



Policy on Artists Pay and Conditions

As an organisation that was founded by writers, that is run by writers and creative professionals, and that works with artists across all disciplines, Fighting Words is committed to paying artists fairly and engaging artists appropriately. All artists associated with the organisation and their contributions are valued.

Fighting Words is built on the principles of equality, respect, and dignity, aiming to provide open access to creative and artistic opportunity for children and young people. Those same principles inform our engagements with volunteers, contractors, and staff.

We are keenly aware that professionals in the areas of focus for Fighting Words – the arts, children and youth, informal education – are not always remunerated and rewarded at levels appropriate to their experience and contribution. This policy has been developed and implemented in line with the Arts Council's policy on the [fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists](#) and its vision for an Ireland where artists and practitioners whose exceptional talent and commitment lead them to work professionally in the arts can have productive and rewarding careers. We seek to create an environment in which artists can make work of ambition and quality and be remunerated appropriately.

Fighting Words delivers a unique model, championing creative writing for all children and young people, as a community endeavour. The approach requires the involvement of multiple mentors with each group. Volunteering is essential to the delivery of this mission, more so than many organisations in the arts. The small ratio – we aim for one volunteer for every four students - fosters a relationship of trust where the creative process can make some young people feel vulnerable.

The organisation's volunteering policy, and its practical management and delivery of the volunteer programme, is general to people from all walks of life. We recruit and seek to retain volunteers based on their passion and commitment to our mission. There are certain skills such as facilitation and illustration that are useful but are not expected or essential.

It is the case that many artists donate their time and volunteer with the organisation, alongside educators, retired people, students and others. The

volunteer roles they are assigned are not replacing or carrying out work that is funded or that could be funded realistically. There is never an obligation or expectation that any volunteer will give time to the work of Fighting Words. Our volunteer model is flexible and signing up for activities is always the choice of the individual.

It is the case that writers and artists associated with Fighting Words through this volunteer network report that there are beneficial outcomes for them in terms of enjoyment, camaraderie, purpose, sharing, peer-support, learning and practical experience that they find valuable. Fighting Words also gives volunteers opportunities to develop professional skills, to collaborate with other artists, to talk with people, learn about their lives and hear their stories.

Separate from our volunteer programme, we do have specific outcomes that require professional engagement, including with artists. Whether it is producing videos, facilitating creative workshops, design, and illustration, etc., these plans are funded as part of the organisation's budget. Contractors commissioned to complete these projects are always engaged appropriately and paid fairly in line with best practice.

Several Fighting Words projects delivered annually are run as partnerships, where the organisations we associate with engage and remunerate artists specifically for this work. An example of this is the Young Playwrights Programme with the Abbey Theatre, where actors and directors are commissioned to work with the young playwrights.

We will continue to prioritise initiatives like this, where collaborations initiated by Fighting Words can unlock resources that will ultimately ensure that more funds are available to provide fair pay to artists.

Given the increase in funding for Fighting Words from the Department of Culture and others during the Covid pandemic, Fighting Words has been able to increase the number of projects providing paid opportunities for artists as part of the work delivered directly, and through the increased number of partnerships with other organisations. Several major pieces of work such as Story Seeds, the Twelve Stories of Christmas, the Write to Right, and Just Us involved contracting artists and creatives to do paid work with Fighting Words.

The organisation is committed to delivering work in this way with artists and will continue to plan and deliver projects in this way, subject to funding.

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