Chris Taylor 18th May 2008).

c) The Quango or ‘Agency’

This is a dedicated new writing organisation established as the result of some strategic thinking by somebody in the region (e.g. Arts Council

managers, theatres or even, in the case of North West Playwrights, writers themselves). Organisations that fall into this category are:

New Writing North (ACE North)
Script (ACE West Midlands)
Theatre Writing Partnership (ACE East Midlands)
Playwrights Studio, Scotland (Scottish Arts Council)
North West Playwrights (ACE North West)

And also the SWNWN (ACE South West) “project”.

New Writing North, the winner of the 2007 WGGB Theatre Committee New Writing Encouragement Award, has leveraged generous amounts of regional development aid and commercial sponsorship which puts it in a league of its own (fig. 1). It has a broad remit across all forms of creative writing. It has also been able to develop the Northern Writers’ Centre, the first purpose-built venue for writers and writing activity in the UK, which includes a performance space.

Script and the Playwrights Studio are much more modestly funded (fig. 1) and focus primarily on writing for performance. Sgript Cymru, also built on the agency or “quango” model, was last year merged with the Sherman Theatre to form Sherman Cymru. Sadly, what these three have in common is a history of funding uncertainty and instability. For example, Script was earlier this year informed of its loss of RFO funding from 2009. And although in 2007 the Playwrights Studio was revenue funded via grants from the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow District Council which together with sponsorship amounted to £106,186, this was a reduction from the 2006 figure of £145,831. This fell again to £100,000 (£85,000 SAC and £15,000 GDC) in 2008-9. But good news arrived recently in the form of “Flexible Funding” from SAC of £130,000 a year for 2009/10 and 2010/11 “which is much more stable for us.” (Julie Ellen email, 13 May 2008)

I wondered initially whether a funding mix unduly dominated by a single source – the Arts Council – was the crucial determinant of an organisation’s lack of robustness. For example, in its final year, the year ending March 2006, Sgript Cymru received a revenue grant from the Arts Council of Wales of £304,057 with the next largest single contribution being a comparatively tiny £20,000 from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

But examining figs. 1 and 2 it can be seen that this theory does not stand up. Two of the most embedded of the regional writing support agencies – North West Playwrights and the East Midlands Theatre Writing Partnership are both Arts Council-funded to the tune of 70%.

TWP arises out of a longstanding consortium of East Midlands theatres. *“We work closely with venues and producing companies across the East Midlands but specifically with Nottingham Playhouse, Leicester Theatre Trust, Royal and Derngate Theatres, New Perspectives and Lakeside Arts*

Centre who all pay a subscription to the company.” (TWP questionnaire.) ACE revenue funding of £48,575 in 2007 was therefore supplemented by £29,592 derived from the theatres.

NWP, which last year celebrated its 25th anniversary, is notable for enjoying the substantial support of local government in the shape of an annually renewed grant (£14,800 in 2007) from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

For stand-alone, “office-based” agencies therefore, it appears likely that Arts Council funding stability is best achieved when there is at least one major, long-standing and deeply embedded local funding partner and stakeholder. However, as fig. 1 makes clear it is the additional legitimacy bestowed by a strong external relationship, or set of relationships, rather than the proportion of Arts Council funding per se, that appears to be the crucial factor in achieving survival over the long term

3. Funding Mix

There are wide differences between PN organisations in sources of income and general funding mix (Fig. 2). Obviously, when comparing an office-based agency or membership organisation with a producing company one is not comparing like with like – and this is further complicated when, as in the case of the Soho Theatre and Writers’ Centre, the company also manages commercial property and runs a sophisticated venue. However, closeness to production is such an intrinsic part of the offer made by such theatres to writers – even if all the work developed does not actually go on to receive a full production -- that it seemed arbitrary, as well as difficult, to tease out the ‘literary management’ side from the rest of their activities.

New Writing North was notably successful in generating £535,540 of voluntary income (ACE and non-ACE grants, donations and sponsorship) from a variety of sources but this must be set against £147,391 annual staffing costs (Catherine Robson email 26 June). Menagerie Theatre generated workshop fees of £36,522 which derived largely from its corporate training and education arms and work for NACRO, the government training agency. writernet has secured funding from corporates (Deutsche Bank), a number of Trusts and foundations, local authorities (Reading Borough Council), European Union (Culture 2000 and Equal programmes), the Lottery (New Opportunities Fund), the British Council and three different regions of Arts Council England.

North West Playwrights relied upon just two donors, ACE and the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, whilst Menagerie, the Theatre Writing Partnership and New Writing South had a much more even and eclectic mix of funding sources. Whilst this might on the face of it give them more financial robustness, NWP could argue that a long-established and stable relationship with its partners enable it to get on with the job in hand. In other words, beyond observing that agencies which rely too heavily upon a single source of

legitimation in the shape of an Arts Council revenue grant without developing strong external partnerships do not seem to have a long shelf life, it is not possible within the parameters of this very limited survey to make glib statements about the ideal funding mix. So much depends on historical and local circumstances and upon the attitude of local theatres and the Arts Council.

Name	Arts Council Nation or Region	Population^a	Income 2006/7	Arts Council funding 2006/7	% Income 2006/7 Arts Council funding	Scope	RFO?
New Writing North	ACE North East	2.6m (North East)	£605,789 ^b	revenue £169,850 , project funding £36,711^b	34%	All types of creative writing	Yes. ^h
North West Playwrights	ACE North West	6.8m (North West)	£78,601 ^b	£53,800^b	68%	Writing for theatre ^d	Yes
Script	ACE West Midlands	5.4m (West Midlands)	£61,534 ^b	£41,801^b	67%	Dramatic writing for stage, screen and radio.	Yes.
Script Yorkshire	ACE Yorkshire	5.1m (Yorks & the Humber)	£17,929 ^c	£11,030^c	62%	Writing for performance and broadcast media	No.
Theatre Writing Partnership	ACE East Midlands	4.4m (East Midlands)	£185,442	£133,828 (£48,575 revenue, £85,253 project-specific) ^b	72%	Writing for theatre	Yes.
New Writing South	ACE South	8.2m (South East)	£81,359	£45,000	55%	All aspects of creative writing (80% writing for performance in 2007)	Yes.^e
Menagerie Theatre	ACE East	5.6m (East)	£227,441 ^b	£107,485^b	47%	Writing for theatre	No.
SWNWN	ACE South West	5.1m (South West)	n/a	n/a ^f		Writing for live performance	No.
Sherman Cymru	Arts Council of Wales	3.0m (Wales)	n/a	n/a		Writing for theatre	n/a
Playwrights	Scottish Arts	5.1m (Scotland)	£113,693 ^b	n/a		Writing for theatre	Yes. ^b

Studio, Scotland	Council							
Tinderbox Theatre	Arts Council of Northern Ireland	1.7m (Northern Ireland)	£304,510	£222,304 ^g	75%	Writing for theatre	Yes.	
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre	ACE London	7.5m (London)	£1,960,356	£628,259	32%	Writing for theatre broadly interpreted to encompass cross-artform working.	Yes. ⁱ	
WRITERNET	UK	n/a	£153,063	£39,238	26%	Writing for theatre	no	

Fig. 1 Playwrights Network Organisations across the UK.

^a National Statistics (Mid-2006 Population Estimates)

^b Annual Report

^c However, the substantial part of a £26,000 Grants for the Arts award was held over into the following financial year's accounts.

^d "However, we have recently taken the decision to begin to explore dramatic writing for other media - but this will be a gradual

expansion, and start with some experimental pilot projects."

^e **Not in 2007 but RFO status from April 2008.**

^f but ACE South West supported

^g Arts Council of Northern Ireland supported.

^h ACE North East website.

ⁱ ACE London website

Name	I n c o m e 2 0 0 6 / 7	Arts Council revenue funding 2006/7	Arts Council project funding 2006/7	Local Authority	Other grants	Commercial sponsorship Element?	Interest and other investment income	Other self generated Income	Miscellaneous/ unidentifiable
New Writing North	£605,789^b	£169,850	£36,711	£56,853 ^x	£190,961 _y	£74,000 ^z	£4,768	£70,181	£2,465
North West Playwrights	£78,601^b	£53,800 ^b	--	£14,400	£7,080	--	£1,779	£1,067	£475 (anniversary income)
Script	£61,534	£41,801	--	--	£14,135 ^k	--	--	£3,563 ^l	£2,035 (in kind)
Script Yorkshire	£17,929^c		£11,030 ^c	£50	--	Yes. ^r	£8	£6,841 ^q	--
Theatre Writing Partnership	£185,442	£48,575 ^b	£85,253 ^b	--	£20,885 ⁱ	--	£1,137	£29,592 ^j	--
New Writing South	£81,359	£45,000	--	£2,900	£14,282 ^m	--	£452.91	£19,859 ⁿ	
Menagerie Theatre	£227,441^b	£15,312 ^b	£92,173 ^b	£1,000	£28,500 ^o	--	£945	£89,511 ^p	--
South West New Writing Network	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	--	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sherman Cymru	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Playwrights Studio, Scotland	£113,693^b	n/a	n/a	£15,000	£6,095	--	£1,412	n/a	n/a
Tinderbox Theatre	£304,510	£100,950	£121,354	£15,500 ^s	£55,637. ^t	Yes.	n/a	£7,825	£3,244
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre	£1,960,356	£628,259	£16,000	£25,000	£190,884	Yes.	£497,716 ^u	£602,497	n/a
writernet	£153,063	--	£39,000	£55,000	£21,300	£23,000	n/a	£13,500	n/a

Fig 2. Sources of Income: The Funding Mix

Theatre Writing Partnership:

GRANTS: ¹ Esme Fairbairn Foundation £10,000 (£9,000 project-specific, £1,000 unrestricted), Awards for All £10,000 (Momentum Festival), donations £885

SELF-GENERATED: ^j Subscriptions from theatres £19,750, ticket sales £9,842

Script:

GRANTS: ^k Screen West Midlands £8,010, Awards For All £5,000, Birmingham Rep £1,125

SELF-GENERATED: ^l Workshop fees £2,788, script reading £775

New Writing South:

GRANTS: ^m Global grant £1,018, other grants and trusts £10,250, donations £114

SELF-GENERATED: ⁿ Includes membership subscriptions £4,062.53, workshops £4,539.33, script reading £336.24, conference delegate fees £654.54, mailing list income £845.05, SideShows income £172.00, other earned income £1,430.55

Menagerie Theatre:

GRANTS: ^o Colchester Arts Centre £4,000, The Foyle Foundation £10,000, The Junction £2,500, BBC East £12,000

SELF-GENERATED: ^p Workshop fees £36,522, performance fees £21,132, co-production/commission £30,055, other 1,802

Playwrights Studio

GRANTS: Revenue grants received from Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow District Council (Annual Report). GDC contribution £15,000 (Julie Ellen email 13th May).

Script Yorkshire:

SELF-GENERATED: ^Q workshop and ticket receipts £1,520, subscriptions and donations £5,261, competition fees £60
SPONSORSHIP: ^R In-kind partnership with BrownButler Chartered Accountants (advice, preparation of accounts, room space)
Tinderbox:

LOCAL AUTHORITY: ^S Belfast City Council

GRANTS: ^T Lottery Fund, Community Relations Council

Soho Theatre and Writers Centre:

INVESTMENT INCOME: ^U Catering rental income £305,801, interest £20,957

SELF-GENERATED: ^V Box office and co-production income £336,197, programme sales £16,885, Writers Centre income £5,533, visiting theatres and comedy income £243,882, bar income and ancillary sales £84,354, premises income £86,604

GRANTS: ^W Grants and sponsorship

New Writing North:

Breakdown of income by categories in table supplied by Catherine Robson, email 26 June

LOCAL AUTHORITY: ^X includes Middlesbrough BC £29,000, Tees Valley Strategic Partnership and Local Authorities £31,500, North

Tyneside Council £15,229 (published documents)

GRANTS: ^Y includes Heritage Lottery Fund £25,000, The Foyle Foundation £20,000, Northern Rock Foundation £32,621 (published documents)

SPONSORSHIP: ^Z includes Orange PCS £74,000 (published documents)

Writernet

LOCAL AUTHORITY – £55,000 Reading Borough Council

SPONSORSHIP – £23,000 Deutsche bank

GRANTS

Trusts and Foundations - £10,000 Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

European - £3,000 EU Culture 2000

British Council - £8,300

Arts Council England, - £39,000

SELF GENERATED – £13,500 (subscriptions and script reading)

4. Facilities

This is what PN Organisations told me about the physical space they occupy:

Name	Are you buildings based? What physical facilities do you have access to?
North West Playwrights	<i>"Office but reliant on theatre partners for performance space."</i>
Script	<i>"Office-based, with access to meeting rooms if necessary. Meeting space occasionally provided free at Birmingham Rep. Possibly rehearsal space if requested."</i>
Theatre Writing Partnership	<i>"Based at Nottingham Playhouse and partnered with regional theatres."</i>
New Writing South	<i>"We have an office."</i>
Menagerie Theatre	<i>"Yes, located in The Junction theatre which subsidises rehearsal space and co-produces Hotbed festival."</i>
SWNWN	<i>"No - but have access to the buildings of our partners in the region."</i>
Sherman Cymru	<i>"Occupies the Sherman Theatre."</i>
Tinderbox	<i>"No. We have offices which include a board room."</i>
writernet	<i>"We have an office."</i>

Script Yorkshire is the only PN organisation operating out of cyberspace -- though we do have access to free meeting rooms at the offices of our accountants, BrownButler. (This is a substantial in-kind contribution that does not appear in our report and accounts.)

Lack of a permanent office space is not *at this point in our development* perceived as a problem by either paid workers or members of Script Yorkshire. The difficulties – the absence of a centralised filing system and the occasional piece of post going astray -- seem minor compared with the cost savings.

5. Staffing

It is difficult to draw any conclusions here as there seems to be no general pattern beyond a tendency towards a core 'artistic director-administrative/general manager' pairing somewhere within the team. It was not possible, within the limited scope and terms of reference of this study, to evaluate the importance of 'artistic' (as opposed to project-management/administrative) leadership in determining the health of non-theatre-based models of new writing support. However an unambiguous model of artistic leadership does already exist in, for example, the Theatre Writing Partnership.

PN organisations committed to full production of new work will inevitably have core staffing costs as a smaller percentage of total costs. The aforementioned lack of permanent office space reduces overheads at Script Yorkshire. Yet it is noticeable that the most established, secure and long-term PN organisations show

a tendency for staffing costs to form a relatively smaller proportion of the whole. But the data is not complete, one is not comparing like with like, and it might be as much a life-cycle issue as a delivery and effectiveness issue for organisations.

Name	Expenditure	Staff Costs	%	Staff Posts (ft equiv)	Team (questionnaire responses and annual report)
New Writing North	£647,841	£147,391	23%	5	Director, deputy director, Tees Valley programme manager, administrator, project and information co-ordinator, web editor and publishing production co-ordinator.
North West Playwrights	£95,433	£28-30,000 ^c		1.5	"director 0.6 FTE, deputy director 0.5, clerical assistant 0.4"
Script	£58,982	£29,681	50%	n/a	In 2006/7 -- executive director, programmes director (both part-time). In 2008/9 -- "Programmes Director (part time); Strategic leader (out to tender) -- freelance"
Script Yorkshire	£21,837	£10,050	46%	n/a	Communications officer 3 days month, PT project officer, voluntary input from trustees
TWP	£184,002	£56,549	31%	2	"Director and Literary Manager. Development Manager (2 year contract) joined in Jan 07. 2 part-time Literary Associates (Northampton joined Jan 07, Lincolnshire joined Feb 07)."
New Writing South	£81,359	£32,563	40%	2.5	"We had two posts for most of that year 3 from Oct 2006 onwards. Current posts are: Director, (FT) Education and Project Manager (PT), General Manager (PT), Admin Assistant (PT) and our staffing bill is much higher!"
Menagerie Theatre	£223,644	£39,603	18%	2 ^b	"artistic director, associate artistic director, associate director, literary associate"
SWNWN	n/a	n/a		vol.	"For 08-09: Sarah Dickenson, SWNWN Coordinator, 0.7 post. Administrator: 0.2 post. Prior to that: it was part of the SWNWN project run by writernet, staff time part of turning heads into Tales, and then a lot of personal time by Sarah not officially covered."
Sherman Cymru		n/a			Difficult to separate from theatre but: literary manager, literary

	n/a						assistant, director, general manager and admin (as well as full marketing/education facilities of a theatre)
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	£182,903	£75,758	41%	3			creative director, general manager (from three-year review)
Tinderbox Theatre	£308,280	£136,249	44%	5 ^a			"1 x Artistic Director, 1 x General Manager, 1 x Literary Manager/Dramaturg, 1 x Outreach Director (all F/T), 1 x Development Manager (P/T), Project & Production Staff (approx 21 f/t short term contracts per production)"
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre	£2,228,496	£762,688	34%	35			At least 23 full-time theatre staff; including Artistic Director, Executive Director, Writers Centre director, Education and Workshop Officer, Literary Assistant (from website)
writernet			34%	2			"0.8 Director, 0.7 SWNWN Co-ordinator, 0.4 Administrator"

Fig 3 Staffing levels (Except where stated, information has been taken from annual report and accounts and other published sources).

^a questionnaire and email response

^b It equals 2 posts in total spread across three 0.5 for Literary manager and 0.75 for two main associates." (Paul Bourne email 13 May 2008)

^c Telephone conversation with Chris Bridgman 13th June

6. Governance:

The peculiarities of British charity law have imposed a similar structure -- company limited by guarantee and registered charity -- on every PN organisation except the South West New Writing Network (which is of course an unincorporated writernet joint project). Recent developments such as the community interest company have made no inroads yet.

Questions about governance did not inspire respondents to generous feats of disclosure. From those who took an interest, there came the following:

“(Our) board of 10 Trustees includes 5 writers.” NWS

“Currently 8 trustees... 2 writers on the board - and we would look to maintain at least that number.” NWP.

“There are currently 8 members of the Board, which meets quarterly. We are currently putting together a strategy document for the organisation in parallel with the recruitment of a strategic leader.” Script

“Writers are not involved in the governance process.” Tinderbox.

“Organisation is always chaired by a working playwright. Board recruitment is based around skills audits and combines working writers with other sectoral and wider business/legal skills.” Writernet (which has a board of 10 members)

And on the SWNWN:

“SWNWN is a project, not an organisation. There is no dedicated organisation in this region, which necessitates the SWNWN. The next stage of the SWNWN began in January 08. It is a partnership between writernet and Theatre South West, the federation of strategic locality plans for theatre in region. The steering group for the project is made up of playwrights, producers and members of TSW. Plans for the South West New Writing Network’s next stage have been drawn up in consultation with the playwrights and producers in the network, the Arts Council and Theatre South West partners, and respond to their identified needs.” Sarah Dickenson.

From annual reports and accounts the following information may also be gleaned:

Name:	No. of Trustees	Other comments
New Writing North	7/8	Trustees are elected to New Writing North based on discussions and recommendations offered by board members and outside advisors to the organisation (such as ACE). During the year the company extended the resource of the board by identifying a new member who had expertise in the field of education. Meet 4 times a year. <i>“depending on when the information is based, at 31.03.08 we had</i>

		<i>8 trustees.” NWN</i>
TWP	5	New Trustees are recruited using a variety of methods including personal recommendations of the Chair, existing Trustees, senior management staff and from Arts and Business “Board Bank”. Meet quarterly.
Menagerie	6	Meet bi-monthly
SWNWN	Not applicable	
Playwrights Studio	10	Invited on basis of expertise.
writernet	12 in total over year	Considerable churn of trustees year-to-year. “Elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association.”

Script Yorkshire’s bi-monthly five-person Board consists of five elected (or ratified) writer-directors, suggesting the need to look outside the writing profession for more trustees and more diversity of skills, which is the model the rest of the PN follows. As is the case with NWS, all trustees have to be members of the company.

PART II: WHAT PLAYWRIGHTS NETWORK ORGANISATIONS DO:

Initially, it seemed a daunting task to analyse the projects and activities of such a disparate collection of organisations; let alone make meaning comparisons between them. But an attempt to pull together the information that was already in the public domain (in annual reports and reviews, on websites and in newsletters etc) soon revealed some strong recurring themes in the *types* of activities and projects PN organisations undertook – even if not every organisation was active in every activity or project sector.

1. Writers

a) Level of Writer Support

It seemed important to try and investigate what level of writer support might be generated by organisations at each level of turnover. Surprisingly few PN organisations were able or willing to attach hard figures to the question: *“How many writers for performance did you actively support during the year via their participation in classes, workshops, courses, showcases etc?”*

I present the available data (fig. 4) – but without a much more sophisticated evaluation of what benefit the writers themselves thought they were getting it’s difficult to draw any real conclusions. There is the potential for an interesting piece of research here – extracting more precise figures from PN organisations, investigating the subjective experiences of writer participants and, not least, mass sampling the opinions of each region’s writers via such routes as writernet, Writers Guild of Great Britain, Society of Authors, literaturetraining and the Authors’ Licensing & Collecting Society.

Name	Income 2006/07	How many writers for performance did you actively support during the year via their participation in classes, workshops, courses, showcases etc?	Are your activities open-access, by invitation or a mixture of both?	Have you established any progression routes by which a writer can travel through your system and on to full commission?
New Writing North	£605,789 ^b	<p>“We have commissioned 15 artists this year and distributed funding to 101 artists or arts organisations. We have responded to 385 requests for information from writers, and distributed 22 e-newsletters to 37,400 people. We have carried out 5 educational projects involving 43 artists and 17 educators. There were 48 formal and informal training sessions, attended by 876 participants aged between 4 and 19 years old. We have also held 35 training sessions for other professionals, with 77 attendees. This year we have been pleased that our work has played to growing audiences, both for our theatre work with 16 performances and 810 attendees; and for our 11 book launches and events with 482 attendees.” (Annual Report)</p>	<p>“question re open-access, invitation; answer is a mixture of both, mainly open public events and opportunities.” (email 26 June)</p>	<p>“Progression routes – yes.” (email 26 June)</p>
North West Playwrights	£78,601 ^b	<p>“Script reading service 80; dramaturgical sessions with writers 14; writers whose scripts were work-shopped in some form 12; participants in classes/courses c. 50. Plus around another 20 via joint projects.”</p>		
Script	£61,534	<p>Six major projects: Big Screen Visions (8 writers on Treatment Weekend, 5 progressing to 9-month professional screenwriting course); 4 Writers Groups mentored; Take 5 showcase of 5 monologue competition winners; 46 attendees of Introduction to Playwriting courses; Write Live Birmingham Rep attachment; Types scheme for young people (5 writers and 2 associate writers selected for 6 months’ mentoring etc culminating in showcase). (Annual Report)</p>		
TWP	£185,442	<p>Approx 40 young writers were supported through the Momentum programme. We read approx 300 scripts and provided critical feedback to the writers. We offered more dedicated support to approx 20 writers either on specific projects or scripts.</p>	<p>Our activities are largely open access with the exception of the Playwrights’ Studio group.</p>	<p>Through a considerable grant from Esmeé Fairbairn, we were able to offer three writers full commissions in 2007.</p>

New Writing South	£81,359	<p>“Estimate 200.”</p> <p>And from the Annual Report: “Though our efforts five writers directly received writing commissions, a further eleven have had work taken up for development by other companies in the region and twenty eight writers have been employed by us to mentor other writers, run workshops, work as writers in schools or on other projects.”</p>	<p>“Activities are a mix of open access, selection and invite only.”</p>	<p>“There are routes but each has an individual journey according to the writers need so no blueprint. Most development work starts with a script read though and all of it involves a relationship with the writer developed over time.”</p>
Menagerie Theatre	£227,441 ^b	<p>“Numbers start at about 200 for workshop and end up at 2 for national touring - losing 10-20% at each stage but they are not abandoned - we still monitor and guide!”</p>		<p>“There is a clear route - open workshop - submission of script- personal feedback - workshop with actors - weekend reading or performance - performance for Hotbed - national touring.”</p>
SWNWN	n/a	<p>“of the network, around 50% are playwrights who benefit from meetings, information. 40 writers benefited from ExFest. 25 from Career Development Round tables. Over 12 months I'd say about 100 benefit from meetings.”</p>		<p>“We are a network and not a commissioning body or development organisation. But writers have been commissioned on the back of the connections they make through meeting and I have hard evidence to show this.”</p>
Sherman Cymru	n/a	<p>“Currently, we have over 20 works under commission to the company.”</p> <p>Spring Board 2008 -- workshop and lock-in for six emerging writers, four short plays by experienced writers, performance piece and programme of workshops for young writers, all leading to performance at Springboard Festival in April.</p>		<p>ScriptSlam -- each month four new ten minute plays by four new writers are performed script-in-hand by professional actors, leading to development of best.</p>
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	£113,693 ^b	<p>“4,990 people have been involved in our activity as writers, artists, participants or audience members.” (3 Year Review 2004-7).</p>		
Tinderbox Theatre	£250,000 for New Writing	<p>“Workshops (30), attachment (1), fireworks (5), commissions (5), one to one dramaturgy (10), script panel (100).”</p>	<p>“Some of the activities are open access but most through invite or selection process.”</p>	<p>“There are definitely progression routes either from script panel or through Fireworks. In 2008 we are producing one of our 2007 Fireworkers.”</p>

Soho Theatre and Writers Centre	£1,960,356	<p>"We read and report on almost 2000 scripts, offer monthly Open Access Workshops, alongside a range of Verity Bargate Associated workshops which ran in this year from March - July and reached over 800 writers and partnered us with over 30 new writing agencies. In addition, 12 commissions, 2 seeds, 2 residency/extended workshops, 7 public performances of work in development or expositions of process and 3 invitational events for 20 writers each, panels discussions and talks, 8 readings/script workshops, 3 weekend masterclasses, 5 writers on attachment (all commissioned)." (Nina Steiger email 4 July 08)</p>	Both.	<p>"Yes. That's exactly how we work." (Nina Steiger phone conversation 4 July 08)</p>
writernet	£153,063	<p>"10 playwrights as part of our playwrights in schools skillshare, 3 as part of our Write Thinking playwrights in schools programme; 10 playwrights as part of our Acts of Translation initiative, 24 playwrights and cultural operators as part of our Fence network; 10 playwrights as part of Hydroponic, 115 as part of our career development roundtables, several dozen as part of our Yorkshire and South West networks and 5 writers as part of our mentoring programme."</p>	<p>"A mixture of both. Our one-to-many support comes through our website, which is entirely open access. Most projects will feature invited writers only."</p>	<p>"As we have no regular funding we cannot offer regular progression routes."</p>

Fig. 4 Support for writers 2006/7

And looking ahead to 2008 and 2009...

- Numbers for the Momentum programme have increased due to our activity in Lincolnshire and Northampton. We will be offering 2 further writers commissions either by the end of the financial year or early 08/09 through the Esmee Fairbairn grant. TWP
- Up to 200 playwrights, cultural operators, and producers. More will come out of the woodwork we hope. This is not a simple project, however, as there are targeted local strategies as well as regional ones which may or may not be about workshops. SWNWN

b) Publicising Opportunities

The question “How do your writers get to hear about you?” elicited a variety of responses, some rather opaque:

- *“Some find our leaflets. Some recommended by theatres or ACE. Some find the website.”* NWP
- *“Mixture - word of mouth, internet search engines, through playwrights' network, local theatres, universities, publicity for our courses.”* Script
- *“A complete mixture - very difficult to quantify.”* TWP
- *“Open-access website. Outreach programmes, open access events and workshops, Printed publicity, referrals from ACE or other organisations.”* NWS
- *“Marketing brochure each year, opportunities of playwrights 2007 /0-8 etc. emailing list, website, partner organisation.”* Menagerie.
- *“Mixture of all.”*(i.e. website, outreach, referrals and recommendations of theatres) SWNWN
- *“We are the only theatre company in Northern Ireland with a reading service so other companies will refer writers to us. We have a website and a newsletter. We constantly work with the creative writing and theatre courses at the Universities and with BBC and Northern Ireland Screen so meet writers that way too.”* “Tinderbox

c) Storing Information About Writers

Of those organisations who responded to the question “What sort of data do you hold about writers and how do you store it?” only one – New Writing South – had an on-line searchable database (*Pirandello*) though North West Playwrights and the SWNWN aspire to something of the sort. (NWS did not develop *Pirandello* but has received a one-off fee from Oxford Brookes University for incorporating it into the website.) The rest hold the contact details and sometimes the scripts and script notes of writers they have worked with or whom they reach via their mailing lists.

- *“We hold a mailing database using FileMakerPro; we are considering setting up an online database in association with the new website (similar to Pirandello at NWS).”* NWP
- *“Database of over 1000 writers, including contact details, level of experience (aspiring, emerging, professional), interests (film, tv, theatre, radio), ethnicity, disability, age bracket, where they heard of us.”* Script
- *“Nothing stored electronically beyond contact details and correspondence. Hard copies of scripts are stored in the office.”* TWP
- *“We have a database of members for use in-house only and we also have a database of professional writers in the region called Pirandello, accessible to all via our web site.”* NWS

- *“Lists of plays - notes from script analysis - and contact details all held electronically.” Menagerie*
- *“We will be mapping writers in the region as part of the project. We will create a database. Information where appropriate will be on regional websites.” SWNWN*
- *“Database of writers under commission or having written for us in the past. Historical pool of both Sherman and Script Cymru writers.” Sherman Cymru*
- *“Script panel information in a spread sheet. Plays in hard copy and soft copy of writers we work with or are interested to work with.” Tinderbox*
- *“We have a database of writers.” Soho (Nina Steiger phone conversation 4 July 08)*
- *“There are details of over 600 writers on our open access Talent Pool on our website. These are uploaded and maintained by writers themselves. How useful this is, is an entirely different question....” writernet*

2. What do you do?

The deliberately open-ended question “What do you do?” elicited the following responses:

- *“Tuition ranging from basic playwriting skills to masterclasses, seminars and workshops on specific skills areas. Workshops on individual plays (work in progress). Joint projects have included competitions, schemes targeted at specific communities (e.g., recently refugees & asylum seekers)” NWP*
- *“Introduction to Screenwriting (open access 4-day courses), Screen Adaptation (selection scheme aimed at professional writers wanting to adapt novels/short stories for the big screen); Leonardo Mobility - writer placements at European theatres; Poised for Flight (Intro to Screen for disabled writers); Script Games (part of China Now - competition for short scripts inspired by exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery); Warwick Words (Writing Workshop)” Script*
- *“Dramatugical support for writers across the East Midlands with a particular focus on young and emerging writers aged 16 - 26 who are supported through the Momentum programme, culminating in the week-long Momentum Festival. We aim to produce a piece of new writing annually, in 2006/07 this was Natural Breaks n' Rhythms by Julius Ayodeji. TWP*
- *“In 2007 we offered: Workshops and courses, Development of writers and their work, script reading, advice and disseminate information service, creative market places, an education programme, a working writer programme, rehearsed readings.” NWS*
- *Oysters, Diamonds and Pearls programme (Oysters workshops and rehearsed readings, culminating in three Rough Diamonds 'bare bones' productions), programme of readings, accept unsolicited script submissions from writers in East of England... commission and tour new plays. And in 2008: “work done for NACRO - government agency where we worked with writers and young people.” Menagerie*
- *“Productions, outreach, dramaturgy.” Tinderbox*

Finally, Sarah Dickenson of the SWNWN offered the most comprehensive answer to this question:

- *“Over the past four years the SWNWN has made a significant impact on the support of playwrights and the development of playwriting in the South West region. Careful curation, regular meetings and the consistent dissemination of information has enabled much-needed connectivity between producers, writers and cultural operators, empowered regional writers and fostered and supported a number of important regional development projects. These include Show of Strengths’ Joined Up Writing project, Hall for Cornwall’s Responses and the newly formed writers’ group at Plymouth Theatre Royal. The network currently has just-under 200 members, with an average of thirty-five participants at the quarterly meetings. The SWNWN has communicated with Arts Council England South West throughout its history, and former Theatre Officer Kate Dean has been a regular attendee of meetings, and we continue this dialogue with Paul Goddard, Head of Performing Arts.*

“At the inception of the SWNWN the South West’s locality plans were in their infancy and many of the mechanisms for their delivery were yet to be put in place. The SWNWN and Theatre South West have effectively grown up in parallel, and the quarterly meetings of the SWNWN have provided a focus for writers and producers to learn more about the infrastructural developments in each locality, and for Theatre Development Officers to learn more about new writing development across the region.

“In October 2005, having run the network unfunded for 18 months, writernet were successful in raising Arts Council and Esmee Fairbairn funding for the SWNWN as part of their wider Turning Head Into Tales project. This funded meetings for a further 18 months, covering the cost of organization, facilitation, refreshments, and the travel-costs of freelancers attending them from across the region. Alongside the network meetings, writernet has continued to invest extra time in new writing in the region, giving advice, guidance and information to playwrights and producers, signposting and routing. In Autumn 2006, Theatre Bristol approached writernet to support them in the facilitation of the New Writing Hub in the city.

“Despite the SWNWN and the emergence of exciting projects in the region around new writing (including Responses at the Hall for Cornwall, the reopening of the Ustinov in Bath and the Brewhouse’s Scratch Nights and Writers’ Groups), the South West still lags behind other regions in terms of the support of new writing and writers. There is no region-wide new writing organisation (Southwest Scriptwriters operates within the confines of the Bristol area), neither is there a literary manager in the region charged with developing and championing local writers (as there is, for example at The Liverpool Everyman or West Yorkshire Playhouse).” SWNWN

3. Types of Activity:

Surprisingly, given the many differences in scale, organisational structure, scope of operation and approach between the various PN organisations it was possible to identify certain activities and ways of working that recurred again and again. I attempt here the messy business of disaggregating these activities into separate strands -- and have dealt with them in the order in which it appears to me logical that a writer in search of support might progress through the various services on offer on their way to full commission. However, as New Writing South points out: *“There are routes but each has an individual journey according to the writer’s need so no blueprint. Most development work starts with a script read though and all of it involves a relationship with the writer developed over time.”*

a) Information Services:

Websites

Every PN organisation with the exception of the SWNWN has a website but they differ a great deal in their sophistication, the type of information they offer to writers and the frequency with which they are updated. Some PN organisations are clearly more ‘netty’ than others!

The New Writing North website at <http://www.newwritingnorth.com/> is, as usual, the gold-standard. As their home page succinctly puts it: *“Our site has two purposes. Firstly, it is the place where you can read about who we are, what we do and how we do it. From downloading our annual reports and browsing our project archive to checking out the books and CDs that we have for sale, it’s all here. The site is also bursting at the seams with information and advice for writers, including advice on agents and the publishing process, writing guides, an archive of our fortnightly e-newsletters, information on awards schemes, mentoring and career development.”*

The writernet site at www.writernet.co.uk was also a mine of useful information for writers, though some of it needs updating.

At one extreme, some PN organisation websites concentrated almost exclusively on providing information about themselves, including information on how to take advantage of their own projects and services. The websites that took this approach were:

Theatre Writing Partnership
Menagerie
Sherman Cymru
Tinderbox

The following organisations tended towards this end of the scale but did also provide some limited open-access information to writers, for example via a links page.

North West Playwrights
Playwrights Studio Scotland
Script Yorkshire
Soho Theatre and Writers Centre
Script (West Midlands)

Others clearly identified an additional role for themselves as an open access information resource for writers:

Name	Open access resources include:
New Writing North www.newwritingnorth.com	News, regional overview, annual reviews, accounts and policy documents, downloadable newsletters, press releases, multimedia downloads and podcasts, advice on: negotiating a contract, writers’ residencies, finding an agent, reading services, vanity press, self-publishing, writing guides to various genre, career development (including jobs and training opps, payscales, links to writing organisations, advice on how to apply for awards and bursaries, downloadable mentoring guide, online merchandising of books, CDs and DVDs
New Writing South www.newwritingsouth.com	<i>Pirandello</i> searchable writers’ database, commissions and job opportunities, ‘Encyclopaedia’ section with comprehensive lists of local resources – agents, festivals, awards, publications (national and local), publishers, useful radio, television and theatre sites, theatre producers in the southeast, other national and regional

	writers' organisations, members only area.
Writernet www.writernet.co.uk	Playwrights Network map and links; writernet and industry news pages, Professional Development resources (writing course searchable database, literary agents, lists of theatre companies, awards and competitions, writers' groups, radio drama information, how to submit a comedy script), plethora of downloadable guides, reports and articles; employment, training and commissioning opportunities, Talent Pool searchable writers' database,

Where open-access information for writers was provided on websites it was not always well done. **Useful advice was often buried deep within difficult-to-navigate sites** (I found one site almost unusable); and **some resource pages had clearly not been updated for several years** and contained information that was startlingly out of date. For example, links to 'Yorkshire Playwrights', an organisation that ceased to exist in 2003.

Newsletters and Mailings

Name	Regular e-bulletin	Face-book	Hard copy	Comments
New Writing North	Yes.	Yes.	No.	Newsletter stored on website which can also be emailed, RSS feed
North West Playwrights	No.	No.	Yes.	<i>“Major communication effort goes into bi-monthly subscription newsletter The Lowdown (£8.00pa) - around 150 subscribers, plus we mail free to about another 150 relevant professionals (e.g. artistic directors, literary managers, LA arts officers) ... We also circulate info via email on an ad hoc basis.”</i>
Script	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	<i>“Monthly newsletter, featuring news and opportunities and events, both regionally and nationally. Mainly via email, but approx 40 via post. Over 1000 subscribers - no charge.”</i>
Script Yorkshire	Yes.	Yes.	No.	Newsletter stored on members-only area of website, frequent e-bulletins to members and beyond.
TWP	No.	Yes.	No.	<i>“Communication with our writers etc is largely through e-mail. We don't publish any regular newsletters. There is no subscription charge.”</i>
New Writing South	Yes.	No.	Yes.	<i>“Monthly hard-copy newsletter to members and members-only area on website. Weekly E News to members.”</i>
Menagerie Theatre	No.	No.	No.	<i>“No - just updates on our website.”</i> And it is possible to subscribe to an electronic mailing list restricted to news of Menagerie's projects and events.
SWNWN	Yes.	Yes.	No.	<i>“It's a network, mailing list, send things out... e-list. About 200 people. Building online presence and information as part of project.”</i>
Sherman Cymru	Yes.	Yes.		Log in to receive e-bulletins.
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	Yes.	No.		Monthly e-bulletin to over 4,000 subscribers. Also open-access on website.
Tinderbox Theatre	Yes.	No.	No.	<i>“We send out a newsletter via e-mail for people interested in stage writing which is free. Currently there is 200 subscribers.”</i>
Soho	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Monthly e-bulletin to 10,700 subscribers and frequent ad hoc emails. (Nina Steiger, 4 July 08)
Writernet	Yes.	Yes.	No.	Monthly e-bulletin.

Fig. 5 The communications effort.

Print newsletters have been largely abandoned, surviving only where the original format was A5 and there is a paid-for element. There is a tendency for theatre-based PN organisations to restrict their e-bulletins to news about their own activities. Other organisations furnish a wider range of information – industry news, awards, commissioning and training opportunities etc. But whether this information is open-access (New Writing North, Script, SWNWN, Playwrights Studio) or limited to members and subscribers (Script Yorkshire, New Writing South, North West Playwrights) it appears that PN organisations spend a lot of time duplicating the collation and distribution of the same material.

Menagerie Theatre company does not adopt an information role but works in partnership with the ACE East revenue funded New Writing Partnership (www.newwritingpartnership.org.uk), an organisation which “works to highlight, develop and support creative writing, establishing the East of England as a national and international centre of excellence.”

b) Script Reading Services

How useful one regards a reader’s report, even the analysis of a skilled and experienced theatre professional, depends a great deal on where one stands in the “text-based” versus ‘theatre-making’ spectrum. Script and writernet take a text-based approach, providing a one-off reader’s report and advice to the writer on where to go next.

North West Playwrights, TWP, New Writing South, Menagerie, Sherman Cymru, Tinderbox and Soho, by contrast, all regard their script reading service as an important entry point for writers into their development programmes. The Playwrights Studio approach, Fuse, is unique in that they marriage-broke scripts between writers and Scottish theatre companies.

No two services were alike in their offer to writers. The main characteristics are summarised in fig. 6. Conditioned as I was by the attitudes of artistic directors and literary managers around the country, for whom reading unsolicited scripts can sometimes represent a very real additional burden on top of their contracted workloads, I was expecting to find the script-reading services of PN organisations in a similar state of permanent overload. Soho’s operation is the largest – they read and feed back on 2,000 scripts a year! And they have indeed found it necessary to tighten script submission guidelines in order to cope with the rising tide. Additionally, the much smaller TWP also works its way through more than 300 scripts annually. But the numbers involved are not always so high – in a couple of cases around 100 a year, which might easily be handled by a proper system of outsourcing. With some caveats, Soho will consider just about every play script sent to them, written in English, from anywhere in the world. Similarly the TWP is committed to an open submissions policy and is bound to read anything by any East Midlands writer (Fintan O’Higgins email 19th June); but various systems of rationing, by price or restricted eligibility, are possible.

c) Mentoring Programmes

Nor are all mentoring schemes quite the same, as Fig 7 illustrates. But the labour-intensive nature of formal mentoring typically means there is usually only sufficient capacity for one or two mentees a year. For better or worse (and perhaps there needs to be greater debate about this) these opportunities are rarely advertised and subject to open competition. More often they arise as a result of relationships previously established with writers who have come through the system.

Nor does any PN organisation broker commercial mentoring relationships between established and emerging writers. Sara Maitland and Martin Goodman discuss how private mentoring might work in their free Mentoring Guild, downloadable from the literaturetraining website. They even include a sample mentoring agreement. It is possible that hidden assumptions about subsidised provision is choking off opportunities for writer development on the one hand and an additional stream of income for more established writers on the other.

Name	Script Reading Service?	Charge	Access	Numbers	Outcomes and Progression routes
New Writing North					
North West Playwrights	Yes.	£10	"Residents of NW region only"	"Around 100 p.a."	"£10 for two readers' reports with the best going on to some kind of development e.g. dramaturgical support, three-day work-shoppings, script in hand showing."
Script	Yes.	120 pages £35 200 pages:£55 200 pages £75	Unrestricted		"Since April 2004, we have processed 107 scripts - 56 stage, 14 radio, 17 tv and 20 film. Currently reader report only." Script
Script Yorkshire	No.				
TWP	Yes.	"Free"	"but only for playwrights based in region".		One reader's report.
New Writing South	Yes.	"Starts at £35 with membership discount."	None.		"Scriptreading service (stage, radio, television with film by prior arrangement). Report and may lead on to mentoring, rehearsed reading or invitation-only programmes."
Menagerie Theatre	Yes.	n/a	n/a		"Script reading back!!! - free to those in our region - payments for those outside."
SWNWN	No.				
Sherman Cymru	Yes.	Free.	No restrictions.		"All unsolicited scripts sent to Sherman Cymru will be read by both the Literary Manager and an Associate Director. We endeavour to provide feedback whenever it is possible to do so. Can lead to development via dramaturgy/work-shoppings etc."
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	Yes.	Free.	Plays by writers who are Scottish or based in Scotland. One play per writer per year. Theatre only.		Fuse is a unique Scottish initiative that puts new plays in front of the artistic directors at the country's top theatre companies. Writers can choose whether the written feedback from reader is private or shared with this community of theatre professionals who may then express an interest in working with the writer.

Name	Script Reading Service?	Charge	Access	Numbers	Outcomes and Progression routes
Tinderbox Theatre	Yes.	Free.		“We receive about 100 scripts a year.”	<p>“We have a script panel which respond to all scripts sent to us. It is free for writers and we pay our readers £30/ scripts as we ask them to fill in a quite substantial script report... A favourable report will lead to a meeting and inclusion in some of our schemes to support writers or a one to one dramaturgy session.”</p>
Soho	Yes.	Free.	Some restrictions.	2,000 a year and rising	<p>We consider and comment on every submission. In most cases a free report is prepared for the writer, although exceptions are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We proactively seek international productions, collaborations and writers. All non-UK submissions will therefore be considered, however we do not have the resources to provide reports on all of them. • Redrafted plays should not be sent unless specifically requested by the theatre. Those plays requested will be read, but a further report will be made at the company’s discretion. • If we have asked for you to send us your next play in the initial report, this will be read, and a further report will be made as appropriate. • In some instances and at our discretion we will respond to the writer by letter only. • We will not report on handwritten scripts; pantomimes; excerpts/incomplete scripts; radio, TV or film scripts; or scripts submitted by email. (Soho submission guidelines)
writernet	Yes.	fully waged £30, part waged £25, unwaged £20	None.	77 (Annual Report)	<p>Our script reading service has four main aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide speedy, constructive and objective feedback in the form of a written report on work in any dramatic form for writers at any stage of their careers. • to provide specialised criticism on any aspect of the work if required to do so by the writer. • to provide feedback from readers from any cultural or skills background as required by the writer (e.g. Afro-Caribbean, woman, disabled, etc.; radio, television, live art, etc.) • to provide advice and help to the writer on where to go for further development and/or possible production of their work.

Fig. 6 Script Reading Services

Name	Do you have a mentoring scheme?	How many mentoring partnerships did you run during the year?	How were the mentees selected?
North West Playwrights	Yes.	"Formal mentoring programme for two writers in 2007. Reduced to one in 2008. But looking to have 2 again in 08/09."	
Script	Yes.	2 mentees	"selected through Write Live 2007 (regional writers shortlisted for Rep attachment, but not ultimately successful)"
TWP	Yes.	"The Playwrights' Studio group runs annually and provides an opportunity for 4 or 5 East Midlands writers to work closely with a mentor over several months to develop their writing skills."	"Participants are selected from script submissions and writers who we have met through our work."
New Writing South	Yes.	"In 2007 6 writers were mentored."	"Mentees selected through our other activities."
Menagerie Theatre		"Informally through ACEE Escalator scheme - we have had two writers under our wings"	"- they just asked us!"
SWNWN	no	"New Writing Champions, not playwrights, 3."	
Sherman Cymru		Emerging Artists programme for new theatre professionals inc. writers, to work alongside more established professionals.	
Playwrights' Studio, Scotland	Yes.	"Playwrights' Studio runs a mentoring scheme – one of our most successful activities. We mentor 6 writers/year"	"They are identified through our script reading service, professional recommendation and spotted by me through the year. They are selected by the Associate Playwrights." (Julie Ellen email 06 July 08)

Tinderbox		<p><i>“Within the dramaturgy activity we have one playwright in attachment annually... The attachment comes with half a commission and an education fund of £1500 for the writer to spend on developing their craft. During the year they have access to our activities and support with their work and development.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They are invited.”</i></p>
Soho	Yes.	<p><i>“5 writers on attachment (all commissioned)” (email 4 July 08)</i></p>	
Writernet	sometimes	<p><i>“5, in partnership with Graeae and Apples and Snakes.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Mentees were recommended by our partner organisations.”</i></p>

Fig 7 Mentoring Schemes

d) Competitions, Bursaries and Prizes

Perhaps surprisingly, given the importance writers themselves attach to these, only a minority of PN organisations put much effort in this direction. Responses to the question: “Do you host competitions, bursaries and prizes?” were rather tentative.

- “Some small bursaries for writers on Studio programme”. TWP
- “sort of - through Hotbed.” Menagerie
- “We plan to in 2008-9.” NWS
- “Not regularly. But to celebrate our 21st and 25th anniversaries we’ve had competitive commissioning process leading to co-productions of the winning scripts.” NWP
- “Not currently.” Tinderbox

Script, in the West Midlands, was one exception, inasmuch as there was an emphasis on open, competitive submission: “Script administers Write Live, the Rep’s open call for plays. We provide the readers and collate the reports. Some other schemes (e.g. Adaptation) are run as competitions. The scheme was publicised through local networks and candidates were chosen via a selection panel.” Script

Playwrights Studio, Scotland was another: “We run competitions – highly successful tool in finding new talent including people like DC Jackson. Pearson/Royal Court winner...amongst other things.”(Julie Ellen email 6 July 08)

Under the auspices of NWN, writers can apply for ‘Time to Write’ awards which allow them to complete major works in progress and ‘Northern Promise’ awards which support emerging talent through mentoring and professional support programmes (the total pot is £25,000 with individual awards tailor-made to fit circumstances). Also The People’s Play Award is run annually to find a new play that will be produced for one week in the studio theatre at the People’s Theatre. In recent years there has also been the Northern Rock Foundation’s Writers’ Award of £60,000 which is not limited to book writers.

Perhaps the trigger point for the establishment of bursaries and prizes is corporate sponsorship. There might be an enhanced role for the Playwrights’ Network in developing such awards.

e) New Writing Festivals

A very popular way of showcasing new work:

Name	Festivals
North West Playwrights	<i>Major 25th Anniversary shindig Striking Silver in 2007</i>
TWP	<i>“Five day Momentum Festival in August 06 Five day Momentum Festival in August 07. The Festival model will change with a smaller showcase event in September 08 followed by a much larger, more ambitious event in Summer 09. “</i>
New Writing South	<i>“No - but we have plans.”</i>
Menagerie Theatre	<i>“annual Hotbed Festival of new writing (this</i>

	<i>year 3rd-12th July)”</i>
SWNWN	<i>“Potentially, but are key partner in regional writing festival in Plymouth this year.”</i>
Sherman Cymru	<i>SpringBoard - new writing festival in April 08. 14 writers commissioned to write various short pieces including verbatim pieces, collaborations with musicians, lock-ins with emerging writers.</i>
Tinderbox	<i>“We support an annual Festival of Work in Progress called Pick 'n' Mix.”</i>

It would be useful if the PN made available an annual calendar of new writing festivals. We could all try harder to publicise, and be represented at, each other’s major events.

4. Targeted Provision

a) Work in Schools

This ranged from none (e.g. North West Playwrights, Menagerie, Script, Playwrights Studio, Scotland) to being a major, plaudit-winning stream of activity (New Writing South).

The question: *“Do you have an education (schools) arm? How many pupils do you work with?”* combined with a study of published literature (annual reports, websites etc) elicited the following:

“We can run bespoke workshops for schools if requested.” TWP

“The outreach department work with 15 school groups across the year through production related and separate projects. We are also piloting playwriting for 9 year olds through school workshops at the moment.” Tinderbox

Writernet has worked with Mousetrap Theatre Projects on three editions of their playwriting-in-schools programme “Write Thinking”. As one would expect, New Writing North has a well developed education arm. Sherman Cymru has an award-winning theatre outreach programme for schools but does not use it to tackle play-writing. NWS’s ‘Writers in Education’ Writer in Residence scheme has been cited as ‘a model of practice’ by the Arts Council and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. They offer taster sessions to schools for just £50 (bookable via website) and other off-the-shelf programmes that schools can buy in, claiming they boost pupils’ confidence in and enjoyment of writing and enhance teamwork. This programme now generates fee income for a stable of over a dozen local writers trained in NWS’s education programme delivery.

b) Young writers

Name	“Do you have a young writers' (up to 26 years) programme? How many young writers do you work with? How do you select them?”
New Writing North	n/a
North West Playwrights	No.

Script	<i>“Currently in discussions with The Drum to offer a 10-week screenwriting course for writers 11-18”</i>
--------	---

Script Yorkshire	No.
TWP	<i>"Momentum Young Writers programme for 16 - 26 year olds. Run in Nottingham and Leicester and started up in Northampton and Lincolnshire at the beginning of 07. Open access but scripts are selected from submissions for the annual Momentum New Writing Festival."</i>
New Writing South	<i>"We have had led new initiatives aimed at new, disadvantaged or young writers that cover multi writing media."</i>
Menagerie Theatre	<i>"We have run specific courses for under 26 once a year.- funding permitting."</i>
SWNWN	<i>"No - but are supporting these initiatives within the network" (2008)</i>
Sherman Cymru	<i>"Current provision is ad hoc, although workshops throughout the youth theatre groups have resulted in showings of two pieces in our upcoming festival."</i>
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	No.
Tinderbox Theatre	<i>"An annual programme called Fireworks for 16-25 year olds. We take on 6 writers and the project last for 5 months. The aim is to write a 10 minute play performed through a rehearsed reading. The process includes 2 full day craft workshops, individual script session, redrafting, seeing work and a weekend workshopping their scripts with actors. There is an open application process and we invite writers we have come across during the year who may be interested."</i>
Writernet	No.

c) Writing in the Community (3rd Sector)

Name	"Do you support writing in 3rd sector (community) contexts?"
New Writing North	n/a
North West Playwrights	<i>'Writing Outside the Box' event July 2007 where a panel of experienced playwrights discussed opportunities for writing drama in non-conventional contexts, including youth theatre, prisons and Arts in Health. Exodus Sparks project in association with Community Arts North West</i>
Script	n/a
Script Yorkshire	No.
TWP	<i>"Not specifically."</i>
New Writing South	<i>"Yes, several schemes including Writing for a Living (Homeless and socially disadvantaged and Disability Arts writing project)."</i>
Menagerie Theatre	<i>Deliver SMart project in partnership with Cambridge CC and Nacro (crime reduction charity) to highlight basic skills in workplace; resulted in commission of 'Red Is Water' by Craig Baxter. Also, bespoke workshops with young people.</i>
SWNWN	<i>"No/Yes - through information and skillshare events potentially, and support these initiatives within the network." 2008</i>

Sherman Cymru	<i>“Have just appointed writer /director Bridget Keehan within Learning and Engagement Dept to work with refugees and disenfranchised branches of community.”</i>
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	n/a
Tinderbox Theatre	<i>“Yes, through our outreach programme we work with different community groups and put on several show cases a year of new writing, devised and verbatim work.”</i>
writernet	<i>“In terms of advocacy, information , advice and guidance or through research for the National Theatre Education Department’s trans-national arts-to-third sector Transmission programme, or specific sector gathering like the Out of Context event we ran with Pursued by a Bear at Stratford Circus.”</i>

5. International Projects

“Please give details of any international projects and partnerships.”

- *“Recently received Leonardo Mobility funding for writer placements to Druid Theatre, Fishamble Theatre (Ireland) and Riksteatern (Sweden)”* Script
- *“3 Short Plays from Africa presented as part of the Momentum Festival, by writers from Algeria, Mauritania and Togo”. TWP*
- *“Working with USA American campuses to produce a new play about Darwin.”* Menagerie
- *“Have on going relationship with Playwrights Union in Iran. Swop plays, translate and present readings etc. Put writers from both cultures in touch with each other.”* NWS
- *“Next Stages international conference in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University 2007.”* NWP
- *“No, but will be one of the local priorities as it's desired by them, so we'll work something up. Obviously we're connected to [writernet's] janus and the Fence.”* SWNWN
- *“writernet runs The Fence, a network for playwrights and cultural operators, founded on the principles of diversity and mobility, launched in October 2003. It has over 100 participants from over 25 European countries and has met 9 times around Europe. The Fence gave rise to a year long EU Culture 2000 funded project Janus which saw 15 playwrights from 15 countries experience their work translated and given showcased readings at Festivals in Austria, Finland and West Yorkshire Playhouse. Writernet also runs bi-lateral platforms for playwright exchange, translation, readings between London with Paris and Rotterdam.”*

It is Soho, with its central London location, that puts the greatest emphasis on international work. *“We proactively seek international productions, collaborations and writers.”* (Soho submission guidelines.)

6. Publishing

Name	<i>Do you have a publishing arm?</i>
New Writing North	Publish “The Write Guide to Mentoring”, poetry and short story collections, play scripts and also multi-media (CDs, DVDs)
North West Playwrights	<i>No</i>
Script	No.
Script Yorkshire	No.
TWP	<i>No.</i>
New Writing South	<i>“Pirandello published/performed writers’ database accessible from website.”</i>
Menagerie Theatre	<i>“No but we work with Oberon - sending them best of the scripts. Five have been published.”</i>
SWNWN	<i>No.</i>
Sherman Cymru	<i>“All productions published as programme texts in-house with the financial assistance of the Welsh Books Council, unless authors have contacts with other publishing houses.”</i>
Playwrights Studio, Scotland	Is conducting a feasibility study regarding the establishment of an online directory of all new plays professionally produced in Scotland.
Tinderbox Theatre	<i>“No but we do publish scripts of our productions.”</i>
Soho	<i>“An increasingly important strand of our work”. (Nina Steiger phone conversation 4 July 08)</i>
writernet	<i>“No, but we have long harboured ambitions around a Journal.”</i>

Part III: Delivery Partnerships

In addition to the advantage of finding a stable, long-term funding partner such as a local authority, PN organisations clearly placed great emphasis on their delivery partnerships. Typically, Jonathan Meth of writernet summarised the benefits of partnership working when he wrote that it “enables us to punch way above our weight.”

- *“Partnership working is fundamental to our existence and growth – whether local, regional, national, and international. We have also worked successfully as part of consortia. As a small non-RFO it enables us to punch way above our weight”.* writernet
- *“We work closely with venues and producing companies across the East Midlands but specifically with Nottingham Playhouse, Leicester Theatre Trust, Royal and Derngate Theatres, New Perspectives and Lakeside Arts Centre who all pay a subscription to the company.”* TWP
- *“We have developed a way of working that focuses on partnerships. The Junction (venue and offices), Cambridge CC, Nacro and Connexions skills training service, New Writing Partnership.”* And in 2008... *“Key partners remain the Junction ACEE, adding New Writing Partnership in Norwich more than before also Watford Palace.”* Menagerie
- *“During the year 2006/7 we worked in partnership with Brighton and Hove Council’s Celebrating Age Project, the Global Grants Project, the Specialist Schools Trust, Farnham Maltings, Literature Training, the Nightingale Theatre Brighton, BBC Southern Counties Radio, Times newspapers, Jubilee Library Brighton, University of Sussex, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Guildford, Writernet, Blatchington Mill School, NAWA.”* NWS
- *“We work in collaboration with North West theatres and other organisations in the region to promote and develop new writing for the stage. Recent partners have included Theatre by the Lake, Action Transport, Big House Theatre, China Here and There and Community Arts Northwest.”* NWP
- *“[Our current delivery partners are] Pentabus, Red Room Films, Tindal Street Press, Outside Centre, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Warwick Words, Birmingham Book Festival.”* Script

And from Sarah Dickenson at SWNWN:

“The SWNWN is currently made up of just-under 200 playwrights and people who work with them. We will be working dynamically with them throughout the whole of the project.

The project will also involve all the members of Theatre South West and draw on their diverse skills and expertise. Where there is no specific officer (Devon) we will work with producers and projects in the locale, namely Plymouth Theatre Royal and The Hidden City Festival, programmed for Autumn 2008.

We will work in partnership with producers in the network to deliver meetings and professional development sessions and in support of their new writing programmes where relevant. Key building-based producer relationships within the region are: Drum Theatre, Theatre Royal Plymouth, The Brewhouse, Taunton, The Hall for Cornwall, Everyman Theatre Cheltenham, Northcott Theatre, Exeter, The Egg and The Ustinov, Theatre Royal Bath, The Tobacco Factory and Bristol Old Vic. We will also work to create new relationships including Salisbury Playhouse (we had a former relationship with Artistic Director Joanna Read but will now seek to build relationships with her successor, Philip Wilson).

We will continue to support the work of new writing producers including Show of Strength, Theatre West, Flax 303, Boiling Kettle, MED Theatre, ScriptunScript.

We will work with new writers and development organisations including: The Engine (Poole), Southwest Scriptwriters (Bristol) and StageWrite (Salisbury Playhouse)

In Bristol we will work in a focused way with members of the former New Writing Hub, which comprises both writers and producers, support the consultation processes for Theatre Bristol and Bristol Old Vic, and with Theatre Bristol's Creative Producers, as well as act as a contact for local playwrights.

We will bring in dramaturgs, directors and playwrights from inside/ outside of the region to facilitate the skill-sharing opportunities and to mentor writers and dramaturges.

We will use the project to develop our relationship with sector training organisations working in the region, namely Artsmatrix and Creative Skills, but also writernet's literaturetraining partners, including NAWA and Apples and Snakes.

We will use freelancers within the region to help deliver local work (thus developing skills in local areas). Resident dramaturgs/ playwrights proposed include David Lane (Playwright and Dramaturg, currently visiting Tutor at Exeter University), Duška Radosavljevic (Dramaturg and Teaching Fellow at Bristol University), Michael Kenyon (former literary manager of the Public Theatre in New York, now based in Bath) and Alan Pollock (playwright based in Gloucestershire and formerly Literary Manager at the Royal Exchange, Manchester)."

Part IV: Going Forward

1. Planning

Not a single PN organisation – even the RFOs -- was prepared to hazard a three-year financial forecast – at least in public. Clearly organisations that survive on G4A project money (e.g. Menagerie and indeed Script Yorkshire itself, see fig 1) will find it much more difficult to plan ahead. (It is notable that both Menagerie and SY place great emphasis on generating reliable alternative income streams, SY via its membership operation and Menagerie through facilitating corporate workshops.) This is what some of them told me about plans for project delivery going forward:

- *“3 projects in discussion in collaboration with The Drum – master classes for film, radio and tv, 10 week young screenwriters course, and stage it! - mentoring and script development for writers with view to production.”* Script
- *“Core funding from ACE will increase from April 08 to £84,850... Funding for Literary Associate in Lincolnshire ends in September 08. Funding for Development Manager ends in Jan 09... Our core objectives will remain the same but there are a number of specific projects currently under discussion.”* TWP
- *“Re:Design, a play about Darwin commissioned by the Darwin Correspondence Project, is in development as part of Cambridge Science Festival... New Play Correspondence tours nationally 2008. Continued workshops for writers - probably hold one a month 2008/09. Plus a weekend of three writers in progress! - readings etc - twice next year.”* Menagerie
- *“Regional new writing award, more international work, new festival, expansion of education remit, formalised mentoring scheme, new collaboration with University Sussex, etc etc!”* NWS (who have just acquired RFO status in April 2008).

- *“Verbatim piece - A Deep Cut - exploring apparent suicide of 4 young soldiers - residency at the Traverse in August, in-house and at Clwyd Theatr Cymru. Gary Owen bilingual piece - Amgen. Co-production with Torri Gair of Welsh translation of Conor MacPherson’s The Weir.” Sherman Cymru*

2. Key trends and issues

Nina Steiger, of Soho Theatre and Writers Centre, identified ever-increasing levels of participation in creative writing as an important trend. However, for most PN organisations who replied to the question *“What key trends and issues are emerging a) in the industry b) in your organisation?”* the key issue was, is and always will be – money. But is the annual scrabble for money getting in the way of a more strategic overview?

- *“Increase in number of people wanting to break into the industry, more opportunities at entry level, but not so much intermediate/ professional development. Funding is obviously a big issue - having lost RFO status, we are currently inviting tenders for a "strategic leader" to re-focus the organisation.” Script*
- *“Clearly funding is the major practical issue with changes in regular funding from ACE there is greater competition for other sources.” TWP*
- *“Lack of funds - through ACEE, lack of money out there generally. Writers struggling and maybe losing a bit of confidence in writing as a career. For us it is about survival and being one-step ahead which is getting harder - on both counts! But writers need us to be there for them - to know someone will read, comment and support them in their efforts!” Menagerie*
- *“a) funding restrictions b) funding restrictions!” Tinderbox*
- *“For SW the key issue is the historic lack of provision for playwriting across the region. No playwriting organisation, no literary manager, at all in the region. So, the work is all about building capacity in a region that has not benefited at all from the sorts of new writing development we've seen in other parts of the country, and this, at a time when new writing is being taken off the priority list. This is the key trend and issue that we face, and the work has to be strategic and effective to ensure that writers are served in this region, that audiences have access to fantastic new work written for them, and that producers have access to cpd and information around it.” SWNWN*

Part V: Conclusions and Recommendations

I hope this brief and inevitably rather impressionistic survey of Playwrights Network organisations has been useful. It is, however, no substitute for the much more rigorous study of best practice in regional new writing support that might be conducted if both the right academic partner and the appropriate level of funding could be found. (e.g. the Lottery’s ‘Big Research Programme at www.bigresearchprogramme.org.uk which funds research into evidence-based best practice amongst voluntary and community organisations; the Collecting Society for writers, ALCS, has also in the past committed funds to academic research which has enabled it to make evidence-based arguments to Government in support of writers’ interests.)

At the outset of Script Yorkshire's 'Routes to Sustainability project' we rather hoped our research would uncover some secret sources of profitability which might be used to support core costs and subsidise the membership operation. But in the light of this study, we can be confident in asserting that -- with the exception of Menagerie's sophisticated corporate workshop programme and Soho's income from commercial property -- no such sources exist. Over time it might be possible to develop a corporate arm but if we are to remain focussed on our core remit of supporting new writing and widening participation in employment in the writing for performance and broadcast industries there is, in the end, no real substitute for ACE revenue funding; albeit in long-term partnership with an additional minority funder such as a local authority.

The Playwrights Network

As stated in the preface, this is very much a working document, intended to identify existing elements of good practise within Playwrights Network organisations in order to map out a sustainable future for Script Yorkshire. However, on the basis of this study, I believe the dim outlines of an enhanced role for the Playwrights' Network are also beginning to emerge:

1. Whilst some PN organisations regard the dissemination of information to their region's writers as intrinsic to their role, others (in particular the producing theatres) do almost none of this beyond publicising their own activities. And even where this broader information role is undertaken there is no evidence that it is being done consistently well. There is much duplication of effort between regions. Perhaps the Playwrights Network/writernet could be charged with an enhanced role in making such information resources available nationally, not just via the touted national 'Journal' but also by the provision of timely online resources. This would free up regional organisations to concentrate on whatever it is they do best – for example, developing and advocating for writers in their areas and supplying information of local relevance without duplication.
2. Playing a co-ordinating role with respect to new writing festivals – making sure they don't clash, increasing awareness by providing a national calendar of events and working to ensure we are better represented at each other's festivals so there is more interplay and dialogue between regions.
3. Continuing the practice of regular meetings which encourage PN organisations to take a step back from project delivery and think strategically about the bigger trends and issues.

The Lessons for Script Yorkshire

1. **Funding Partners.** Although a quick fling with a grant-making trust can be fun, what really counts towards long-term stability and a sustained level of Arts Council funding is the establishment of a long-term relationship with an additional key funding partner such as a local authority. **Though even with this additional support Arts Council funding of PN organisations still amounts typically to 60%-70% of income.**

In the light of this study Script Yorkshire can make a strong case to ACE Yorkshire that it needs to be comparably funded with other PN organisations in order to do a comparable body of work. Nevertheless it makes sense for Script Yorkshire to seek out local authority partners in districts where the existing infrastructure for new writing support is weak (notably, but by no means limited to, parts of South Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire). In an ideal world this support would include an 'unrestricted' element to support our core costs and which is not tied to project work. But no such long-term funding partners have as yet, specifically, been identified and it is very possible they may not exist in the fragmented Yorkshire context.

However, uniquely amongst PN organisations, SY is evolving a grassroots branch structure. This has been in response to the region's challenging geography and transport networks but it makes it easier for us to access smaller, community-based pots of money such as Awards for All on a town-by-town basis. So if it is not possible to identify a major long-term funding partner, it is possible a portfolio of such small-scale funding sources and local partnerships might fulfil the same purpose.

2. **Delivery Partners.** Partners for project delivery are, to an extent, a different matter from funding partners; and with funding levels tied closely to delivery it is frequently impossible to generate a surplus – or even claw back the entirety of one's core costs, as more than one PN respondent pointed out. However, the benefits of partnership working include avoiding the duplication of effort and provision, generating additional resources for the organisation, complementing our own knowledge, skills and capacity and reaching out effectively to targeted communities. All the most successful PN organisations emphasised the importance of partnership working and we will continue to build upon the work of our Routes To Sustainability project which has been key to raising our profile in the region and identifying partners for delivery.

Outreach project work is a good in itself and on the basis of exploratory work completed this year, our potential long-term delivery partners include Sheffield Hallam University, Screen Yorkshire and the BBC (grassroots and outreach work for Northern Exposure). The region's vibrant calendar of literature festivals offers another hopeful route, as do small venues and small-scale producing companies, and we will continue, if funding permits, to work in partnership with literature training, writernet, the Playwrights Network and the Yorkshire Theatre Writers' Network.

3. **Self-generated income from events.** Until such time as Script Yorkshire achieves revenue funding status it will be dependent upon self-generated income to support its core costs. In the long term it might be possible to develop a series of branded corporate workshops along the lines of Menagerie Theatre. This corporate programme does, unambiguously, deliver a surplus whose aim is to subsidise Menagerie's new writing remit.

Another route might be to develop a schools-and-education programme and a series of off-the-shelf workshops which can be bought in by local festivals and library services. But the experience of NWS informs us that if these are to have integrity they will take time to set up and we will need to be confident we have a sufficiently stable infrastructure to develop relationships of trust and for delivery in the long term. They will also have to be keenly priced which means, although they will be a valuable resource to the region, they will not generate a surplus and their wider financial contribution to the organisation will be insignificant. Such projects are valuable in themselves but they are not cash cows and are difficult to establish and maintain in the absence of a stable infrastructure.

4. **Membership.** It is membership subscriptions from writers that offer the most immediate potential for a surplus of self-generated income. A recruitment campaign is ongoing and has already started to bear fruit. However, membership feedback informs us unambiguously that the present £40 subscription (waged) is the highest the market will bear. We plan an expansion (ideally a doubling) of membership numbers but to do this we must continue to offer good value for money to members, responding both to developments in technology and to evolving membership needs and aspirations.

5. **Information services.** The need for a robust package of membership benefits dictates that, in the short term, the information resources we offer must be to members only. However, these resources must demonstrate *exclusive* advantages and not be duplicated by standard industry websites such as BBC Writers Room and in the (free) e-bulletins of other organisations. For this

reason it is crucial that we update and extend the Members Only area of our website in order to create a unique advantage.

In the long term it might be desirable for Script Yorkshire to offer a range of open-access resources to the region's writers for performance and broadcast media -- but only if the external funding can be found to support this work.

6. **Progression Routes.** The study makes clear that the key to successful writer development work is providing progression routes by which an individual writer can move between script feedback, tailored workshops, script-in-hands and other low-budget, small-venue performances as required. For the very best this will lead to high-profile showcasing opportunities, one-to-one mentoring and ultimately a commission. There is a view amongst the trustees that the best way to achieve this, with the necessary degree of artistic judgement and quality control, is by appointing an artistic director to a full or near full-time post within the organisation.
7. **Brokering Relationships.** Both Ben Turner in his Routes for Sustainability project work and, independently, the Yorkshire Theatre Writers Network have identified a shortage of incubator spaces for new work. Yet the only theatre in the region currently resourced with a literary manager (the West Yorkshire Playhouse) is the one that effectively lacks a studio. Plenty of small spaces and small venues exist; the key delivery task for Script Yorkshire is to develop the relationships and broker the partnerships between the existing regional infrastructure and the new writing community. Our emerging branch structure, properly resourced, is a suitable vehicle for achieving this; strategic co-operation with the region's literary festivals is another.
8. **Script Submission.** As has already been mentioned, there is a perceived need within the organisation for an overarching artistic director figure who can oversee the development of an integrated programme of quality writer development work and – in line with the McMaster Review on supporting excellence in the arts – ensure it feeds into the existing infrastructure of the region. One point of access to this programme for the region's writers would be script submission. The artistic director would thus be at the head of an organisation with the capacity to read and feed back on scripts, freed from the necessity to tie in its writer development work to the specific needs of any one venue (for example, the requirement to fill a 350-seater auditorium!). However, it must be emphasised that without being part of an integrated programme of writer development and strategic partnerships for the delivery of new writing to audiences, a stand-alone 'script reading service' would be of limited value and would merely duplicate provision available from other sources e.g. Soho Writers' Centre and writernet.
9. **Mentoring.** Whilst using the existing model of integrated writer development as our template Script Yorkshire should not be afraid to deviate imaginatively from this. For example, we could explore the possibility of brokering commercial mentoring relationships in order to widen opportunities and generate additional income streams for experienced playwrights.
10. **Targeted provision** aimed at particular outreach groups would be an aspect of this integrated programme. This would mostly be grassroots work, helping more people to take part in high quality artistic activities, but with the subsidiary aim of identifying talent and providing that talent with progression opportunities including showcasing at the region's festivals. It is this integration, and the possibility for further development of talent, once it has been identified or self-identified, that lifts the branded provision of one-off workshops or workshop programmes to schools, festivals, library services out of the realm of the cynical and creates meaningful opportunities for participants.
11. Most PN organisations engage in some kind of **international work**. Doubtless, the creation of international links and dialogue adds value for the region's writers; it is an attractive and desirable target for the longer term.

12. We do not need to address the issue of **publishing** until commissioned plays emerge; at which point it makes sense to publish the script as part of the programme.
13. Corporate sponsorship of **competitions, bursaries and prizes** only really kicks in once a threshold level of activity has been reached sufficient to sustain a continuous fundraising operation. With a plethora of national competitions and prizes already available, the need for writers' bursaries seems particularly acute.
14. Dedicated office space is not an issue for Script Yorkshire at the moment but we need to be more explicit about the value of **in-kind support** being offered to us by BrownButler – and perhaps regularise this via an Arts & Business partnership.
15. Finally, we need to further **professionalize our board** which at present meets bi-monthly and still sometimes acts more like a management committee. Whilst retaining strong representation by practitioner members of the company (writers, directors, actors) we need to bring in more expertise from external partners such as Screen Yorkshire, the Big Six theatres, local authorities, university drama departments etc.

Part V1: Next Steps

The role of Script Yorkshire is to encourage the development of dynamic new writing in the ACE Yorkshire region and to support the professional development of the region's script writers for theatre and broadcast media.

We aim to do this by delivering a region-wide, integrated programme of scriptwriter training and development, giving rise to genuine opportunities, which will both support existing practitioners and widen participation in employment within the writing for performance and broadcast industries by all sections of the community. SY is committed to the necessary vigorous fundraising to make this happen.

In order to achieve our vision we will:

- Establish long term relationships with a portfolio of key funding partners,
- Develop the organisational capacity and staff competencies appropriate to delivery of our programmes,
- Work with a variety of delivery partners within both the creative industries and the third sector,
- Safeguard our independence and organisational robustness by fostering a variety of self-generated income streams and maintaining a low cost base.

Key Actions Over Next 12 Months:

Funding:

- Make the case for revenue funding at a strategic and regional level: ACEY, Yorkshire Forward, Screen Yorkshire etc,
- Identify additional long-term funding partners,

Organisational Capacity:

- Appoint a full-time or near full-time artistic director (0.8)
- Retain the services of our membership and communications officer (0.4)

- Identify key skills weaknesses and institute a staff and board development programme.

The artistic director post will be externally funded in its entirety and the communications officer post funded out of self-generated income. (This necessitates a doubling of self-generated income from its present level.)

Partnership Working:

- Progress key delivery partnerships already identified (Sheffield Hallam, Screen Yorkshire, Sheffield Theatres, BBC Northern Exposure, YTWN, literaturetraining),
- Continue to explore relationships with festivals sector,
- Build on relationships with local authority arts officers, particularly North Lincs, East Riding, Hull and York,
- Look for ways to roll and develop branch structure under the auspices of paid co-ordinators (12 days per year), possibly by attempting to access Awards for All and other community and locality-based funds.

Self-generated income:

- Continue to build self-generated revenue via such sources as membership recruitment, workshop income, donations etc,
- Develop the existing package of SY member benefits (special offers, discounts, exclusive competitions etc) and revamping the members' only area of the website to create a unique resource,
- Look for short-term ways to enhance delivery to members ahead of the development of our integrated programme e.g. 'Meet the Commissioners' strand of SY events.

Liz Ryan

Administrator, Script Yorkshire

Contact details: liz.ryan@scriptyorkshire.co.uk Tel: 01757 630742

Script Yorkshire -- supporting new writing for performance and broadcast media in Yorkshire.

Website: www.scriptyorkshire.co.uk

Facebook: Script Yorkshire

Script Yorkshire Ltd

Registered in England No: 3337922 Registered Charity No: 1063574

Registered Office: Brown Butler, Apsley House, 78 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 2JT (Please note this is NOT a correspondence address.)