

Arvon Report to the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust, December 2025



Arvon's Grant Fund 2025

'I am so incredibly grateful, beyond words really, ironically, for a funded place on this course, which was completely transformational. It helped me understand the form I am trying to write in so much better, and has given me confidence and much needed insight. It really has changed my life and my relationship to a project I was feeling very overwhelmed by. Thank you so much for the opportunity' – Grant recipient, 2025

Arvon is so thankful to the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for the commitment they have always shown to us and our work – most recently in the news that you will be increasing your annual gift to £15,000 next year. This will give a transformative experience to at least 16 writers, who will join the scores who have already benefitted from your generosity over the past 14 years. The Grant Fund wouldn't be what it is without you.

Arvon's Grant Fund in 2025

We have awarded 30 grants in 2025 at an average of £770. Over half of grant applicants described themselves as 'emerging writers', over half as Disabled, two thirds had a household income of £23,000 or less, and over a quarter were from BAME backgrounds. Following are details of three grant recipients who benefitted from your generosity in the second half of the year. Names have been changed.

Belinda was awarded a full grant of £985 to take part in a theatre course at The Hurst. 'I am not financially stable, so without the grant, I would need to give up on my dreams,' Belinda told us. In her feedback, she said that before the course she'd felt at a stalemate with her writing, not good enough, and like there wasn't a place for someone like her in the industry. The tutors were supportive and the course made her feel 'empowered' and 'in a much clearer headspace'. She concluded, 'I have gained a deeper understanding about the craft and the playwriting world, and I am one step closer towards achieving my dreams'.

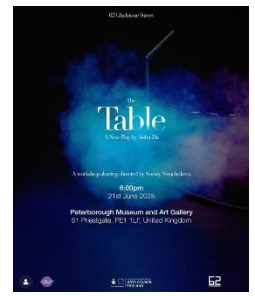
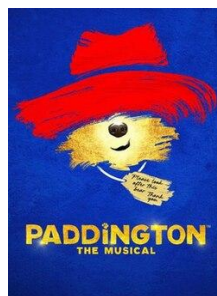
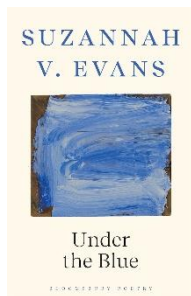
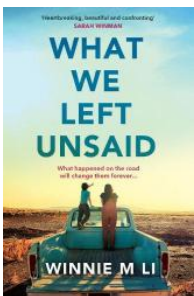
Melissa received a grant of £392 to take part in a fiction course at Lumb Bank. Melissa had been on an Arvon course as a teenager – 'it was a formative experience and one I have never forgotten. Attending as an adult always seemed out of reach, due to the constraints of family life and finances.' Following her course, Melissa told us, 'This course was an absolute game-changer for me. I gave up my job two years ago to focus on writing and, although I have taken some big steps forward, I've often questioned my decision. [The course] has propelled me from believing that writing a novel was an optimistic prospect to feeling that I have both the ability and the toolset. I also now have people I can turn to for help along the way. In short, since returning home from Lumb Bank yesterday, the "spare" room has now been transformed into the "writing" room...'

Rachel is a writer from Scotland. Rachel was awarded a full grant of £960 to take part in a non-fiction course at Totleigh Barton. Following a difficult financial period, she said, 'I'm desperate to get back to writing, which is both my identity and my grounding'. Following her course, she said, 'The course gave me some much-needed momentum and self-belief. [...] Whichever way you look at it, this financial support will be life changing for the writer, and/or for someone down the line. [...] There is no way that this is not money well spent.'

Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

We love to follow the career progress of writers who have once received a grant to take part in our courses. Following are some successes of Grant Fund alumni over the second half of 2025. We also welcomed back eight alumni as tutors and guests on our courses: **Fiona Benson, Liz Berry, Inua Ellams, Ella Frears, Rosie Garland, Wyl Menmuir, Deanna Rodger, and Richard Scott.**

- **Isabelle Baafi's** debut poetry collection *Chaotic Good* won the Forward Jerwood Poetry Prize for Best First Collection, and has been shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize
- *Sweetheart*, a short film written by **Alastair Curtis**, was shortlisted for the Iris Prize and is currently [streaming](#) on Channel 4
- **Suzannah V. Evans** published her debut poetry collection *Under the Blue* with Bloomsbury in September
- **Carol Farrelly** was awarded an Ignite Fellowship by the Scottish Book Trust to work on her forthcoming novel
- **Liv Fowler** produced her second radio play for BBC Radio 4, *Odds On*, in December
- **Helena Hunter's** poems were exhibited at the National College of Art and Design Gallery, Dublin, and as part of the Living Library eco-poetry exhibition at Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington
- **Gabriella Leonardi's** short film *Stuck, Painfully Aware, Restricted yet Marvellous* was included in the Greenwich Film Festival, where she won Best Emerging Actor
- **Winnie M. Li's** third novel, *What We Left Unsaid*, was published. She was appointed Assistant Professor in Creative Writing at the University of Birmingham
- **Len Lukowski's** debut poetry collection *Bodily Fluids* was published
- **Arji Manuelpillai** was commissioned by the Royal Family to write a poem for Armistice Day
- **Evan Placey's** play *Lifers* played at the Southwark Playhouse in October 2025
- Poet **Laura Strickland** was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize
- **Jess Swale** directed the romantic comedy film *Merv*, published a book of creative prompts, and wrote the book for *Paddington: The Musical*, which is currently playing the West End to rave reviews
- **Claudine Toutoungi's** adaptation of Austen's *Sense & Sensibility* will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in December. She was selected for the RSL's Scriptorium Award
- **Grace Waga Glevey** was appointed 2025 Residency Artist for Sheffield Theatres
- **Aisha Zia's** play *The Table* was produced as part of Platforma Festival, Peterborough, and she was appointed Artistic Director of Kali Theatre, London



Thank You

All of us at Arvon value so deeply our relationship with the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust, who have been truly vital to our Grant Fund for over a decade. We are so grateful for your committed support and that you have chosen us as one of the charities to focus on for the next few years. Your generosity continues to make a profound difference to disadvantaged writers across the UK.

If you have any questions about Arvon and our Grant Fund, please contact Dean Stigwood, Head of Development, at dean.stigwood@arvon.org