

THURSDAY 27 – SUNDAY 30 MARCH 2025

DEPTFORD LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Live performances + music

Open mic sessions

Children + young people's programme

Talks + workshops

Zine + book making

Walking tours + more!



**More info and book:
deptfordlitfest.com**



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

**LEWISHAM
BOROUGH of
LITERATURE**

**SPREAD
THE WORD**

Welcome

Welcome to Deptford Literature Festival, a celebration of the diversity and creativity of Deptford and Lewisham. Come along to discover local organisations and talent, meet authors and editors, and try out your writing skills. Deptford Literature Festival is for anyone who wants to have a go.

Taking place over four days, from Thursday 27 March to Sunday 30 March, the festival launches with Lewisham Lyricists curated by Emma Warren on Friday 28 March.

Throughout the weekend you can enjoy workshops, talks, walking tours, zine and book making, readings, performances and much more. We also have a special event for our *Lewisham, Borough of Literature* campaign. Come and hear new work created by our commissioned authors, meet the advisory group and have your say.

We have a special programme of family and children's activities for younger festival-goers and creative workshops for teenagers. There are also many ways to get involved from home. All sessions are open to writers with different levels of experience – from complete beginners to regular writers.

The Festival Anthology and Young Writers Collective Anthology will be available for free at the festival hub in Deptford Lounge. Pick them up to read new writing from local, emerging and established writers and our collective of 25 young poets. Visit the festival exhibition to discover stories by elders from Entelechy Arts and Meet Me at the Albany that celebrate our local community.

Deptford Literature Festival is run by Spread the Word with creative producer Tom MacAndrew and funded by Arts Council England with support from the Albany, Deptford Lounge and Lewisham Libraries.

How to book

Book your tickets and find out more about all our festival events at: deptfordlitfest.com

Please note that all events are suitable for ages 16+ unless otherwise stated. For the children's and family programme, please see each event for its recommended age range. All children attending family events must be accompanied by a parent or carer.

For travel information and a map of festival venues, see page 37.

All events are free, except for Conversations on Kindness, Lewisham Lyricists and The Littlest Yak. Bursary tickets are available for Lewisham Lyricists for local residents. Please see the festival website for more information.

If you are experiencing difficulties making a booking, please contact: festival@spreadtheword.org.uk

Share your experiences using the festival hashtag: **#DeptfordLitFest**

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February – March

What's Happening in Lewisham Libraries?

This year we are proud to be working in partnership with Lewisham Libraries in the lead up to the festival, offering free creative opportunities for children, young people and adults across the borough.

Children's + Family Events

This half-term festival authors, storytellers and illustrators are bringing fun creative sessions for children and young people to local libraries throughout Lewisham. All the sessions are free, but please do sign up to take part. Please note that parents, guardians or carers must stay with their children during these events.

Drawing Animals as Characters with Rikin Parekh for 4-6 year olds

Tuesday 18 February, 2.30pm-3.15pm, Sydenham Library

Making Graphic Novels! with Vivian Truong for 12-18 year olds

Wednesday 19 February, 2pm-3pm, Catford Library

African and Caribbean Folktales with Wendy Shearer for 8-11 year olds

Friday 21 February, 1pm-2pm, Grove Park Library

Instruments from Around the World with Nate Holder for 6-8 year olds

Saturday 22 February, 2pm-3pm, Downham Library



See from page 26 for the Young People's and Children's + Family programmes at the festival.

Festival Reads

We're really excited that there will be a Festival Reads book collection at Deptford Lounge this year. Books by festival authors are available for you to borrow and read for free. Get yourself down to the library to get a taste of the festival before, during and after it takes place!

Not a member of Lewisham Libraries? Find out how to join here:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/libraries/join-the-library>



February – March

What's Happening in Lewisham Libraries?

Lewisham Writes: A Poetic Life Workshops

Come together this spring for some relaxed writing sessions facilitated by Helen Bowell. As part of the Lewisham Writes programme run by Spread the Word in partnership with Lewisham Libraries, Helen will be running free taster workshops across the borough in the run up to the festival. If you'd like to give writing a go, please do come and join us.



Lewisham Libraries Celebrates Local Writers

Date: Saturday 22 March

Time: 2pm–4pm

Location: Deptford Lounge

Price: FREE

Join us to celebrate the creative writing talents of the members of writers' and poets' groups supported by Lewisham Libraries.

Coming together for the first time, local writers and poets from Lewisham Multicultural Writers' Group (Deptford Library), Torridon Writers (Corbett Community Library) and Forest Hill Stanza (Forest Hill Library) will be sharing their literary works in this spoken word event.

You'll get to hear poetry and stories full of the joys, the fears, and the ups and downs of life and meet other local writers. There'll also be book signings and a zine launch.



Credit: Emily Fellah

Book your tickets: deptfordlitfest.com

Thursday 27 March

Festival Opening Events

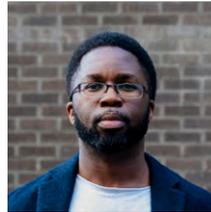
Poetry in the Library with Jacob Sam-La Rose + Ella Frears

Time: 6.30pm–8pm

Location: Catford Library

Price: FREE

Join us for an evening of poetry readings from acclaimed local poets Jacob Sam-La Rose and Ella Frears. This special Deptford Literature Festival edition of Lewisham Libraries' roving monthly poetry evening will also feature a Q&A, and books to buy and borrow.



Credit: Naomi Woddis



Credit: Robin Christian

Presented in partnership with Lewisham Libraries.

Conversations on Kindness with Bernadette Russell

Time: 7.30pm

Location: Albany, Red Room

Price: £8-£10

Age: Recommended 14+

Access: 

You are invited to the launch of Bernadette's latest non-fiction book *Conversations on Kindness*. She will also be presenting her "part storytelling, part stand up" show *366 Days of Kindness*, the true story of how Bernadette tried to change the world by being kind to a total stranger every day for a year. After the show, Bernadette will be answering questions about

Conversations on Kindness and signing books. This event is a fundraiser. All profits from ticket sales will go to Deptford charity the 999 Club.

Presented by the Albany as part of Deptford Literature Festival.



Friday 28 March Festival Launch Event

Lewisham Lyricists curated by Emma Warren

Time: 7.30pm

Location: In person: Albany Theatre / Online: streamed live

Price: £10 with free tickets available to Lewisham residents

Access: In person: **(BSL)** Online: captioned

Step into the vibrant heart of Lewisham's lyrical creativity at this unmissable event, celebrating the borough's rich history of MCs and poets. From the fast chat pioneers of the Saxon Sound System era of the 1980s, to today's contemporary wordsmiths, experience performances that honour Lewisham's vibrant culture and celebrate its future. Curated by Lewisham resident Emma Warren, the event will include sets from Lezlee Lyrix, Belinda Zhawi, Cecil B, No Hats No Hoods (DJ set) and more; all accompanied by atmospheric and immersive soundscapes from the acclaimed musician Anja Ngozi.

This one-of-a-kind evening bridges generations of creativity, capturing the heart and soul of Lewisham through spoken word and music. Join us for a celebration of music, language, rhythm and community that's uniquely Lewisham.

For more information on the free bursary tickets for Lewisham residents, visit spreadtheword.org.uk/bursary-places

Presented by Deptford Literature Festival in association with the Albany.



Saturday 29 March Festival Hub

Festival Stalls + Signings

Books by Deptford Literature Festival writers and artists will be available to buy from the festival bookseller, **The Word** bookshop.

Local publishers and literature organisations will have stalls with titles to browse and buy alongside stalls from Lewisham Libraries and the Lewisham, Borough of Literature Campaign.

Book signings by featured festival authors will take place in the foyer of Deptford Lounge on Saturday 29 March soon after events have taken place. Books need to be purchased in advance of signings.



Festival Exhibition

Dates: Saturday 29 March – Sunday 13 April

Location: Deptford Lounge

Price: FREE

Elders have been exploring and creating work around the themes of community and the power of stories. Come along to read the stories and see the banners they have created.

Join Laurie and Barbara for a cosy words + craft session on Saturday 29 March – see page 13.

Throughout the start of the year, poet Laurie Bolger and artist Barbara Majek have been running workshops with Elders from Entelechy Arts' Meet Me at the Albany community. The



Pick up your free copies of the Festival Anthology and the Young Writers Collective Anthology at the Festival Hub in Deptford Lounge. Both will also be available to read online in PDF format.

Festival Anthology

Discover new writing from Lewisham and London-based writers. The Festival Anthology features ten commissioned pieces of work, from fiction to poetry, including Spread the Word's 30th Anniversary Commissions from emerging writers and D/deaf and disabled writers, and the four Borough of Literature writers' commissioned pieces on the theme of 'To All the Places I have Read'.

All the featured writers will be reading and discussing their work at events on Saturday 29 March – Find out more from page 10.



Credit: Christy Kai

Young Writers Collective Anthology

We're really excited to be launching the Young Writers Collective's first anthology at the festival. Since October 2024, young people from Lewisham, Bromley, Greenwich and Southwark have been working with poet Tolu Agbelusi to develop their voice and create new poems.

The Young Writers Collective will be sharing their work on Saturday 29 March – see page 26. Last year's event was full of energy and powerful writing, this is not to be missed!



Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Meet the Agents with Davinia Andrew-Lynch, Emma Leong + Emma Bal

Time: 10am-11am

Location: In person: Deptford Lounge, Studio
Online: streamed as live

Price: FREE

Access: In person **(BSL)** Online: captioned

Come and connect with some of the leading agents working in the publishing industry today including Davinia Andrew-Lynch, formerly with Curtis Brown and now an independent agent operating under Andlyn, non-fiction specialist Emma Bal of Madeleine Milburn Agency, and Emma Leong of Janklow and Nesbit who is building a fiction and non-fiction list.

You'll get an insight into what an agent does and how they work with writers, and have an opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the publishing industry. The event will be hosted by Spread the Word's Bobby Nayyar.

Please note an online recording of this event will be made available for one month after the event - see page 32.



Credit: Janklow & Nesbit UK LTD



How To Be Held: A Writing Workshop on Queer Tenderness with Annie Hayter

Time: 10am-11.30am

Location: Deptford Lounge, Room 2

Price: FREE

Access: **(BSL)**

A workshop for LGBTQIA+ people, where we'll delve into the possibilities of queer tenderness through discussion, reading, writing and longing. With writer Annie Hayter, it will be a space to write amid queer community; exploring what it means to hold and to be held. As inspiration for our writing, we'll read texts that unfurl the many possibilities of queer tenderness and consider together what this means for our collective liberation.

For LGBTQIA+ people and anyone questioning. Whether you are new to writing, or a seasoned poet, there is a place for you here.

Do Annie's Festival At Home activities in your own time - see page 33.

30th Anniversary Emerging Writer Commissions with Giselle Cory, Eliezer Gore + Naomi Walsh

Time: 10am-11am

Location: Albany, Red Room

Price: FREE

Access: 

Hear the next generation of literary stars at this event showcasing bold new work by emerging writers from underrepresented backgrounds, commissioned as part of Spread the Word's 30th anniversary celebrations. Hosted by award-winning writers Joelle Taylor and Olumide Popoola, this event highlights fresh perspectives from underrepresented voices in poetry, fiction, and narrative non-fiction, sharing new work from emerging writers Giselle Cory, Eliezer Gore and Naomi Walsh.

It will be followed by an engaging discussion about the creative process, inspiration, and the impact of being commissioned.

You'll also be able to pick up a copy of the Festival Anthology which features all three commissions.

These commissions are supported by Cockayne Grants for the Arts and the London Community Foundation.



Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Translated Literature + Zine Making with Hidden Keileon

Time: 10.30am–1.30pm

Location: Albany, Orange Room

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Libraries are repositories of stories that span cultures and histories, yet many voices remain unheard, particularly those from East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) heritages. This participatory workshop seeks to bridge that gap by bringing these untold stories to the forefront through translated literature and zine making. Using translated poems and stories from ESEA writers as a catalyst, participants will explore and express their visions of our shared future through the creation of zines.



Led by members of Hidden Keileon, who work across literature and community engagement, the workshop will also feature local artists and translators to provide additional insights and support. This session is open to participants from ESEA backgrounds, or those keen to explore ESEA literature.

Sky Breaks: A Walk with Amber Obasi + 饒桐 (Aí Tung)

Time: First walk: 11am–11.30am, Second walk: 1pm–1.30pm

Location: Meet at Deptford Lounge Foyer

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**, 1 mile walk

What is the point of breaks? What happens when we look at the sky, the streets, passers-by? What transformations can be ushered in through daydreams?

Sky Breaks is an interactive walk/performance of writing produced by Amber Obasi and 饒桐 (Aí Tung) in collaboration with Deptford residents. It explores these questions and uses benches, bus-stops, low walls, and other public seating areas across Deptford to consider the power of public breaks. Not just as single moments of time, but as interconnected processes in the creation of change.



Celebrating Lewisham through the Borough of Literature

Time: 11am-12.30pm

Location: Deptford Lounge, Main Hall

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Join Aimée Felone, chair of the Lewisham, Borough of Literature advisory group, and other group members, for a lively discussion about plans for the UK's first ever Borough of Literature. We'll be inviting you, the audience, to share your ideas and feedback.

We'll also be joined by four Lewisham writers: Tuktu Barbaros, Erica Hesketh, Fathima Zahra, and Amii Griffith who are creating new writing under the theme, 'To All The Places I Have Read'. They'll be reading their work, discussing their creative practice and what it means to be a writer in Lewisham. You'll also be able to pick up a free copy of the Festival Anthology which features all four commissions.

Supported by Spread the Word.

LEWISHAM BOROUGH of LITERATURE



Credit: Christy Ku

Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Words + Craft: A Cosy Creative Session with Laurie Bolger + Barbara Majek

Time: 11am–12pm

Location: Albany Café

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Local artists Barbara Majek and Laurie Bolger invite you to join a feel good creative session mixing visual arts with creative writing and mindfulness. During this session, Laurie will guide you in creating poems and stories, and Barbara will help you turn your words into striking banner art. Let's get scribbling, sharing and crafting over a cosy cuppa!

Presented in partnership with Entelechy Arts and Meet Me at the Albany.



Plants As Resistance with Alexandra Yellop + Idman Abdurahaman from Earth Tenders

Time: 11am–12.30pm

Location: Brookmill Park

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**, accessible toilet, tarmac paths, bench seating

The session offers an opportunity to engage with environmentalism and earth practices from an indigenous, afro-centric, non-western and anti-colonial lens. With a focus on histories of the Caribbean and Africa, we will explore texts by authors such as Malidoma Some, bell hooks, Melanie Harris, Kukuwa Abba, Judith Carney and Robin Wall Kimmerer as well as archive materials to explore our relationships with the land whilst uplifting African and indigenous botanical knowledge and contributions.

This workshop will create a space for grounding, deep reflection and knowledge sharing. Through sharing resources such as literature, theory, images and archival materials, we hope to lead the participants into a space of exploration and meaningful exchange.

Presented in partnership with the Friends of Brookmill Park.



Credit: Idman Abdurahaman

Meet Your Future Favourite Science Fiction + Fantasy Authors with M.H. Ayinde, Marve Anson, Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson + Tasha Suri

Time: 11.30am–12.30pm

Location: In person: Deptford Lounge, Studio / Online: streamed as live

Price: FREE

Access: In person: **BSL** Online: captioned

Looking for your next favourite read? One that will take you out of this world? Join Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour to meet three authors making waves on the science fiction and fantasy (SFF) scene.

M. H. Ayinde, Marve Anson and Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson discuss their books, creating epic new worlds, and what SFF tells us about the time and place we live in. The event will be chaired by award-winning author Tasha Suri.

Please note, an online recording of this event will be made available for one month after the event – see page 32.

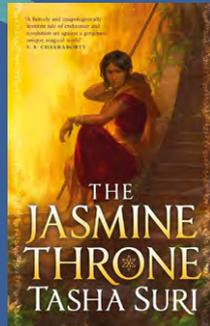
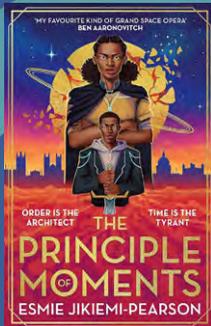
Curated by Future Worlds Prize.



Credit: Avel Shah



Credit: Sarah Shaffi



Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

30th Anniversary Deaf + Disabled Writers Commissions with Oli Isaac, Jamila Prowse + Ellie Spirrett

Time: 11.30am-12.30pm

Location: Albany, Red Room

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Celebrate the voices of D/deaf and disabled writers with this event, showcasing new work commissioned as part of Spread the Word's 30th anniversary celebrations. You'll hear powerful new work from Oli Isaac, Jamila Prowse and Ellie Spirrett, offering the sorts of fresh perspectives that are often left unheard.

The event will be hosted by Ayesha Chouglay and Joe Rizzo Naudi who selected the commissioned writers.

Don't miss this opportunity to experience inclusive storytelling and engage in a thought-provoking conversation about the future of diverse and accessible literature.

You'll also be able to pick up a free copy of the Festival Anthology which features all three commissions.

Supported by Spread the Word.



The Character of Voice Workshop with Nii Ayikwei Parkes

Time: 12pm–1.30pm
Location: Deptford Lounge, Room 2
Price: FREE
Access: **BSL**

Through a mix of discussion, short writing exercises and Q&A, this session, led by novelist and poet Nii Ayikwei Parkes, will guide writers in deepening their exploration of character and voice – key elements that shape plot, mood, and genre – while enhancing the overall impact of their fiction.



Credit: © Nii A. Parkes

Literary Love Match with Rosie Wilby + Robyn Perkins

Time: 1pm–2pm
Location: Albany, Red Room
Price: FREE
Access: **BSL**

In an interactive comedy chat show, award-winning comedians Rosie Wilby and Robyn Perkins pick out their favourite books on love, sexuality and relationships. Selecting texts from popular science to romantic fiction, they share fun anecdotes about the books' key takeaways and muse on whether our favourite fictional love stories could ever have a 'happy ever after' in real life... while the audience swipe right or left to vote on their favourite 'matches' to curate a bespoke bookshelf.



Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Chapters: Authors in Conversation with Irenosen Okojie, Chris Bridges, Santanu Bhattacharya + Sara Jafari

Time: 1pm-2pm

Location: In person: Deptford Lounge, Studio / Online: streamed as live

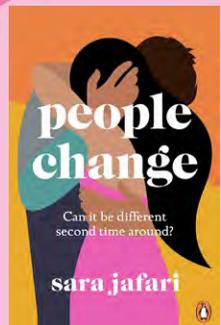
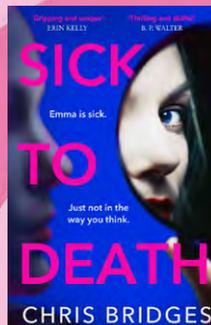
Price: FREE

Access: In person: **BSL** Online: captioned

Join Irenosen Okojie, Chris Bridges and Santanu Bhattacharya for an inspiring celebration of storytelling and creativity, hosted by Sara Jafari. "Chapters" brings together authors from different career stages – emerging voices to seasoned writers – for an engaging discussion about their work, creative journeys, and the evolution of their careers. The authors will also share readings from their books.

Whether you're a passionate reader, aspiring writer, or just curious about the lives behind the pages, this event promises to ignite your love for literature.

Please note an online recording of this event will be made available for one month after the event – see page 32.



Poems from the Heart (n Soul) with Sam Castell-Ward + Tilley Milburn

Time: 1.30pm-3pm

Location: Albany Café

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

A poetry open mic space, featuring music and poetry performances by Heart n Soul artists Sam Castell-Ward, Tilley Milburn and others. We'll also be inviting members of the audience up on stage to have a go at performing something of their own.

Presented in partnership with Heart n Soul.



Credit: Emily Pain



Lewisham Fantastical: A Guided Walk curated by David Turnbull

Time: 2pm-4pm

Location: Meet at New Cross Station

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**, 3 mile walk

A guided walk from New Cross to St Johns, curated by writer and tour guide David Turnbull, exploring the borough's connections to the literature of the fantastical and their influences on popular culture. This walk takes you on a voyage through time and relative dimensions, visiting ghost stories real and imagined, dystopias and alternate histories, children's fantasies and classic monsters, all with Lewisham connections.



Festival Timetable

Saturday 29 March

DL - Deptford Lounge BP - Brookmill Park
 TA - The Albany MS - Moonshot Centre
 NCS - New Cross Station

Events + Workshops		10am	11am	12pm
Meet the Agents	DL	■	■	
How to be Held: Writing Workshop on Queerness	DL	■	■	
30 th Anniversary Emerging Writer Commissions	TA	■	■	
Translated Literature and Zine Making	TA		■	■
Sky Breaks	DL		■	
Celebrating Lewisham through Borough of Literature	DL		■	■
Words & Craft: A Cosy Creative Session	TA		■	■
Plants as Resistance	BP		■	■
Meet Your Favourite SFF Authors	DL		■	■
30 th Anniversary Deaf + Disabled Writer Commissions	TA		■	■
The Character of Voice	DL			■
Literary Love Match	TA			■
Chapters: Authors In Conversation	DL			
Poems from the Heart (n Soul)	TA			
Lewisham Fantastical	NCS			
Voice and Versatility	DL			
Bind Your Own Poetry Book	TA			
Moving Words: Dance and Poetry	DL			
Lewisham Writes	DL			
Translating Heritage: Vietnamese Poetry Showcase	DL			
South London Storytellers	DL			
A Night in Sign	TA			
Children's + Family Events				
Drawing Animals as Characters	DL	■	■	
Instruments from Around the World	DL			■
African and Caribbean Folktales	DL			
Granny Mermaid	MS			
Young People's Events				
Young Writers Collective	DL			
Making Graphic Novels	DL			
Festival Online				
Disabled Poets Prize 2025				■
Nature Persists: Poetry for Urban Resilience				
CRIPtic x Spread the Word Salon				

Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Voice + Versatility Workshop with Karen McCarthy Woolf

Time: 2pm-3.30pm

Location: Deptford Lounge, Room 2

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Explore new approaches to narrative and learn how to bring characters to vivid life, whether through single or multiple points of view. Led by novelist and poet Karen McCarthy Woolf, this masterclass will use a combination of close reading, writing exercises and discussion to add vitality and vibrancy to your writing.

Do Karen's Festival At Home activities in your own time - see page 33.



Bind Your Own Poetry Book with Lucy Hayhoe + Gayathiri Kamalakanthan

Time: 2.30pm-4.30pm

Location: Albany, Orange Room

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

Join local artist Lucy Hayhoe and poet Gayathiri Kamalakanthan for a poetry and book-binding workshop. We'll read and reflect together on poetry by trans and queer poets, before generating new writing of our own. We'll learn how to make and bind a small book. We'll explore some simple binding and folding techniques, before creating an accordion style miniature book. There'll be time for everyone to start their poetry books by writing up their new pieces.

This event is for everyone, especially those who do not consider themselves to be poets. No prior experience needed and all materials provided.

Do Lucy and Gayathiri's Festival At Home activities in your own time - see page 33.



Moving Words: Dance + Poetry with Oluwaseun Olayiwola, Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa + Maria Ferguson

Time: 2.30pm–3.30pm

Location: Deptford Lounge, Studio

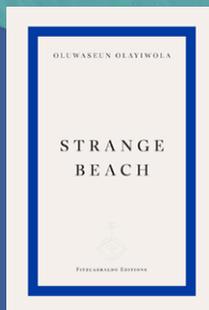
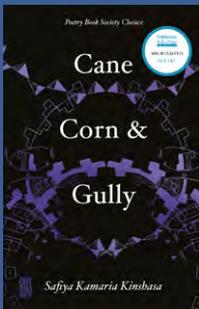
Price: FREE

Access: **BSL**

This special event brings together poets and dancers Oluwaseun Olayiwola and Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa to discuss the overlapping and diverging nature of their work across both dance and poetry. Join us for poetry readings by these acclaimed writers, as well as an insightful discussion hosted by poet Maria Ferguson that delves into the interplay between poetry and dance, the creative processes behind them, and their power to evoke emotion and connection.

Whether you're a poetry enthusiast, a dance admirer, or simply curious, this event promises an inspiring and thought-provoking exploration of artistic expression.

Presented in partnership with Fitzcarraldo Editions.



Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

Lewisham Writes: A Poetic Life with Helen Bowell

Time: 3.30pm-5pm
Location: Deptford Lounge, Room 4
Price: FREE
Access: **BSL**



Credit: Hayley Madden

Join poet Helen Bowell for a relaxed writing workshop, the last of Helen's tour delivering similar sessions in libraries across Lewisham. Thinking about the theme of 'community', we'll explore what's important to us and why. We'll write from objects, people and places, becoming archivists of our own lives. Everyone is welcome - you don't need any experience to take part, just an open mind.

Supported by Spread the Word.

Translating Heritage: A Vietnamese Poetry Showcase

Time: 4pm-5pm
Location: Deptford Lounge, Studio
Price: FREE
Access: **BSL**

Join us for a vibrant showcase of poetry born from a unique journey of collaboration and translation.

Experience the powerful voices of Vietnamese poetry, brought to life by participants who have been working with translators April Yee, Quỳnh Nguyễn, and Phương Anh Nguyễn, to explore culture, language, and creativity through the art of translation. Whether you're part of the Vietnamese community or simply a lover of literature, come along for a celebration of language, heritage, and community.

Presented in partnership with The Poetry Translation Centre and Vietnamese Family Partnership - Gia Đình Việt.



Credit: Bern Roche Farrelly

South London Storytellers: From Page to Stage + Screen with Caleb Azumah Nelson, Nathan Bryon, Yolanda Mercy + Natty Kasambala

Time: 4pm-5pm

Location: In person: Deptford Lounge, Main Hall / Online: streamed as live

Price: FREE

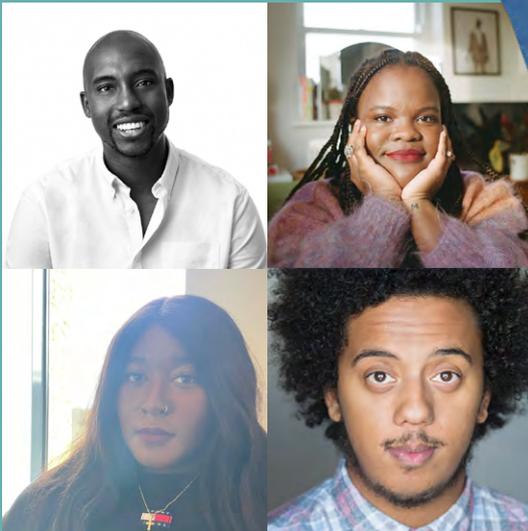
Access: In person: **BSL** Online: captioned

Join us for an inspiring conversation between four of South London's most exciting writers.

Journalist and cultural commentator Natty Kasambala chairs this lively discussion featuring Caleb Azumah Nelson, an award-winning novelist whose work has been optioned for television, Nathan Bryon, a celebrated children's author and screenwriter, and BAFTA-nominated writer and playwright Yolanda Mercy. Together, they'll explore how their craft intersects and how South London has influenced their stories.

Please note an online recording of this event will be made available for one month after the event - see page 32.

Credit: Stuart Simpson @ Penguin Books



Credit: Marc Simonson

Saturday 29 March

Events + Workshops

A Night in Sign **with Chris Fonseca + Nadeem Islam**

Time: 5pm-6pm

Location: Albany, Red Room

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL** + live captions

Hosted by Nadeem Islam, *A Night in Sign* is an hour of pure delight. Shining a spotlight on the UK's most established and up-and-coming Deaf and hard of hearing artists with poetry, dance, comedy, sign-song and more! This event will feature performances from Chris Fonseca plus more to be announced.

The event is open to both D/deaf and hearing audiences.

Presented in partnership with Fuse Theatre.



Spread the Word's Young Writers Collective Showcase

Time: 1pm–2.30pm
Location: Deptford Lounge, Main Hall
Price: FREE
Access: **BSL**



Experience the power of poetry at the Young Writers Collective Showcase featuring young creatives from Lewisham, Bromley, Greenwich and Southwark.

This vibrant event celebrates emerging voices through live readings that span personal stories, social reflections, and bold creative expressions. Connect with the next generation of poets as they share their unique perspectives in an intimate, welcoming space. Whether you're a poetry lover or curious creative, this event promises inspiration and connection.

You'll also be able to pick up a free copy of the Young Writers Collective's first anthology.

Making Graphic Novels with Vivian Truong

Time: 4pm–5pm
Location: Deptford Lounge, Room 2
Price: FREE
Age recommendation: 12–18
Access: **BSL**

From a blank script to a fully illustrated book, young creators will learn tips and techniques on how to create comics and how to turn them into a book. The workshop is taught by professional comic artist Vivian Truong, who has several years of experience within the comic industry.



Saturday 29 March

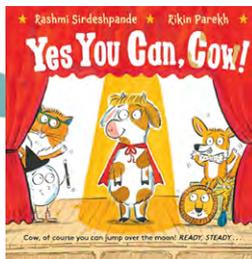
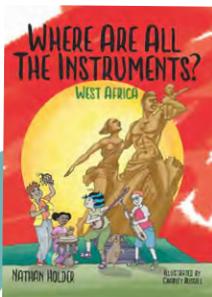
Children's + Family Events

A day of special events for younger members of our community and their families. All children's and family events are free to attend and are BSL interpreted. Please note that parents, guardians or carers must stay with their children during these events.

Drawing Animals as Characters with Rikin Parekh

Time: 10.30am–11.15am
Location: Deptford Lounge Children's Library
Age recommendation: 4–6
Access: **BSL**

An interactive session from children's author-illustrator Rikin Parekh. Using some of his acclaimed books, learn how to draw an animal character, and then design some of your own as well!



Instruments from Around the World with Nate Holder

Time: 11.45am–12.30pm
Location: Deptford Lounge Children's Library
Age recommendation: 6–8
Access: **BSL**

Join author Nate Holder as he takes you on a journey around the world, learning thorough stories, sounds and pictures about musical instruments that have helped to shape our world.

African + Caribbean Folktales with Wendy Shearer

Time: 1.30pm–2.30pm
Location: Deptford Lounge Children's Library
Age recommendation: 8–11
Access: **BSL**



Join professional storyteller Wendy Shearer for fun-filled tales from her collection of African and Caribbean folktales, myths and legends, where you will meet clever tricksters, foolish kings and magical shapeshifters. With music and colourful props. Everyone is invited to join in.

Granny Mermaid with IRIE! Dance Theatre + Centre for Caribbean + Diaspora Studies

Time: 4pm–4.45pm
Location: Moonshot Centre
Age recommendation: 3–7
Access: **BSL**

Join IRIE! dance theatre and Goldsmiths, University of London's Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies for their first interactive show, featuring dancing, drumming and storytelling.

Who is Granny Mermaid? What secrets might be hidden in her tail? Does she even have a tail? Join us and see.



Artwork: Harlem Edwin

Sunday 30 March

Children's + Family Events



Credit: Alex Brenner

The Littlest Yak with LASTheatre

Time:	First performance: 1pm, Second performance: 3pm
Location:	Albany Theatre
Price:	£9.50
Age recommendation:	3-7
Access:	(BSL) relaxed, touch tour available

On the tip of the top of a mountain all snowy, where the ice-swirling, toe-curling blizzards were blowy, in a herd full of huddling yaks, big and small, lived Gertie... the littlest yak of them all. Gertie is the littlest yak in her whole herd, and she's feeling stuck in her smallness – she wants to grow UP and have BIGNESS and TALLNESS!

But when it turns out that there are some things that only Gertie can do, might she come to see that she's perfect, just the way she is?

This musical adaptation of the award-winning children's book will delight audiences young and old with beautiful puppets, catchy tunes and an uplifting tale of self-acceptance for all the family.

Join LASTheatre for a dazzling adventure, into the heart of the Himalayas. Nominated for a YAKTASTIC 4 OffWestEnd Awards!

A LASTheatre production, presented by the Albany as part of Deptford Literature Festival. Based on the book written by Lu Fraser and illustrated by Kate Hindley. Published by Simon & Schuster. The creation of this production was generously supported by Arts Council England, Marlowe Theatre, Backstage Trust, Kent County Council and Folkestone Town Council.

2025 Disabled Poets Prize with Jamie Hale, Polly Atkin + Khairani Barokka

Time: : 12pm broadcast as live

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL** + captions

Credit: Alex Muir Photography



Join Jamie Hale, founder and judge of the Disabled Poets Prize, and fellow judges Polly Atkin and Khairani Barokka, for the announcement of the winners of this year's Prize.

Polly will be introducing the Best Single Poem awards and Khairani the Best Unpublished Pamphlet, followed by readings from the winning and placed poets in each category.



The Disabled Poets Prize was set up to highlight and celebrate the incredible work being produced by disabled poets across the UK. The work received this year was exceptional – deft, intricate poetry that issued from the perspective of being disabled, whilst reaching out to explore universal themes and ideas.

Book your free ticket to receive a link to join the event.

The Prize is supported by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society and the partners are CRIPtic Arts, Spread the Word, Verve Poetry Press, The Literary Consultancy and Arvon Foundation.

Credit: Matthew Thompson



Saturday 29 March

Festival online

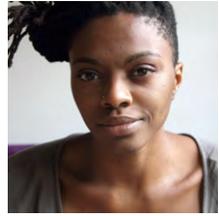
Nature Persists: Poetry for Urban Resilience with Zena Edwards

Time: 2.30pm-4pm

Location: Online

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL** live captions



Write, create and build resilience for urban environments using journaling, poetry and the written and spoken word. We will discuss the symbolism of the natural world and how we can sharpen our own poetic lens. Using visual prompts we will examine how awe and wonder can return to us as an imaginative coping mechanism to inspire authentic writing. You will leave with a number of exercises that you can practise in your own time.

Presented by Apples & Snakes for Deptford Literature Festival.

CRIPtic x Spread the Word Salon with Jamie Hale, Gayathiri Kamalakanthan + Susie Wilson

Time: 5.30pm-7.30pm

Location: Online

Price: FREE

Access: **BSL** live captions

Join poet and founder of CRIPtic arts Jamie Hale, and 2024 Disabled Poets Prize-winning writers Gayathiri Kamalakanthan and Susie Wilson, for a special festival edition of the CRIPtic x Spread the Word Salon. This online session is for D/deaf and disabled writers writing in any genre, both new and more experienced.

5.30pm-6.30pm: Writing the Body: Lessons from Disabled Writers, with Jamie Hale. Taking a range of work by disabled writers as provocations, we will explore how the body is written, and how a 'crip' lens can influence the way we - disabled or not - write our own interactions with the body.

6.30pm-7.30pm: Performance + Open Mic. Gayathiri Kamalakanthan and Susie Wilson will be reading their work before opening up the virtual floor to the audience. Five writers will have the chance to share their work.

Presented by CRIPtic Arts and Spread the Word. Do Jamie's Festival At Home activities in your own time - see page 33.



Six of the festival events will be available to watch as online streams for one month after first broadcast. All the streams are captioned and the 2025 Disabled Poets Prize event is also BSL interpreted.

Friday 28 March

Lewisham Lyricists

Streamed from 7.30pm

With Lezlee Lyrrix, Belinda Zhawi, Cecil B, No Hats No Hoods, Anja Ngozi + more, curated + hosted by Emma Warren.

Saturday 29 March

2025 Disabled Poets Prize Announcement

Broadcast from 12pm

With Polly Atkin, Khairani Barokka + readings from placed poets, hosted by Jamie Hale.

Sunday 30 March

Meet the Agents

Streamed as-live from 10am

With Davinia Andrew-Lynch, Emma Leong + Emma Bal, hosted by Bobby Nayyar.

Meet Your Favourite Science Fiction + Fantasy Authors

Streamed as-live from 11.30am

With M.H Ayinde, Marve Anson + Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson, hosted by Tasha Suri.

Chapters: Authors in Conversation

Streamed as-live from 1pm

With Irenosen Okojie, Chris Bridges + Santanu Bhattacharya, hosted by Sara Jafari.

South London Storytellers: From Page to Stage + Screen

Streamed as-live from 4pm

With Caleb Azumah Nelson, Nathan Bryon + Yolanda Mercy, hosted by Natty Kasambala.

Festival At Home

Activities To Do In Your Own Time

Looking for inspiration and ways to spark your creativity?

Festival writers **Karen McCarthy Woolf**, **Jamie Hale**, **Annie Hayter**, **Lucy Hayhoe** + **Gayathiri Kamalakanthan** have created writing exercises and activities for you to do in your own space and time.

All the Festival At Home activities are available to download in PDF format from the festival website.

Festival Audio Walk – Sky Breaks by Amber Obasi + 鯿桐 (Aí Tung)

What is the point of breaks? What happens when we look at the sky, the streets, passers-by? What transformations can be ushered in through daydreams?

Sky Breaks is an audio walk based on writing produced by Amber Obasi and 鯿桐 (Aí Tung) in collaboration with Deptford residents. It explores these questions, and uses benches, bus-stops, low walls, and other public seating areas across Deptford to consider the power of public breaks. Not just as single moments of time, but as interconnected processes in the creation of change.

The audio version of the piece, with maps of the route is available on the festival website if you wish to do the walk in your own time.

If you would like to do the walk with Amber and 鯿桐 (Aí Tung) – see page 11.



Festival Community Projects

Community and collaboration are at the heart of our work. In the lead up to the festival we've been working in partnership with local artists, communities and organisations to create new work that is being presented at the festival.

Power of Community + Stories

It's a real joy to be working again with **Entelechy Arts** and **Meet Me at the Albany's Elders community**. Building on our Talk Di Tings Dem project last year which saw the publication of poetry by Caribbean Elders, this year's project is exploring the power of community and the power of words and stories. Throughout the start of the year, Elders have been working with local poet **Laurie Bolger** and artist **Barbara Majek** to create their own stories and banners. Their creative work will be exhibited at Deptford Lounge from Saturday 29 March to Sunday 13 April. Laurie and Barbara will also be running a words and craft session as part of the festival.

entelechy
arts



Translating Heritage

Building on their sold-out workshop at last year's festival, **The Poetry Translation Centre** and the **Vietnamese Family Partnership - Gia Đình Việt** have been running collaborative translation sessions with the local Vietnamese community. Led by translators April Yee, Quỳnh Nguyễn, and Phương Anh Nguyễn, the poems created during the sessions will be presented at a showcase celebrating language, heritage and community on Saturday 29 March at Deptford Lounge.



Access

We prioritise accessibility. We want to make sure that as many people from Deptford, Lewisham and beyond can access as much of the festival as possible.

We want to let you know that:

- All in-person festival events across the main festival weekend Friday 28 – Sunday 30 March will offer BSL interpretation. Six will be streamed online and available for one month after the festival.
- All online events and streams will be captioned and are marked as such in the programme.
- All in-person events are wheelchair accessible and have accessible toilet facilities.
- Deptford Lounge has Changing Place facilities, an induction loop and assistance dogs are welcome. For more information: deptfordlounge.org.uk/access
- The Albany has an induction loop and assistance dogs are welcome. Free tickets can be booked for companions or personal assistants. For more information: thealbany.org.uk/accessibility
- A quiet space is available during on Saturday 29 March at Deptford Lounge, in the Music Room, on the first floor.
- There are two walking tours as part of the festival. Information about distances covered is available in the programme. Please get in touch if you'd like further details.

Keeping you safe is our priority. We continue to encourage anyone displaying Covid-like symptoms not to attend the festival.

If you require additional access provision in order to attend or take part in the festival, for example larger print handouts at workshops, or a scribe, please get in touch before the festival at: access@spreadtheword.org.uk

If you require assistance whilst attending the festival, please speak to a member of staff. Or, on Saturday 29 March, you can also come to the Festival Hub in the foyer of Deptford Lounge where we will be happy to help you.

If you'd like to request a copy of this information in larger print, please contact access@spreadtheword.org.uk

Support the Festival

Deptford Literature Festival celebrates local talent and introduces exciting new writers from Lewisham and nearby boroughs.

We want everyone to be able to join in the workshops, readings, events and community projects for free. We do not want finances to be a barrier to anyone taking part.

If you are in a position to make a donation, please give a gift today. Anything you give will help more people come to future festivals for free. Our typical ticket price, without donations, is £10.



Please give what you can through this link bit.ly/4jBzWrO or via the QR code.

The organisers behind Deptford Literature Festival are registered charity Spread the Word. They have to fundraise to pay local writers, host events, and make them accessible to our communities.

Let us know what you think

We'd love to know about your experience of this year's Deptford Literature Festival, and any ideas you have for future iterations of the festival.

We will have paper feedback forms available at all festival events. If you prefer, you can give your feedback digitally, using the QR code here. Volunteers will also be on hand to help you access the feedback form.

By completing the form you can enter to win one of four £20 book tokens.

Give your feedback using the QR code or via bit.ly/40yiaNC



Book your tickets: deptfordlitfest.com

Getting To Deptford

The majority of the festival events from Thursday 27 March to Sunday 30 March take place in and around Deptford. Travel options are given below. Please check Transport for London and National Rail websites for up to date travel information.

- **Train:** Deptford (2 min walk to Deptford Lounge).
Access: lift to both platforms, step-free access
- **DLR:** Deptford Bridge (9 min walk to Deptford Lounge)
Access: lift to both platforms, step free access
- **Train/ overground:** New Cross (8 min walk to Deptford Lounge)
Access: lift to platforms, ramp for train access, step free access, staff help available
- **Buses:** 47 / 53 / 177 / 188 / 199 / 225 / 253
- **Bike parking:** spaces outside Deptford Lounge and the Albany. For more spaces in Deptford check: activethings.app/home
- **Disabled car parking:** Franklin Street car park is the closest to Deptford Lounge with seven disabled bays. The pay-and-display parking bays are 77 steps away from the Lounge.
- **Taxi drop off point:** If you are travelling via taxi, the drop off point is on Giffin Street directly next to Deptford Lounge.

The Poetry in the Library event on Thursday 27 March (see page 5) takes place at Catford Library – the nearest station is Catford (8 min walk) and buses including 202, 136, 54, 47 and 171 stop nearby.

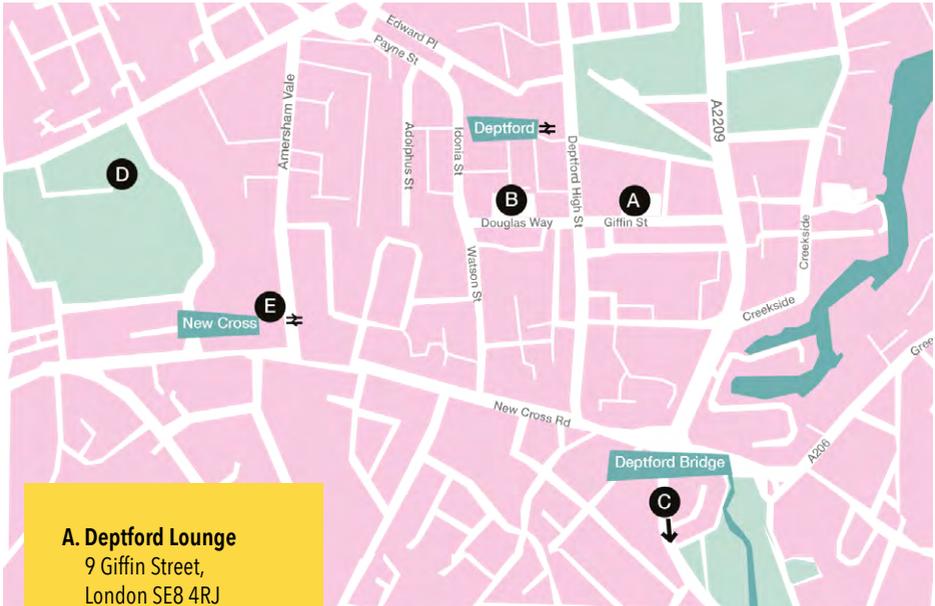
We are committed to mitigating the environmental impacts of creating a live festival, reducing our carbon footprint and advocating for action on climate change. We would like to encourage people coming to the festival to use local public transport links or to walk or cycle if possible. You can read the full Festival Environmental Statement on the festival website.



Credit: Kashif Haque

Festival Map

Deptford Lounge is the hub of the festival on Saturday 29 March. This is where you'll be able to get more information about what is taking place during the day.



A. Deptford Lounge

9 Giffin Street,
London SE8 4RJ

B. The Albany

Douglas Way,
London, SE8 4AG

C. Brookmill Park

47 Brookmill Road,
London, SE8 4JP

D. Moonshot Centre

Angus Street, New Cross
London SE14 6LU

E. New Cross Station

off Amersham Vale,
New Cross Road,
London SE14 6LD



Credit: Hayley Madden

DEPTFORD LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Thanks

We are grateful to our principal funders Arts Council England. Thanks also to our main partners the Albany, Deptford Lounge and Lewisham Libraries for all their support. Thanks to Cockayne Grants for the Arts and the London Community Foundation for supporting our 30th Anniversary Emerging Writer Commissions and the Authors Licensing and Collecting Society for supporting the 2025 Disabled Poets Prize.

Thank you to our partners Fitzcarraldo Editions, the Friends of Brookmill Park, Earth Tenders, The Word bookshop, Entelechy Arts and Meet Me at The Albany, Poetry Translation Centre, Vietnamese Family Partnership, Future Worlds Prize, Hidden Keileon, IRIE! dance theatre, Goldsmiths, University of London's Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies, Apples & Snakes, Heart n Soul, Fuse Theatre, LASTheatre, Verve Poetry Press, The Literary Consultancy, Arvon Foundation and CRIPtic Arts.

Thank you to our festival volunteers, as well as the great artists, publishers, BSL interpreters, captioners, photographers and support staff who are contributing to this year's programme.

Most of all, thank **you** for coming and supporting the festival.

COCKAYNE



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



**LEWISHAM
BOROUGH of
LITERATURE**



**SPREAD
THE WORD**