

# FIGHTING WORDS

THE WRITE TO RIGHT



## *Mission Statement*

*Our aim is to help children and young people, and adults who did not have this opportunity as children, to discover and harness the power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. At its core, **Fighting Words** is also about something much broader and more inclusive: it is about using the creative practice of writing and storytelling to strengthen our children and teenagers – from all backgrounds – to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives.*

## **2019 REPORT**

*Fighting Words* is a free creative writing organisation whose headquarters is located beside Croke Park in Dublin's north inner city. Co-founded by Roddy Doyle and Seán Love in January 2009, we operate on the premise that creative writing is an essential part of every child's education: that giving children a real dedicated chance and space to explore the limitlessness of their imaginations does great things. The raw skills that are passed on here are some of the key ingredients for succeeding in life with marked improvements in self-expression, literacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. We have no purpose other than providing opportunities to engage their creative talents for as many children as possible, providing free workshops, programmes and publishing. *Fighting Words* worked with 24,000 students during 2019, and since opening has hosted more than 130,000 participants.

## **Students**

We work with primary schoolchildren in the mornings and second level students in the afternoons. We host dedicated sessions for children and adults with "additional needs" ranging from mental health issues to intellectual/physical disability to social marginalisation. We also send teams of tutors out to groups who cannot physically come to us, including places of institutional care, children's hospitals and Oberstown campus.

We run free week-long summer camps in more specialised forms of writing for children. This includes fiction, prose, scriptwriting/film-making, playwriting, songwriting, poetry, graphic fiction, feature journalism, online media and documentary. We host Write Club, providing mentoring for teenagers who want to take their writing to another level and who come, in their own time, working on their novels and filmscripts.

### **Volunteers**

Tutoring and mentoring is all provided by volunteers, of whom there are 1000 countrywide. All volunteers are subject to interview, reference checking, police vetting and training. Our Child Protection Policy is comprehensive and complies with best practice requirements. Anyone over 18 can apply to be a volunteer, If you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please see contact details below.

### **Demand**

Since we opened in Dublin in 2009 students have been coming from every county on the island of Ireland. We are constantly booked out many months in advance. In order to try to meet the ongoing demand, more *Fighting Words* venues have been opening around the country. Fighting Words is now based in 14 locations around the island of Ireland, most recently opening in Conamara working *as Gaeilge*.

### ***Fighting Words* around Ireland**

*Fighting Words* Belfast is located at the Skainos Centre in east Belfast,



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*Fighting Words* Mayo is based at National Museum of Country Life.



*Fighting Words* Wicklow is based at Glenree.Centrte for Peace & Reconciliation



*Fighting Words* Cork is based at the Graffiti Theatre



*Fighting Words* Galway is based at Galway Arts Centre



*Fighting Words* Kerry is based at the Seanchai centre in Listowel.



*Fighting Words* North West is based at Bundoran & Ballyshannon libraries



*Fighting Words* Wexford is based at Wexford Library.



*Fighting Words* Kildare is based at Riverbank Theatre, Newbridge.



*Fighting Words* Coleraine is based at Riverside Theatre, Coleraine,



*Fighting Words* Chonamara is based at Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc.



*Fighting Words* Longford to be based at Longford Town Library

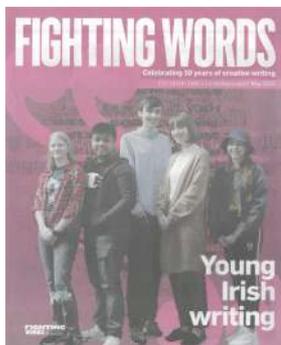


*Fighting Words* Clare to be based at county libraries



## Publishing

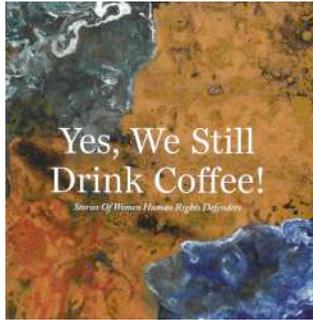
Every primary school child who comes to write a story at *Fighting Words* leaves with their own personalised book of their story, printed in-house. In 2019, 14,000 primary school children around the country received their own free books containing their own stories. In 2019 we also published our award-winning 9th annual magazine in partnership with the Irish Times of new writing by children and young adults. We published *Dissent into Madness*, an anthology of short stories by 4<sup>th</sup> Year students from Beneavin College, Finglas with an Introduction by Paul Howard – our sixteenth anthology of stories by teenagers. We also published *CAPACITY*, our eighth collection of plays by teenagers in partnership with the Abbey Theatre. *Yes, We Still Drink Coffee!* is a collection of stories by Irish women writers about women human rights defenders around the world. *Dublin Port Diaries* is a collection of memoirs by retired Dublin dockers and their families.



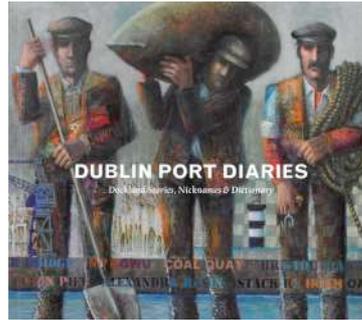
*Irish Times/Fighting Words 2019*



*Dissent into Madness*



*Yes, We Still Drink Coffee!*



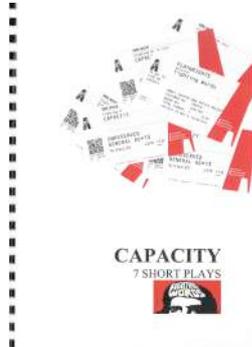
*Dublin Port Diaries*

### **Dublin City University Partnership**

Our partnership with Dublin City University's Institute of Education continued to develop. The purpose of this partnership is to introduce the *Fighting Words* model into teacher training; to further develop the already multi-faceted number of creative collaborations between the university and *Fighting Words*; and to research the model in order to see if it can be adapted for use beyond creative writing into other areas of the curriculum.

### **Creative Collaborations**

Another way in which we have expanded access to *Fighting Words* services has been through creative partnerships with arts, media and educational organisations. These collaborations allow a substantial number of children to take their interest to another level, with greater resources, facilities and expertise generously made available to us. During 2019 these creative partnerships have included Dublin City University, Abbey Theatre, Everyman Theatre (Cork), Gate theatre, Irish Times, Science Gallery, National Print Museum, Lyric Theatre (Belfast), Linenhall Theatre (Mayo), Mermaid Theatre (Wicklow), Riverbank Theatre (Kildare), Dublin City Libraries, Central Remedial Clinic, Dublin Port Authority, Dublin Retired Dockworkers, Shaking Bog, Anam, Kaleidoscope and Electric Picnic festivals, and several more. We have received many prestigious awards over the years for the creative output arising from some of these collaborations.



*CAPACITY with The Abbey Theatre*

## **Finance**

Our 2018 audited accounts are available on our website beside this document. Our 2019 accounts will be available by June 2020.

*Fighting Words* has been and continues to be funded primarily by philanthropic individuals and organisations since the outset. However we also now receive support from the Department of Education & Science, Creative Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Arts Council. During 2019 two-thirds of our budget came from private funders, and one-third came from state sources. We work with thousands of children, young adults and people of all ages with “additional needs” every year, providing a completely free service for all. Demand for the service is such that we are constantly booked out a year ahead. There are now fourteen *Fighting Words* venues in Ireland, and more will open during 2020. If you are interested to help us do that, or to help keep the current show on the road, or interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please get in touch.

## **Governance**

Governance information is all available on our website on the same page as this document. Policies on Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, Data protection and privacy are available on our homepage.

## **Feedback and Complaints**

*Fighting Words* is committed to ensuring that all our communications and dealings with the general public and our supporters are of the highest possible standard. We listen and respond to the views of the general public and our supporters so that we can continue to improve.

*Fighting Words* welcomes both positive and negative feedback. Therefore we aim to ensure:

- it is as easy as possible to make a complaint;
- we treat as a complaint any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our operations which calls for a response;
- we treat it seriously whether it is made by telephone, letter, fax, email or in person;
- we deal with it quickly and politely;
- we respond accordingly - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, and information on any action taken, etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve, and monitor them at board level.

### **If you have feedback or a complaint**

If you have a complaint about any aspect of our work, you can contact Mr. Sean Love, Executive Director, in writing or by telephone, who will deal with your complaint in the first instance. Write to:

The Executive Director

Fighting Words

12-16 Behan Square

Russell Street

Dublin 1

Tel: 353 1 8944576

Email: [info@fightingwords.ie](mailto:info@fightingwords.ie)

We are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

### **What happens next?**

If you complain in person or over the phone, we will try to resolve the issue there and then. Similarly, if you complain by email or in writing, we will always acknowledge your complaint within 7 days and do everything we can to resolve it within 21 days. If this is not possible, we will explain why and provide a new timeframe.

**What if the complaint is not resolved?**

If you are not happy with our response, you may get in touch again with the Chairperson of *Fighting Words*. The Chairperson will ensure that your appeal is considered at board level and will respond within 2 weeks of this consideration by board members.

*Roddy Doyle & Seán Love*  
**FOUNDERS**

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