

NEW WRITING
NORTH

SCREENWRITING WEEKENDER

6–8 FEBRUARY 2026



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Welcome to New Writing North's Screenwriting Weekender.

New Writing North has been supporting screenwriters with a broad programme of activity since 2014. Our current programme offers awards, mentoring, placements with production companies, writers' rooms, script hubs, workshops, roadshows and one-to-one surgeries.

Our growing network includes those who are totally new to screenwriting; emerging television and film writers; and writers who are experienced in different forms, but are looking to move into screenwriting.

In May 2026 we will be launching the 11th annual **Channel 4 Writing for TV Awards**.

The awards were established to offer new television writers based in the North of England unique professional opportunities. All the winners receive mentoring, a £3,000 cash bursary and a long-term placement with a leading production company, funded by Channel 4's training and development initiative, 4Skills.

Find out more about New Writing North's support for screenwriters at
NewWritingNorth.com/Writing-For-Screen

Friday

Doors open and registration

5.45pm

Welcome: Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive of New Writing North

6.30–6.45pm

Original Drama vs IP: Demystifying What's Being Made and Why

6.45–7.45pm

Russell T Davies in Conversation

8–9pm

Industry Mixer in the Live Theatre Bar and Undercroft

9–10.30pm

Saturday

Coffee and registration

9.15–10am

The Industrial Ideas Complex

10–11am

Mastering Vertical Storytelling

11.15am–12.15pm

Writing a Hit Crime Thriller: Chandni Lakhani

12.30–1.30pm

Lunch and coffee

1.30–3pm

How to Break a Show

3–4pm

What's Up With TV?

4.15–5.15pm

Three Page Challenge: Comedy Edition

5.30–7.30pm

Scene Slam

9–10.30pm

Sunday

Coffee and registration

9.45am

Writers on Writers: Faebian Averies and Anna Jordan

10.30–11.30am

How to Write Characters We Care About

11.45am–12.45pm

Show Me The Money!

1–2pm



Original Drama vs IP: *Demystifying What's Being Made and Why*

6.45–7.45pm

How can writers with an original drama idea get noticed in an IP saturated and risk averse commissioning landscape? What is the industry looking for right now and how do you hone your voice to ensure your ideas are unique but find an audience? This session will demystify the current drama landscape and uncover what writers should be thinking about as they embark on writing their scripts and idea outlines.

Chaired by **Méabh O'Donavan**, Head of **NFTS North**, we'll hear from **Siobhan Morgan**, **Warp Films**, **Natasha Heliotis**, **See-Saw Films** and **Dave Evans**, **Balloon Entertainment**.

Natasha Heliotis heads up development at in-house label **fanboy** at **See-Saw Films** (*Slow Horses*, *Heartstopper*) - a new destination for creative talent to tell fresh and original stories that celebrate unique, underdog perspectives.

First out of the stable was 'coming-of-age' original comedy thriller ***Sweetpea***.

Head of Development at **Warp Films**, **Siobhan Morgan** oversees the slate including the multi Emmy award-winning global smash hit series ***Adolescence*** and revenge thriller ***Reunion***, which she associate produced. Prior to Warp, she was an Assistant Commissioner in **BBC Drama**, where she worked across the slate with a focus on Northern writers and programmes.

Dave Evans is Head of Development at writer-led drama and comedy indie **Balloon Entertainment**. He started his career as an assistant at the literary agency, **Rochelle Stevens & Co**. At Balloon he has executive produced shows including ***Clique*** (BBC), ***Champion*** (BBC/Netflix), ***Newark Newark*** (UKTV), ***Eden*** (Stan/Spectrum) and most recently ***Counsels*** (BBC).



Russell T Davies in Conversation

8–9pm

Leading screenwriter **Russell T Davies** will be in conversation with journalist, editor and author **Terri White**.

Russell T Davies received an OBE in the Queen's 2008 Birthday Honours list for services to television drama. His work includes the ground-breaking *Queer as Folk*, *Bob and Rose*, *Casanova* and *The Second Coming*.

In 2004, he revived the classic British science fiction series *Doctor Who* and he created *Torchwood*. This was followed by the trilogy *Cucumber*, *Banana and Tofu*. He then adapted *A Very English Scandal* on BBC 1 followed by the 6-part drama *Years and Years* for BBC One/HBO.

He wrote the acclaimed 5-part series *It's A Sin* for **Channel 4/HBO MAX** and a 3-part drama *Nolly* for **ITV**. He has returned to the BBC to oversee *Doctor Who*. His 5-part spin-off series *The War Between the Land and the Sea* for **BBC One/Disney+** is in post-production. Russell is currently in production for an original 5-part drama for **Channel 4** called *Tip Toe*.

Manchester based **Terri White** was the editor-in-chief of *Time Out New York* and *Empire* magazine and is author of a memoir *Coming Undone*. Terri will chair a conversation with Russell focusing on his work in television, exploring how he has developed his craft and career.

Saturday



The Industrial Ideas Complex

10–11am

How do you fire up your creativity, generate multiple TV ideas and sell your one page pitch? Bradford based screenwriter **Kat Rose-Martin** will talk through how you develop, sell (and re-sell!) a one page idea or script, how you pitch and adapt them to fit the indie or current commissioning landscape and how to take an entrepreneurial and pro-active approach to idea development. Kat is a writer/actor and inaugural winner of the **Kay Mellor Fellowship**.

In 2020 she was part of **BBC Writers room, Northern Voices**. For screen, her TV Drama **The Crossleys** made the **BAFTA Rolcliffe TV Drama Top 10** and is now in development in the US. She has original TV projects in development, at treatment stage, with **Rollem, Dancing Ledge, Urban Myths, Warp** and **APC**. She has a pilot commission with **BBC3**. Her script **Ursula**, developed with **RED Productions**, made **The Brit List**.



Mastering Vertical Storytelling

11.15am–12.15pm

‘Vertical dramas consisting of minute-long episodes are booming, with the market predicted to be worth \$14bn by 2027’ (The Guardian).

In the shadow of rapid AI development and fragmenting audiences, it’s vital screenwriters understand vertical storytelling and how to adapt their work for different platforms and audiences. **Nosa Eke**, **Dan Lowenstein** and **Anna Costello** will discuss fundamentals of short form vertical storytelling for platforms like TikTok and YouTube as well as exploring the opportunities in mobile gaming and how to exploit these trends whilst maintaining creativity.

Chaired by **Emma Nuttall** a Northern-based writer working across television, video games, theatre, and immersive storytelling.

Nosa Eke is a platform agnostic writer/director, she has a TV show in development with

Studiocanal. Nosa was chosen as a future leader by **Google Creative Labs** and has written a **BBC** drama for **Amazon Alexa**. Her real time scripted digital series **The Grind** was the first to use livestreaming internet technology, among other platforms.

Dan Lowenstein has spent the last year in vertical drama, completing 18 projects for platforms such as **Reel Short** (*Pride & Prejudice*), **DramaBox** (*Mafia Obsession*) and **Joy Reels** (*My Rookie Agent*). He has gained a strong reputation within the vertical drama space being one of the the first directors to shoot a vert in the UK.

As well as developing her own sitcoms and comedy dramas Broadcast Hot Shot **Anna Costello** is the Principal Writer at **Scriptic**, a BAFTA-nominated studio building immersive narrative experiences at the intersection of true crime, gaming and storytelling.

Saturday



Writing a Hit Crime Thriller: Chandni Lakhani, *Department Q*

12.30–1.30pm

With a greater emphasis on genre in TV commissioning we'll take a deep dive into how to craft a compelling crime thriller with **Chandni Lakhani** writer and co-creator of Netflix hit *Dept. Q*.

Set in Edinburgh, *Dept. Q* is an adaptation of the novels of the same name by Danish author **Jussi Adler-Olsen**.

The series revolves around Carl Morck, a former top-rated detective assigned to a new cold case whilst wracked with guilt following an attack that left his partner paralysed and another police officer dead.

The show spent six weeks in **Netflix's** top ten shows following its release and has been renewed for a second season.

Chandni's career began as a script editor on the Emmy-winning Netflix series *Black Mirror*, where she helped develop episodes such as *San Junipero* and *USS Callister*.

Since then, she has written episodes for *Dublin Murders* for **BBC One/Starz**, based on the acclaimed Tana French novels, and the record-breaking BBC One thriller *Vigil*.

The discussion will be chaired by **Adam Woodhall**, Development Producer at **Film Nation** Adam has worked in development and in production for indies including **Company Pictures**, **Vertigo Films** and **Pulse Films** and his production credits include *Bulletproof*, *A Town Called Malice* and *The Day of the Jackal*. A North East native, Adam now works across **FilmNation UK's** North East TV slate.



How to Break a Show

3–4pm

Back by popular demand, screenwriter **Sarah Morgan** is turning her attention to the dreaded world of structure. Whether you love it or hate it, knowing how to structure a TV series can improve your spec and your writers' room skills. Sarah will go through the nuts and bolts of TV drama structure exploring how you develop your season arcs vs your episode arcs and what the tips and tricks are to ensure you hit the key beats that make a series successful.

Sarah has a wealth of experience to draw on having created original TV pilot scripts for **BBC studios, ITV, Sky, FX** and **Apple** and was recently on the writing team for Netflix YA smash **Geek Girl** and **Sky's Romantic Getaway**. She is currently adapting **Redlands** the graphic novel by **Jordie Bellaire**, as a horror series for **UCP/NBC Universal**.

Recent credits include co-writing **BBC3's Fully Blown** with **Donna Preston** and **Verona Rose**, and Story Producer on **Sky One/Peacock's Intelligence** starring **Nick Mohammed** and **David Schwimmer**. Sarah is also a sought-after script editor/consulting producer, with a reputation for working with emerging voices.

Saturday



What's Up With TV?

4.15–5.15pm

Former **BBC** and **UKTV** commissioner **Sarah Asante** lifts the lid on the commissioning process from pitching and packaging through to navigating relationships and understanding the secret language of commissioners. Sarah will provide open and frank insider insights as to why projects are turned down and offer tips on how you can win over the industry gatekeepers and troubleshoot your pitch.

Sarah founded **Asante Space** after a 20 year career with leading commissioning teams and broadcasters including **Channel 4**, **ITV** and **Fox International Channels** across factual, entertainment and scripted. She commissioned hits like ***Dreaming Whilst Black***, ***Famalam***, and ***Murder They Hope*** at **BBC & UKTV** and since founding **Asante Space** earlier this year has become the translator between brilliant creators and baffling commissioners. She'll reveal why some pitches get greenlit in 10 minutes and others gather dust for years.



Three Page Challenge - Comedy Edition

5.30–7.30pm

Back for 2026! How do you grab a reader's attention of the in the first three pages of your script? In this session chaired by **Lisa Laws**, **North East Screen**, we have invited **Chris Jones** from **Hat Trick Productions** and **Navi Lamba** from **BBC Comedy** to analyse opening scenes from Northern screenwriters spec comedy scripts.

Screenwriters **Adam Bennett-Lea**, **Scott Turnbull**, and duo **Emily Low** and **Chess Tomlinson** have all been developing their work through New Writing North's screen development programmes.

Navi Lamba, a Commissioning Editor at **BBC Comedy**, began her career at **VICE Media** and has held commissioning roles at **BBC Three** and **Channel 4**, where she developed digital-first formats including the BAFTA-winning **How To Be A Person**. Navi joined the BBC as Head

of Development, launching the BBC Comedy short film strand – a pipeline for emerging talent that has gone on to receive BAFTA acclaim. Navi has also overseen a range of projects including **BBC New Comedy Awards**, **Greg Davies' *The Cleaner***, and the upcoming series of ***Juice*** and ***Alan Partridge***.

Chris Jones is an RTS and Broadcast Award-winner and comedy producer at **Hat Trick Productions**. He developed and produced two seasons of the critically acclaimed **BBC** sitcom ***Smoggie Queens***. His producer credits also include ***Kate & Koji*** (ITV), as well as scripted podcast ***Whistle Through The Shamrocks***. Chris began his career as a freelancer, working across various roles on some of the UK's most iconic comedies, including ***The IT Crowd*** and ***PhoneShop*** (Channel 4), ***People Just Do Nothing***, ***Detectorists***, and ***Motherland*** (BBC), and ***Birds of a Feather*** (ITV).



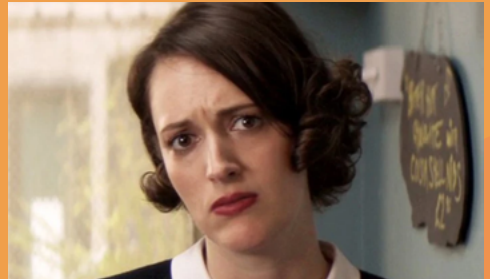
Scene Slam

9–10.30pm

Join us in the bar for an informal drink and natter as we gather together to play Scene Slam! Local comedy writer-performers have been invited to take iconic scenes from much loved TV shows such as *Succession*, *Fleabag* and *Breaking Bad* and work with you in groups to rewrite and perform them based on your suggestions.

The aim of the event is not only to have fun while networking but to develop writers' understanding of how small changes to a script can impact tone and intention as well as understanding an actor's relationship to script.

Winners of the Best Scene Slam will win a copy of **Philip Shelley's** book ***Screenwriting: The Craft and The Career***.



North East Screen is the screen industries development agency for North East England, supporting high-end TV, commercial film and digital production across the region.

At the heart of this is our Film Office, which supports incoming commercial film and high-end TV productions by offering easy access to skilled crew, diverse filming locations, and our filming-friendly local authority partners. We ensure productions receive the on-the-ground support they need for a seamless experience.

The North East Production Fund further strengthens the region's offer by investing in high-end, globally recognised content made here in the North East. The fund is designed to secure inward investment, create jobs, and

build a long-term, resilient and sustainable production base in the region.

We also work with production companies, established producers, and high-level creative talent across film, TV, and digital platforms, supporting them to develop IP, connect, and deliver outstanding content in the North East and champion them when they work away from the region.

As the fastest-growing screen sector in the UK, we're committed to building a fairer, greener and more inclusive industry, while championing the talent, crews and stories that define our region.

The North East is a welcoming home where people can live, work and create exceptional content.





Writers on Writers: Faebian Averies and Anna Jordan

10.30–11.30am

BBC Writers Pilot Scheme alumni **Faebian Averies** will be in conversation with screenwriter **Anna Jordan**. As well as being an established playwright Anna's impressive TV credits include **Succession** (HBO), **Killing Eve** (Sid Gentle), **One Day** (Netflix) and **Sweetpea** (See-Saw/Sky).

The conversation will be chaired by Faebian who won The Brit List with a crime drama that is now in development with **NBC Universal**. She is also developing a family drama with **Bad Wolf**, a murder-mystery with **Warp** and a family drama with **Kudos** through the **BBC Pilot Scheme**.

Anna is Faebian's mentor on the **BBC Pilot Scheme** and in this frank and open discussion they'll discuss writing for television from both of their perspectives - what it's like to write for iconic hit shows like **Succession** and **Killing Eve** and how you move from development to green light, get into writers' rooms, improve your craft and forge a career whilst maintaining your voice.



How to Write Characters We Care About

11.45–12.45pm

How do you create characters with depth and flaws that audiences actually root for? What makes a character likeable without being boring? What are the tips and tricks for creating engaging secondary characters?

Screenwriter **Jeremy Dyson** will be lifting the lid on all things character, giving you the skills and insights to turn your characters into people we just can't turn away from.

Jeremy was born, raised and educated in Leeds. In 1995 he formed the comedy group **The League of Gentlemen** with Mark Gatiss, Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith. The League went on to enjoy a highly successful ten-year career in the UK, appearing on stage, radio, TV and film – winning among others the Perrier award, the Golden Rose of Montreux, and Royal Television Society and BAFTA awards for best TV comedy.

In 2017 they reunited for three anniversary TV specials and an award-winning sell-out UK tour in 2018. In addition to his work with the League, Jeremy co-created the BAFTA nominated comedy drama series **Funland** with Simon Ashdown, was script editor and co-writer of BBC1's BAFTA award-winning **Armstrong and Miller Show**, and co-creator, co-writer and director of **Sky Arts'** comedy series **Psychobitches**, which won the Rose d'or for Best TV comedy in 2015. He has also written for shows as wide ranging as **Good Omens** and **Killing Eve**.

In addition he was script editor on the hit **BBC** shows, **Grandma's House**, **The Wrong Mans**, **Bad Education**, and the Emmy-nominated **Tracey Ullman's Show**.

Sunday



Show Me The Money!

1–2pm

How can you make a living from writing, get a foot on the ladder and break in to the industry whilst crafting your dream original script?

We've invited an industry panel to reveal what it really takes to earn a living as a screenwriter and what the routes and income streams are. We'll focus on the reality of breaking in as well as answer your burning questions.

The session will be chaired by screenwriter and Northern representative of the **Writers' Guild of Great Britain**, **Lisa Holdsworth**, and feature screenwriters **Bridget Deane** (*Emmerdale*), **Ishy Din** (*Phoenix Rise*, *Shakespeare* and *Hathaway*) and **Georgia Kanner**, agent with **Independent**.

Lisa Holdsworth is a writer and producer born and bred in Leeds. Lisa wrote extensively for the original *Waterloo Road* and returned to the show when it was rebooted. She wrote on the final series of *Robin Hood* for the **BBC** before moving on to *Midsomer Murders*. She has also written for *Ackley Bridge*, *Call the Midwife* and *All Creatures Great & Small*. Over the last two years, she created and wrote *Dreamers* for **C4**, her first original series.

Bridget Deane is a working-class, dyslexic writer based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne with a strong track record across television, film, and theatre, including writing for **ITV's Emmerdale**. She currently has writing projects in active development with **Film Nation** and **New Writing North/C4 Drama Programme**, and was recently commissioned to write for **ITV's** primetime drama series: *The Bay*.



Ischy Din is a screenwriter and playwright, he took part in the prestigious **Media XChange Advanced Writing For Television Drama Programme** and the **BBC TV Drama Writers Programme** and wrote ***Life's Like That*** for the **BBC TV Brief Encounters** strand. His half hour standalone comedy-drama ***Doughnuts*** was broadcast on **C4** as part of the 'Coming Up' season. Ischy has two feature films in commissioned development funded by **Creative England**.

Natasha Salter is founding partner at **Salt Partnership**, who represent and manage some of the UK's leading literary and creative talent for Film and Television from their bases in London and Manchester. They manage the careers of Writers, Directors and Journalists for Film and TV and seek to extend opportunities whilst guiding and nurturing exceptional voices. Salt Partnership represents both new emerging talent through to established and recognised names.

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards

5 May–12pm midday on 26 June

The Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards offer awardees £3000 bursaries, mentoring and long-term placements with leading production companies. Writers will work alongside company partners to develop their original scripts.

The writers also receive bespoke mentoring from an industry professional to enhance their career development.

The winning writers will receive additional support as a group, including meetings with producers, writers and agents.

Find out more at NorthernWritersAwards.com



Screenwriting for Playwrights

Gala Theatre, Durham

Saturday 9 May 2026, 2–5.30pm

A programme of insight and discussion around writing for television, curated by Hooley Theatre in partnership with New Writing North. This event is aimed at people with experience writing for the stage who would like to develop their work for the screen. TV writers and industry professionals will discuss the commonalities and differences that exist between writing for the stage and the screen and offer advice on how most effectively to navigate those transitions. You will have a chance to meet other writers and to put your questions to industry experts.

Find out more at NewWritingNorth.com/Events



Writing TV Drama

Brewery Arts, Kendal

Saturday 11 April 2026, 12.30–4pm

This event is for anyone interested in writing for television. You may already be working on a script or just beginning to consider if this is a world you'd like to know more about.

Our panels of writers and producers will discuss how to turn ideas into scripts, what writers need to do to get their work out there and the kind of stories that have resonance for audiences. We will hear from specialist speakers about the types of drama being made, and you will have an opportunity to network and share ideas.

Find out more at NewWritingNorth.com/Events



Right to Read is a programme of events in the North East to celebrate the National Year of Reading in 2026. Throughout the year we'll be hosting events in Northern libraries, working with young people to create exciting book lists for teenagers, putting reading volunteers into hospitals, and convening family reading groups to help improve literacy and inspire a lifetime love of books.

We'll be bringing a host of bestselling authors to newcastle for upcoming events with: Alan Hollinghurst, HF Askwith, Tasha Suri, Max Porter, Douglas Stuart, Maggie O'Farrell, and The Announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize.

To find out more scan the QR code or visit NewWritingNorth.com/RightToRead

