

MANY PEOPLE CONTACT NEW WRITING CUMBRIA OUT OF SHEER FRUSTRATION!

They have perhaps been writing for many years, and tried submitting manuscripts to publishers, but with no success. How can you break this deadlock? How can you find the light at the end of the publishing tunnel without descending into depression or dying of old age first?

First you need to look long and hard at your writing, and be a ruthless self-editor. You might also try putting your work aside for a while and revisiting it after few months, when you'll look at it with fresh eyes. Get someone else to read it too - someone whose opinion you value, and who can be trusted to give an honest evaluation of your manuscript. Finally, make sure you've done your research into what individual agents and publishers are looking for.

Are you ready for the long haul? We're talking marathons here, not sprints. You may need to refine your covering letter umpteen times as you write to agent after agent (send them off in batches - it could save time). You may need to edit and re-edit as you get critical feedback on your writing. And do bear in mind that the JK Rowlings of this world are very much the exceptions rather than the rule, so don't expect to make a fortune from your writing - or even a living wage.

If you're still determined to get published after reading all of the above, well done! Dogged determination is just what's needed, along with hard work and of course your natural talent. Now, read on for some practical advice which may just put you on the right path, or at least revive your flagging spirits:

1. Get hold of the *WRITERS' AND ARTISTS' YEARBOOK OR WRITERS' HANDBOOK* which both have information and contact details of agents and publishers, and list what sort of writing each is interested in. They also contain useful articles on getting published, and are updated annually. Available from booksellers or from many libraries.

2. Join a **WRITING GROUP** to get some critical feedback on your work. If you know anyone who is a published writer, then you could also try asking them if they would read your work. Ideally you need someone who knows what a publisher is looking for. Having someone read and critique your work is so important: however rigorous you think you have been at self-editing. There are individuals and agencies who offer critique services for fiction - at a price (see Critique Services for Fiction Writers download).

3. Alternatively, do a **CREATIVE WRITING COURSE**. These are on offer at most universities. The University of Cumbria offers courses at both Carlisle and Lancaster, with Lancaster University, Newcastle University and the University of Glasgow's Crichton Campus at Dumfries not too far away. Many published writers say that one of the best things they ever did to help their careers was go on an Arvon writing course: residential courses are held at centres with tutors who are all published writers. They are not cheap, but bursaries may be available. See www.arvonfoundation.org

4. Enter **COMPETITIONS**. Many are advertised on the New Writing Cumbria website and in our e-Update email newsletter, as well as in magazines such as *Kudos*, *Writers' News* or *Msllexia*. Try also Googling UK writing competitions and prizes. Most competitions charge an entry fee.

5. Submit POETRY AND SHORT STORIES to MAGAZINES. Mainstream publishers will usually only publish short stories by well-known writers whose novels they also publish, so one of the best alternatives for short story writers are magazines. Literary magazines can be expensive, and only available by subscription, but can be found in larger libraries. If your work is in a particular genre, eg romantic fiction or sci-fi/fantasy, then target specialist magazines (see *Writers & Artists Yearbook*). It's crucial to do your homework: find out magazines' submission details, target well - and write a cracking covering letter.

6. Hardly any PUBLISHERS these days will look at unsolicited manuscripts, only accepting those coming from an agent - so the advice is to GET AN AGENT first: see *Writers and Artists Yearbook* and target those who publish writers whose work you know you like, or which is in a similar genre to yours. Take note of exactly what kind of writing they want, and make sure you present it in the form they want. It is extremely difficult to get an agent to take you on, so it may help if you can get a recommendation from one of their authors, perhaps if they are teaching on a writing course you're doing. Again, the advice is do your homework so you know who to target, and how ... and be persistent.

7. Be aware that SHORT STORIES AND POETRY are much harder to get published than novels. This is because neither genre sells in large quantities, so bookshops are not so interested. Only a handful of major publishers publish poetry, so your best bet is to submit to literary magazines (see above) or try SMALL INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS. Some specialise in poetry, others in fiction, including short stories. For details of some in the north see: www.publishingnorthwest.co.uk and www.northernpublishers.co.uk

(8) For WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE (theatre, radio, TV, film) take a look at the website www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom which has lots of useful information on how to lay out a script, where to submit etc. There are two writing/networking groups in Cumbria which specialise in this field: North Cumbria Playwrights and South Cumbria Playwrights or see North West Playwrights' website www.newplaysnw.com

(9) Keep abreast of the latest opportunities, get news from local writing groups and find out what literature events are happening and become part of the county's writing community by subscribing to NEW WRITING CUMBRIA e-Updates: sign up on the website or email sue.allan@edenarts.co.uk

The logo for edenarts, featuring the word "edenarts" in a lowercase, rounded, sans-serif font. The letters are white with a thin black outline, giving it a clean, modern look.

For further information, contact:

WRITING CUMBRIA

c/o EDENARTS

1 Sandgate

Penrith

Cumbria CA11 7TP

Tel: 01768 899444 Fax: 01768 895920

Email: sue.allan@edenarts.co.uk