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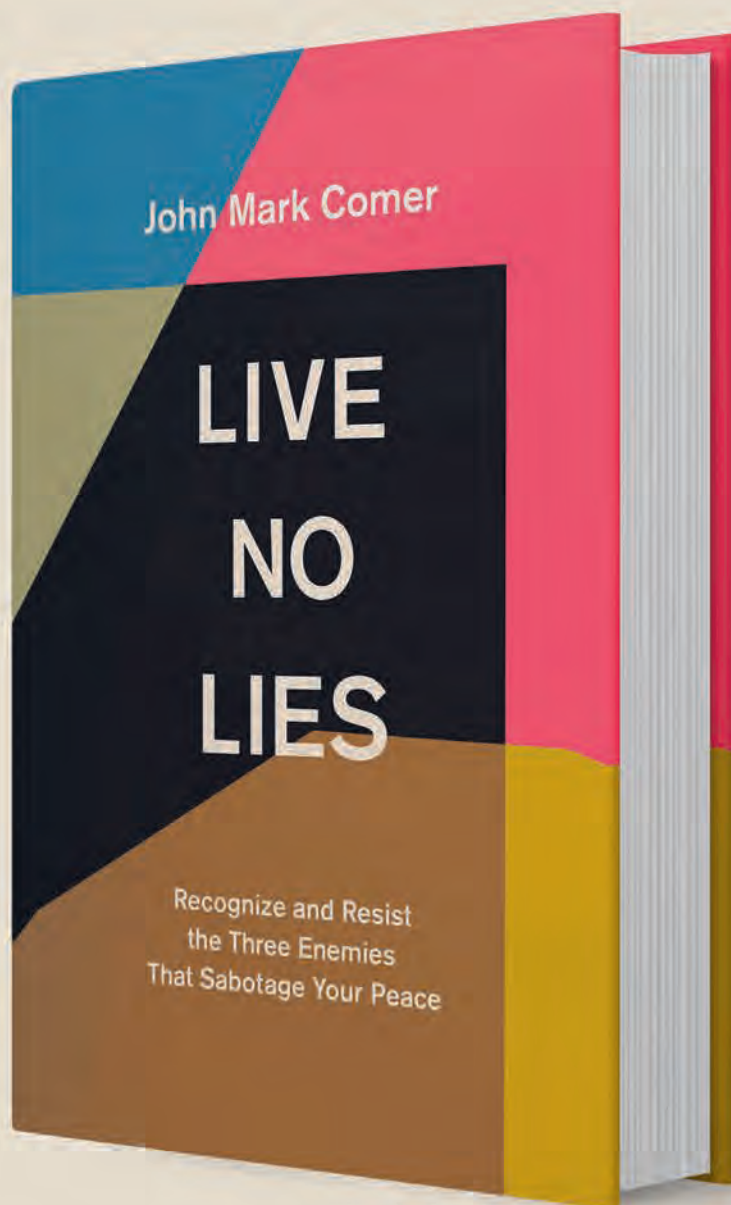
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# THE BOOKSELLER

Curated by Authors With Disabilities  
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**Editor's Letter**

# Rewriting the narrative

**I**f words have power, then the people who publish, promote and sell them have the ultimate power. They, or rather you, choose who is heard and who is silenced, who is seen and who remains invisible. The choices you make don't just impact readers, they resonate out across society. Books help us understand the world we live in and the people around us, especially those with different backgrounds to our own. We gain new insights which, intentionally or not, affect the way we treat others. Publishing more diverse voices has brought positive visibility to many marginalised communities. The same needs to be done for disabled people.

There are over 14.1 million disabled in the UK, with a spending power estimated at over £16bn, and yet it often feels like we are invisible; we're barely represented on page and screen, our stories are untold—or worse, told by non-disabled people. This means they lack the authenticity and nuance that disabled authors can bring to their genres, a unique perspective that is currently missing, but you have the power to change this. Together we can write a new

narrative around disability and the way disabled people are perceived. We can end harmful stereotypes and replace them with realistic representations of people who are more than their diagnosis or their physical challenges, people who live and love and dream of a better future. As we all do.

I was pleased to be asked to curate this special issue on behalf of Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses (ADCI), the group I co-founded, but as I write this, I too feel my own sense of

responsibility. There is vast diversity within the disability community, I could never hope to cover everything that needs to be said, which is why this must only be the start of the conversation.

My aim for The Disability Issue is to raise awareness and understanding of the barriers and obstacles disabled authors face. These include physical access to buildings, events and meetings, as well as the lack of virtual alternatives for those who can't travel, and the need for adaptability around working practices, adjustments to forms of communication and improved attitudes towards disabled people. I also wanted to offer practical solutions, simple and easy ways to make the industry more accessible to and supportive of disabled people. Some barriers will require organisational changes, while tailored solutions to specific problems will be solved by collaborations between agents, editors and publishers and their individual authors.

These discussions can only happen if the industry fosters a more inclusive, accepting environment, where people can talk openly about their access needs without fear of discrimination or prejudice.

Borrowing a metaphor from the recent Paralympics, I'm now passing the baton on to you. Read our stories, listen to the feedback and look at where you have the power to bring about positive change. If we work together we can create not only better books, but a better world.

**Claire Wade** is the author of *The Choice* (Orion, 2019); she won the Good Housekeeping Novel Competition and the East Anglian Book Award for Fiction. She co-founded Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses.



**Claire Wade** Guest editor

It often feels like we are invisible; we're barely represented on page and on screen

**Contents 24th September 2021**



**The cover illustrator**

**Ananya Rao-Middleton** is a disabled woman of colour illustrator and activist who uses her creative work as a tool to speak truth to the voices of marginalised communities at the intersection of disability, race and gender. As someone living with MS and other chronic conditions, she is particularly passionate about raising awareness about invisible disabilities.



**In my adult brain I now realise how damaging that can be for a child, if you don't see yourself in books or on TV or in the media**

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# The Disability Issue: how workplaces can revolutionise their approach to disability



The industry has proven itself to be incredibly adaptable over the past 18 months. How can that momentum be harnessed to bring about real change for those living and working with disabilities?

**Claire Wade** @clairerwade



**D**isability doesn't just happen to other people, it doesn't discriminate, it can affect anyone at any time and there is nothing you can do to protect against it. Some 14.1 million people in the UK are disabled, approximately 22% of the population. They have had to come to terms with the fragility of the human body and now, as a result of the pandemic, we are all aware of how vulnerable we are. But ill-health or disability shouldn't mean the end of a career or an obstacle to even starting one. It does mean adjustments have to be made, things need to be done differently, and while there is comfort in doing things the way they have always been done, new innovations and improved working practices benefit all.

The publishing industry showed remarkable adaptability during lockdown, demonstrating a creativity and speed of change that was inspiring. The members of peer support network Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses were encouraged to see the rise in online meetings and virtual events, and have been able to be part of the industry in ways we never thought possible.

Up until now, disabled authors have shied away from talking about the reality of our lives for fear of prejudice and discrimination, and with good reason. In a survey in 2020 by health and welfare charity Leonard Cheshire, 20% of UK employers said they were less likely to employ a disabled person; in the Professional Publishers Association's Diversity & Inclusion Industry Survey 2021, only 6% of respondents had

a disability or impairment—significantly lower than the overall UK working age population of 19% (Department of Work and Pensions).

Ableism teaches us that we are a burden, and that our disabled bodies require “fixing”. Historically we have been shut away and now we are portrayed in the media as benefit scroungers or inspirations, and in fiction as either the villain, the sidekick or the sacrifice, always enabling the non-disabled hero to triumph. It’s a toxic narrative that needs to change and this can be done by centring disabled voices and understanding the true reality of disability. The publishing industry has the power to do this in incredible, positive ways, and this article is our invitation to all those within the industry to look at how you can make this happen.

### What is disability?

According to the Equality Act 2010, the term “disability” covers everything from physical impairment to chronic illness, mental health problems, neurodiversity and energy limiting conditions. You are considered disabled if your condition “has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities”.

The common narrative is that disability equals incapability, but disabled people are some of the most focused, determined and creatively adaptable people you will ever meet—they have to be to navigate a world not designed for them. In fact, the social model of disability proposes that it is harmful attitudes, stereotypes and society’s structure which truly disables people. It is these obstacles that prevent us from living the same lives, with the same opportunities, as non-disabled people.

The social model of disability proposes that it’s harmful attitudes, stereotypes and society’s structure which truly disables people

Changing the status quo requires allies, active participants within the industry who see that a more inclusive approach doesn’t just help disabled authors. If we create an industry that empowers everyone to find ways of working, no matter their physical ability, no one has to quit when ill health and disability strike.



### Inclusivity

Enabling disabled people to access the same opportunities as non-disabled people isn’t an act of charity—it’s required by the Equality Act 2010. Under “reasonable adjustments”, changes have to be made to a workplace or to the ways things are done to remove or reduce the disadvantage for the person with the disability.

For adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments, funding is available through Access to Work for both employed and self-employed people, and practical and financial support can be provided for special equipment, adaptations, extra transport costs and support worker services.

For some disabled authors, access to suitable aids and support is all they require, while others will also need flexibility around deadlines. This isn’t due to laziness or lack of a work ethic, it’s a result of living with conditions that can be unpredictable and require adaptability; intentionally building extra time into a project is a simple way to insure against potential problems.

### An open dialogue

Disabled authors and employees need to be able to have open conversations without fear of discrimination and prejudice; they need to know they will be met with patience, a willingness to understand and flexibility in finding a solution.

We are all guilty of unconscious bias, so it’s essential that all staff members receive specialist disability awareness training, no matter the size of the organisation. Education means people are prepared to have the important conversations that up until now have often been avoided for fear

of saying the wrong thing.

It takes courage to talk about your own ill health and there is no one size fits all when it comes to disability; many conditions are invisible and often dynamic, fluctuating over time. We have to find a way to make it easier for authors with disabilities to self-identify without the fear of judgement and rejection.

Start by including an “access needs” section on every form, as standard practice. This provides a neutral place to state any necessary requirements, without putting the onus on the disabled person to make a big, public declaration.

If you’re putting out a call for under-represented writers remember to include disabled people. Provide contact details so they are able to discuss any access concerns

### Adaptability

Many of the activities you take for granted as “easy” and “normal” are barriers to disabled people. Some are insurmountable, while others take planning and preparation to make them possible. Nobody asks for adjustments unless they genuinely need something—however strange it might sound. Small changes are often all that is needed to make things possible and accessible. Generally, the disabled person knows exactly what they need to make a situation viable,

# THIS WEEK The Lead Story The Disability Issue

but sometimes they will require your expert advice on possible adaptations.

It is far more empowering to approach the challenges of disability from the angle that we are a team and everybody succeeds if we work together.

## Accessibility

Accessibility isn't just ramps and blue badge spaces—only 8% of disabled people use wheelchairs. True accessibility is ensuring that everything from websites, submission portals, meetings, events, printed material and communications are accessible to all.

Consult with disabled employees and service users and ask them what they need, what is working and what isn't; value their feedback over non-disabled experts and carers. You might need to adapt the form of communication, use large print or audio, closed captions or British Sign Language, but these are small steps that will ensure your project is the best it can be.

It is far more empowering to approach the challenges of disability from the angle that we are a team and everybody succeeds if we work together

If you are putting out a call for under-represented writers, remember to include disabled people. Provide contact details so they are able to discuss any access concerns and share details of your experience with working with disabled authors, so they know they will be welcome.

You can download disability arts organisation Unlimited's "Cards for Inclusion", a free card game that explores how barriers to access can be removed. It encourages new, creative thinking to old, often unappreciated problems.

Building in access from the start of a project or event is far cheaper and easier.

## Meetings and events

All events and meetings must be physically accessible, with step-free access to buildings and stages, appropriate seating and provisions for those with specific impairments, for example hearing loops or British Sign Language interpreters.

For those unable to travel, there also needs to be a virtual alternative. Up until the pandemic, we were told this was impossible, but now we know it's not only possible but easy to achieve. This progress must not be lost despite any returns to "normal". You can read more about accessible events and the Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses events guide in the article by Helen Barrell (see p17).

## The Purple Pound

As established by other "own voice" authors, representation matters, not just to disabled readers, but also on a broader scale of understanding experiences that are not our own. This doesn't only apply to fiction. Disabled authors are capable of writing on a diverse range of subjects and their insights on lifestyle, relationships, travel, sport and nature, to name but a few, are severely missing from bookshelves.

Disabled people are not represented in all genres, and disabled households are also often overlooked when it comes to spending power; known as the Purple Pound, businesses are losing over £2bn a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people.





## What to do next...

# 11 steps to take

- 01** Review your representation. How many disabled authors are you working with? Proportionally it should be 20%.
- 02** Assess your accessibility. Examine everything from physical access to virtual meetings and events, all forms of communication, websites and online submission processes. Are they accessible to all?
- 03** Demonstrate how you are adapting: call for submissions by disabled authors and detail your accessibility and inclusion processes.
- 04** Support your disabled staff—acknowledge the expertise they bring, and trust and invest in them.
- 05** Create specialist schemes and opportunities. Set up projects to support and encourage disabled authors and staff.
- 06** Remove barriers to inclusion in existing schemes—review schemes that need in-person participation.
- 07** Check your disability portrayal—use the Fries Test on every publication.
- 08** Honour authentic voices and experiences, include disabled voices in all conversations and, when commenting on disability, turn to disabled people over their non-disabled counterparts.
- 09** Build relationships. Create links with disabled readers, bloggers and critics.
- 10** Disability awareness training for all—beware of ableism and unconscious bias.
- 11** Celebrate Disability. Being disabled isn't something to be ashamed of. Disability Pride Month in July is the perfect opportunity to celebrate disabled voices.

Disabled readers don't want to solely read books by disabled authors, but seeing themselves represented on the page and in the industry is important. Visibility shows people what is possible and spotlighting disabled authors does this.

Disabled readers don't want to solely read books by disabled authors, but seeing themselves represented on the page and in the industry is important

However, promotion must be handled sensitively. Some authors are willing to discuss their experiences of disability, but the focus must always be on their books first. Disabled pain is not a promotion tool.

### Positive portrayal

In the past, disabled stories have been told by non-disabled people without lived experience; this has proven problematic and alienating to the disability community. When referencing existing stories of disability or choosing future publications, make sure they aim to pass the Fries Test. Similar to the Bechdel Test, which is a measure of the representation of women in fictional works, the Fries Test ensures positive disability portrayal. For more details, see the article by Catherine Miller (p16) and Lisette Auton's piece on avoiding disability tropes (p20).

### Gathering momentum

The publishing industry has taken steps to become more inclusive and as a result we are hearing more diverse voices, learning about different lives and expanding our understanding of the world we share. The publishing industry holds enormous power and therefore must ensure that everyone is represented.

I have felt an incredible responsibility writing this piece, because how do you cover something as vast as disability in a single article? How do you capture the nuance of different disabilities and even differences within the same disability? You can't. That's why this Disability Issue of *The Bookseller* is only the start of the conversation, and one that disabled authors look forward to continuing with the industry long after this edition of the magazine goes to print.

For a free guide to working with disabled authors, visit [clairewade.com/adci](http://clairewade.com/adci)



## The disabled author experience

### The authors



**Paula Knight's** books include her graphic novel *The Facts of Life* (Myriad Editions). She has written three children's picture books and illustrated many more. She is currently concentrating on nature writing and poetry. Readers can find her on Twitter @Paula\_JKnight

Author photograph:  
John Austin



**Liz Nugent** is an award-winning writer of the bestselling psychological suspense novels *Unravelling Oliver*, *Lying in Wait*, *Skin Deep* and *Little Cruelties* (all Penguin). Her books have been optioned for screen adaptations and translated into 16 languages. She tweets @lizzienugent.

Author photograph:  
Darragh Kane



**Nydia Hetherington** grew up in Leeds. She moved to London in her twenties to embark on an acting career, before creating her own theatre company. She completed a creative writing degree at Birkbeck, and *A Girl Made of Air* (Quercus) is her first novel. She tweets @NydiaMadeofAir

Author photograph:  
Andy Hebden

Living with a disability isn't easy, and it brings unique challenges, but by sharing our experiences we can find better solutions. Author-illustrator Paula Knight, psychological suspense author Liz Nugent and début novelist Nydia Hetherington talked to The Bookseller about how they have navigated the publishing process, what they have learnt and what they would do differently



**Claire Wade** @clairerwade



The biggest drawbacks to my writing life are, unsurprisingly, pain and fatigue. Hours sitting at a desk is exhausting and painful

Nydia Hetherington

### What are the biggest obstacles you have faced in your writing career?



**My début graphic memoir coincided with a severe deterioration of three chronic conditions,** and I became disabled and, eventually, bedridden. This presented a problem for book publicity. I had been looking forward to new opportunities but was able to attend only two events in person that year. As well as the publicist's work, the good will and enthusiasm of colleagues and peers in my absence was important. However, accommodating Disabled and Chronically Ill (DCI) authors should be integral to the industry, rather than authors having to "overcome" illness.



**I have a neurological condition called dystonia as a result of a childhood brain haemorrhage,** which has recently been exacerbated by a very unlucky fall. The biggest challenge for me is the choice between walking or writing. If I take too much medication, it messes with my head and I can't write. If I take too little, the pain and spasms in my right leg become unbearable and I can't walk. I have found an acceptable level of pain I can work with, and in time, I will get used to it and it will become discomfort rather than pain. This isn't my first rodeo.

I was reluctant to be public about my illness because I experienced an incident of ableism while freelancing

Paula Knight



**Living with chronic illness,** the biggest drawbacks to my writing life are, unsurprisingly, pain and fatigue. Hours sitting at a desk is exhausting and painful.

### What is your writing process and has it changed as a result of your disability?



**Pain and severe energy impairment led to me being unable to draw,** hold a pen or type. At first, I used a digital dictaphone, which had to be transcribed. I now write using voice-to-text assistive technology (AT), and help from my carer. With energy impairment, AT isn't necessarily the answer because I can't always speak, so I'm not as productive as I'd like. My aim now is to be the Tortoise, not the Hare, and the "write every day" maxim has become ashes in the dying embers of my internalised ableism (discriminatory practices and beliefs against disabled people).



**I type with one hand.** I could use dictation software and I have tried but, weirdly, it doesn't quite work for me. I lose something in the process of getting from brain to page. Perhaps the act of physically typing makes my imagination work harder.



**I've invested in all manner of gadgets to help with sitting at a keyboard all day.** Nothing works. So, I plod on through the pain and fatigue until I need to stop. That's the only way for me to get my writing done. I'm used to pain, it's a constant. So, I accept it and deal with the physical and emotional ramifications.

### How do you navigate the publication process?



**My latest publisher was aware of my illness before signing the book,** so I felt comfortable discussing any needs and negotiating deadlines. There was a healthy mixture of professionalism and mutual understanding. Years ago, I was reluctant to be public about my illness because I experienced an incident of ableism while freelancing. I'm open about it now and have found most other professionals to be amenable, although I'm apprehensive about whether this will affect future publishing prospects.



**I have had to ask for concessions—**taxis instead of trains, wheelchair transfers through airports, ready access to a seat at all times, no high stools on a panel interview, etc. This isn't easy when you are new to the business because you don't want to be seen as demanding, but the things I ask for are necessary, and I have found that once the people concerned understand why you are asking, they will go out of their way to help you.



**Being a début author,** I had no idea what to expect from the industry. In fact, as with most things I expected very little. To be fair, this was not the fault of publishing, but rather the difficulty I have talking about my condition. I have Rheumatoid Disease/Arthritis, an autoimmune disorder and one of the often-referred-to "invisible illnesses". If I don't tell you I'm in pain, then the chances are you won't know. As I've got to know my publishing team, I've spoken more openly about

it. They have always listened and been kind. Plus, these have been extraordinary times and in a way the lockdown and its effects have been a boon for me.

### **Book launches often require lots of publicity and events, how have you found this?**



**I managed to attend my book launch partly because my editor provided a space to rest.**

Planning rest time around events is essential, but few venues can accommodate this. Virtual presentation was necessary for me to partake in other events. My editor, [Myriad Editions'] Corinne Pearlman, presented on my behalf several times; I provided the text and images. I made a video for Cardiff Book Talk, and called in live by video conferencing for the Q&A. Recently, I wrote a podcast interview, which was recorded and voiced for me. I was still semi-ambulatory when I attended a major literary festival and was able to secure "VIP" parking close to the authors' tent, and a guest ticket. Had I been a full wheelchair user, the stage had stepped access only. I have had to forego many in-person opportunities.



**I almost never say no to publicity opportunities because let's face it, they are few and far**

between. Ask for time to rehearse walking into the TV studio from backstage. Make sure the interviewer will focus on your books and not your disability. I don't mind talking about the disability angle, because my experience might help someone else who feels they could never do it, but talk about my books first, please.



**The rise of online platforms was a blessing.** In September 2020, when my book was published, there was a sense of, "We're all in it together" [owing to the pandemic restrictions]. I didn't

need to explain myself; everyone was staring into their webcams now. I had a wonderful online launch. It was oversubscribed, with people from all over the world turning up to show their support. A live event would have been a dream come true. But the after-effects on my physical and emotional health can't be ignored (I'm usually in bed by 7 p.m.–8 p.m.), and there wouldn't have been as many bums on seats. Back then, it was early days for the webinar, and we were still navigating the online events system. The fact that most of my author events didn't go online and were cancelled was, and still is, upsetting.

### **Do you think that your disability informs your writing?**



**A significant proportion of my comics and life writing involved personal testimony of illness.**

Our stories, whether autobiographical or fictional, are important in culture to counter society's normative narratives of illness and restitution, and medical status quo, which is often dispassionate. There's an activist element to some of my work, especially after learning more about ableism, but equally I like writing about pigeons enjoying relations on rooftops—some are disabled!



**I don't really think it does, in my case.** It has been said often about writers that we are "outsiders" and that makes us good observers of human nature. I guess you can double that feeling of being an outsider if you have a disability.

**Had I been a full wheelchair user, the stage had stepped access only. I have had to forego many in-person opportunities**

Paula Knight



**Living with chronic pain isn't something I have written about specifically.**

This is mainly due to the fact that I still don't know how to categorise myself (this is how it is with invisible illness, you're never quite sure where to put yourself), but to say that I am not utterly alive to it when writing my fiction would be untrue. Like anything that defines us, it is reflected in my writing as much as being a cis woman is, as much as my personal history, as much as anywhere I have lived or anything I have done, or am, or have been. That might sound simple and obvious, but it's not really. My condition has never appeared in my work as yet, but the fact that I live with it means it will be unconsciously reflected in there somewhere.

### **What more do you think could be done to support and encourage disabled authors?**



**I would like to see provision for virtual presentation and attendance remain for events.**

This will help towards ensuring wider inclusivity in the industry. We saw it become possible for majority needs—to take it away would be marginalising. I would also welcome more submission windows for underrepresented writers, and for diversity discourse to include disability.



**Perhaps publishers could ask the writers they sign up if they have any additional needs,**

rather than the writers having to eventually volunteer the information? For example, I know several writers who suffer with mental health issues and anxiety, and I think some of them are terrified of admitting it. There are plenty of ways to make everyone feel more comfortable, physically and emotionally. It is in your publisher's, agent's, editor's and publicist's interests for you to perform at your absolute best.



**Publishing, like everyone else, is chomping at the bit to get back to live events.** I understand, of course, but it's unlikely I'll be a part of that, at least not soon. I've no doubt my publishing

team will continue to be kind and understanding—they're lovely people. But the industry isn't under their control. As always, I'll push through, find a way, I always do. Still, I wish I didn't have to.

### **What's the best piece of advice you would like to share with other disabled writers?**



**Your physical and emotional limitations should not stop you becoming the writer you want to be.**

The late filmmaker Simon Fitzmaurice, who had Motor Neurone Disease, wrote his autobiography with eye-tracking software. Shakespeare wrote his entire works with one hand and a feather. There are no excuses any more. If you want to write, do it.



**My advice to writers with chronic illness is to talk about your condition.** It doesn't have to be the thing that defines you. Our illnesses might be invisible, but we must be seen.



**There's no need to apologise for asking for accommodations and inclusivity.**

**It has been said often about writers that we are 'outsiders' and that makes us good observers of human nature**

Liz Nugent



## Hayley Steed

The Madeleine Milburn agent highlights how the industry needs to become far more open and flexible in its approach to health and disability

# Tackling stigma



thought long and hard about whether to write this piece, before realising the thing holding me back was the very thing we need to tackle: the shame and stigma around disability. My reluctance comes from a place of fear. Because while I know my condition doesn't set me back at all, others might not see it the same way.

Authors want an agent who will go to the barricades for them: a tough negotiator and reliable comrade-in-arms.

We are expected to be infallible, and a disability—or an admission of one—feels like it counters that image. It might suggest a weakness or an inability to perform the job to the same degree as a non-disabled person, which would be devastating in a job where we compete to represent the best talent. It feels as though admitting that I might need more allowance than someone else will count against me. But I was convinced by the articles I have admired from my publishing colleagues—Viking's Katy Loftus [who wrote about mental health] and Rachel Mills Literary agent Nelle Andrew's [about racial inequality] in particular. The responses have always been empathetic, and their openness has felt like a necessary call for change, so here I am.

### Out of office

I had lunch with an editor and friend recently, who made the good point that by writing this, I would be disclosing a little more of myself to an industry that already expects so much, professionally and personally. It's mad that we live in a world where (pre-pandemic) you still went to work if you were ill, and being ill is almost seen as a personal failing. This isn't just a publishing issue, it's a capitalist one, but don't get me started on that.

But it is normal to be ill. It is not shameful to admit it, or to take a day off to rest without having one eye on your emails. And it doesn't mean you need to work harder, or prove you have earned your place, if you need more flexibility than others. We don't need to give all of ourselves,

all of the time. We are pushing ourselves to the brink of our capabilities and it's important to take the pressure off the demand to be constantly "on"—to separate our professionalism from our health, and to give more flexibility to those who do have a disability or a medical condition. The past 18 months have shown how fragile our health is. Any of us could fall ill at any time, and the more we open up, the better we can support one another.

I'm lucky that I work for a company that has always understood and accommodated my needs, but not every company is as supportive. After a relapse in 2015, I was rushed to hospital and that same day, my boss at the time DM'd me on Twitter to ask when I would be back in the office. My condition is stable now, and largely invisible, so I'm sure there have been worse experiences for those with more visible disabilities, or for those who aren't also white, straight and cis, like I am.

### A flexible future

We cannot let these practices continue, nor lose the workplace flexibility that has emerged over the past year. Disabled workers, and writers, were finally able to see a place for themselves in an incredibly closed industry. We have seen that flexible hours and work locations—aided by supportive technology—are all possible and easily accessible, which immediately opens up the industry to more talent. By offering this support upfront, rather than those with disabilities having to ask for it, we are creating a more diverse workforce. We can generally be much better at accepting and normalising sick days, or weeks, without seeing them as a reflection on our ability or professionalism. In fact, our disabilities, and our differences, can sometimes be our greatest strengths. Yes, I need to manage my health in a way others don't, but my disability also gives me perspective; it makes me even more tenacious and determined, and I know



Author Marie-Claire Amuah's novel *Diary of a Magpie* is the first novel in which Steed has seen her condition depicted

**We are expected to be infallible, and a disability—or an admission of one—feels like it counters that image**

I am a better agent for it.

This isn't just about making publishing a safe place for those with disabilities to work in. It's also about ensuring that disabled writers know there is space for them, not only to be part of the industry but to thrive in it. I read a submission last year—*Diary of a Magpie* by Marie-Claire Amuah (Oneworld)—and it's the first time I've ever seen my condition reflected in a novel, or spoken to someone outside of the medical profession who knows what my illness is. It was emotional and overwhelming, but it also reassured me that I wasn't alone.

I hope the writers and publishing hopefuls who read this article understand that we are hungry for their work and insight, and that we want to hear their voices. It's nothing new to say representation and visibility matter—we're all constantly talking about it. We now need to put it into action.

Hayley Steed is a literary agent. She joined the MM Agency in 2016 and was named a Rising Star by *The Bookseller* in 2019.

# Holly Smale, bestselling author of the Geek Girl series, discusses how autistic characters, and authors, should no longer be seen as 'niche'

Questions

Lottie Cardew @mslottiecardew



**Holly, your beloved Geek Girl character Harriet Manners resonated strongly with my teenage daughter, before either my daughter or I realised we were autistic, so how important is a character like Harriet for girls experiencing stigma, or lost in the system?**

So many young people have connected with Harriet for the different way her mind works and how she sees and interacts with the world. They love her because she's autistic, even if they didn't know it. I'm open about my own diagnosis because Harriet's popularity is another step towards changing the conversation around autism, helping to destigmatise it. Autistic girls need to have someone they know and adore on their team. Through Harriet, I want them to be seen as the valuable, loveable, individual people they are. Change happens one story at a time, reminding the world what autism is from the inside.

**There's a huge problem surrounding late or missed diagnoses in women and girls, so how useful is fiction in changing people's perception of autism?**

Sadly, it's not just girls and women. Autism studies have typically revolved around white cis males, so if you're a person of colour, non-binary, trans, female, you're likely to be missed. The outdated stereotype is so ingrained—it's hard to find a prominent fictional autistic character that isn't a white male who loves physics! Fiction is essential not just to highlight the wide and beautiful diversity of autistic people, but in allowing those who don't fit the "mould" to feel included too.

I'm open about my diagnosis because Harriet's popularity is another step towards changing the conversation around autism



**As an adult, do you see yourself authentically reflected in characters who are labelled or coded autistic?**

I don't think I've read an adult character who feels truly like me yet. There's usually a sense that my neurology has been co-opted as "quirkiness" and some kind of "hook" or punchline. Children's literature seems to be making great strides, yet autistic adults need to see themselves accurately portrayed too. Our life journeys are often different but there's little to reflect that in fiction. The more open the book world is to autistic voices of all ages, the faster genuine representation can happen.

**I'm sure you'd like to see more neurodivergent writers within the industry, but have you found it easy discussing your own need for accommodations?**

If I'm specific, I've found people can be receptive. Small changes make a huge difference and they're not difficult to implement, whether it's virtual meetings, email interviews, longer processing time or clearer communication. The hardest part can be knowing what to ask for. Also, finding the courage to ask without judgement, or at a cost to our careers. After years of being labelled "difficult", autistic people don't want to be seen as trouble.

**Book promotion can be tough even for non-disabled writers, so how have you coped? Has it been easier since your diagnosis?**

Historically, I've struggled, as it relies heavily on skills I don't have. Promotion tends to wipe me out. I've been lucky that my publishers have always been supportive, but I do feel more comfortable speaking up now, from requesting longer breaks between events, smaller groups, a detailed schedule in advance, or even just a particularly quiet hotel if I'm staying away from home. The difference has already been immense.

**You already have a dazzling track record, but what can the industry do to embrace an autistic writer at the start of their career?**

We need to stop seeing autistic authors, and characters, as "niche". We have fascinating, hugely valuable stories with potential bestseller appeal. Budding autistic writers may need additional support and accommodations, but there's no reason they can't have long, hugely successful careers without burning out in the process. Just make sure not to limit or dismiss them before they get there.

**On a final positive note, what strengths do you feel an autistic writer can bring to the table?**

What we generally have in common is an ability to give a story a distinctive, fresh spin. We have often spent our lives studying people, and many of us prefer written communication to verbal, so we are leaning into our primary skill-set. We're also often amazing at hyper-focus, detail and "scripting". There's a reason so many successful authors—potentially Virginia Woolf, Isaac Asimov—are considered to have been autistic. Our natural strengths tie in perfectly with the attributes of a great writer, so give us the appropriate tools and sit back and watch us flourish!

**Author Interview**

Maud Rowell takes readers on a startling history of sight loss



Rosario Blue  
@bluezephyr

**I** want to tell people what it's like to have this disability. I want to change their minds, in terms of how they think about disability more generally, because I think we internalise a lot of negativities about it."

In *Blind Spot: An Exploration and Education on Blindness*, debut author Maud Rowell takes the reader on a journey through blindness in history, and discusses society's often callous approach to it. It tells Rowell's story of losing her sight at a pivotal time in her life, as well as the stories of other blind people. "I was trying to envisage who my reader was," says Rowell. "I was hoping it would be kind of anyone—a blind person could read it, someone losing their sight could read it, a sighted person could read it. Ultimately, I wanted people not to feel scared that that could happen to them."

Rowell was 19 when she lost her sight. "I went straight to university. I then did a Masters. I felt like I didn't really have time to get to grips with my identity as a blind person. I didn't know anyone else who was blind, pretty much."

Rowell struggled with the changes at first, but writing and researching *Blind Spot*—discovering inspirational and forgotten-to-history blind people—was cathartic. "We haven't bothered to preserve the history of these people, which I think is really dangerous. It really shapes how we think about blind people today... We don't have these historical role models to look back on and contextualise things for us."

She feels very grateful to the people who shared their stories with her. They not only informed her book, but also let her know that there are other people that share her experience. "My interviewees were just amazing people, and they said such important things. It's been a tiny bit stressful... I feel a duty of care to the people I've spoken to, and I really want to represent their stories true to how they want them to be conveyed."

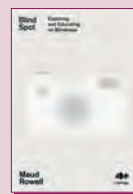
On technology she uses in everyday life, Rowell says her phone is probably the main thing. She uses Otter.ai, a very accurate transcription service,



and has found the boom of audiobooks helpful. Another device she uses is the OrCam MyEye, a wearable device that enables blind people to read text and identify faces and products. Rowell loves it. "Amazing as that technology is, it only reads in one language. So if I wanted to read a book in Japanese, I'd have to buy a whole separate OrCam, and they cost like £3,000. So yeah... that's another problem. It's almost like assuming blind people will have really limited intellectual curiosity—like, because you're blind, you don't want to learn more than you know."

While it shouldn't be the work of those affected by an issue to divvy out education to those ignorant of it, Rowell has the grace to be that educator while also uplifting herself. In *Blind Spot*, she does so expertly.

*Blind Spot* will be released in the UK on 28th October 2021 by 404 Ink, priced at £7.50.





## Catherine Miller

Almost one in five working-age adults are disabled, so why does it remain a struggle to find that statistic adequately reflected in modern fiction?

# Taking centre stage

**I** have been surrounded by disability and chronic illness all my life. So why is it I don't see this reflected in fiction as broadly as I do in the real world?

For a long time, the medical profession thought my mum might have multiple sclerosis, until they discovered it was a slipped disc pressing on her spinal cord. My Uncle John had arachnoiditis, a condition of the spine, caused by a fall from a roof, and the subsequent tests resulted in a long-term issue. I lost part of my vision in my right eye, aged 17, caused by uveitis and have been on tablets to prevent the inflammation ever since. The conditions that have entered my life for various reasons have shaped my world. Often beyond words. These individuals have defined what it is to be brave and outstanding and overwhelmed and tremendous and unique. All of these family members (myself included) have been characters within their own stories. Without doubt, these are the people who are my absolute heroes. These are the people I want to champion and read about. The experience of having a disabled mother led to me becoming a physiotherapist, adding to the breadth of wonderful people, who happen to be disabled, that I've met. So where are these amazing people represented in the pages of fiction?

I know they are out there. But why aren't there more? Eighteen per cent of the working-age population are disabled, but I'm not seeing this percentage reflected in the adult fiction I read. One way for authors to check whether their books are representative is the Fries Test, where the writer answers three questions:

- **Does a work** have more than one disabled character?
- **Do the disabled** characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a non-disabled character?
- **Is the character's** disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?

**Eighteen per cent of the working-age population are disabled, but I'm not seeing this percentage reflected in the adult fiction I read**

If you haven't answered yes to all three questions, there's room for improvement. One of the things I often come across are disabled people as secondary characters or as a plot point. I want to see these characters at the forefront. Centre stage is where they belong.

One book that has done a beautiful job of this is *Hope Nicely's Lessons for Life* by Caroline Day (Zaffre). It's a great example of a book passing the Fries Test. It follows a character with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) who joins a writing group, determined to write her life story. This book really sang to me on a personal level, but more so because Hope wasn't a bit-part, she was the main event.

I asked Day what research she had done for *Hope Nicely*. "I did a lot of research. The book itself came to me very quickly but I read up extensively about FASD, to be sure that my depiction was both respectful and authentic. I think that if you are doing justice to the subject, particularly when it is not your own lived experience, then the research must be extensive." I echo her comments, as research is paramount. My most recent release, *The Girl Who Couldn't Leave*, involved a character with agoraphobia, and a good friend who has the condition happily answered questions and did a sensitivity read to make sure I had portrayed the character's experience accurately.

To help meet the Fries Test, I suggest the following:

- **Speak to people with the lived experience** you are trying to portray. Only ask them once, and respect the fact they may not want to disclose to you. Having said that, I have only ever found that people want to share their stories in whatever way they can.
- **Contact charities and groups** connected to what you are trying to portray. They are usually glad to help.
- **Speak to specialists** in the subject. I have used old contacts when suitable, but even when I haven't had any, I've been able to find people willing to help me with any unusual questions that might crop up.
- **Make the stories hopeful.** I primarily write happy endings, so this might be a personal wish, but as with the Fries Test, if you are killing or curing, are you giving a just representation?

I have written about characters with multiple sclerosis, agoraphobia, autism, cancer and broken heart syndrome, alongside other medical conditions. I'm going to continue adding to the list, but I also hope to start reading more disabled-character driven stories. It makes me sad to think that I am over half-way through the year and have only come across one stand-out disabled lead character. I strive to make sure I'm reading as diversely as possible, so I want to read characters able to fill this gap. I hope this has helped you consider whether you're meeting that need with what you're currently writing, publishing and selling.



Catherine Miller was an NHS physiotherapist, but for health reasons retired early from this career. She is now an internationally bestselling author of contemporary fiction. Her latest book is *The Girl Who Couldn't Leave* (Bookouture, out now). You can follow her on Twitter @katylittlelady.





## Keeping events accessible in a post-pandemic landscape

The Covid-19 lockdowns have drastically altered book trade events and made a number of them more accessible, but how can we ensure they remain so in the years to come?



**Helen Barrell**  
@helenbarrell

**E**vents are an exciting way for readers to meet authors, and vice versa. For many, though, attending them is very challenging, and sometimes impossible. One of the few silver linings of the pandemic has been that most events have moved online, and organisers have found their audiences grow and diversify. People can tune in from across the world, or can fit attendance around jobs and caring responsibilities. For disabled people, it's been a game-changer.

Many disabled people are still housebound due to safety concerns regarding the pandemic, but many others have always found it difficult or impossible to attend events in person. For this reason, as in-person events begin to become feasible again, organisations must continue to incorporate online

and in-person events to ensure that everyone can be included.

Online events themselves need to be accessible. Many platforms provide automatic closed captioning, which are not entirely accurate but make life a lot easier for people in the audience who, like me, are deaf. British Sign Language interpreters can provide their services for both in-person and online events.

When you are planning an in-person event, ensure that wheelchairs can get around your shop or venue. This can be done more effectively by paying someone to go around the event space in a wheelchair, rather than by guesstimating the space. Is there anything confusing in the layout that will hinder access for people with visual impairments? Is there a hearing loop system, and does it actually work? Based on personal

experience, I've come to the conclusion that most don't!

Find ways to include disabled people in any Q&As, and incorporate us in the audience. Don't keep us off to one side in the "disabled space". Is your bookings website accessible, and do you offer alternative formats? PDF forms are not very accessible; a Word document is better as the font sizes, colours and so on can be altered. Do you ask during booking if attendees have accessibility needs?

Find ways to include disabled people in any Q&As, and incorporate us in the audience

It's not only people in the audience who might be disabled. When you are setting up an event, check with the author to see if they have any accessibility requirements. I've attended panel discussions using my Roger Pen microphone, which beams the speaker's voice straight into my hearing aids. For Q&As, I ask the organisers to repeat the questions to me, or I go into the audience. I do warn people in advance, as being pounced on by an author might be daunting.

Event accessibility is a huge area, but hopefully this article has offered some food for thought. For those wanting to find out more about how to make events accessible to disabled authors and visitors, you can download the Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses guide from [clairewade.com/adci](http://clairewade.com/adci).



Helen Barrell's *Fatal Evidence* was named one of the *Guardian's* Best Summer Books 2018. With Catherine Curzon she writes as Ellie Curzon: *The Ghost Garden* was short-listed for Romantic Novel of the Year in 2020.

# Comedian **Rosie Jones** has added another string to her bow by authoring a children's book series—the sort of titles she says she needed as a child



**Lucia Osborne-Crowley**  
@luciaoc\_

**In my adult brain I now realise how damaging that can be for a child, if you don't see yourself in books or on TV or in the media**

**Y**ou have probably heard all about the stellar British comedian Rosie Jones, who rose to the top of her field despite all the barriers facing disabled people, and women, in comedy. But you might not know that she's also a brilliant writer, and that her first book, *The Amazing Edie Eckhart*, was published by Hachette on 5th August.

The children's book tells the story of Edie, who, as Jones puts it, is a "funny, smart, ambitious, stubborn girl who is starting secondary school for the first time—and she also happens to be someone who suffers from cerebral palsy." Jones, who suffers from cerebral palsy herself, told me that as a kid, you could not tear her away from her books; reading was her first love. "It's how my parents always knew I would be OK—no matter what happened with my condition, I would always have my books," she says.

But the problem was that none of the books she loved and took comfort in had disabled characters. Jones says no matter how many books she read, she couldn't find anyone whose life looked like hers; it meant she couldn't imagine what her life would look like. "In my adult brain I now realise how damaging that can be for a child, if you don't see yourself in books or on TV or in the media," Jones tells me. "It means you don't value yourself, and it means it's hard to imagine how your life will pan out.

"I wanted to write the book I needed as a child," she adds. Enter Edie, a girl who is the centre of her own story and who navigates life with her disability in the best way she can. "Edie has cerebral palsy," Jones says, "but it's not only a book about disability. Her disability comes up in the book, in the same way it comes up in real life, but it's not her only quality." Jones says this is exactly why we need more disabled voices in comedy, in books, in films and on TV, because having so little representation leads people to flatten the identities of disabled people, and force them to become two-dimensional characters in their own lives. "Being disabled is not a personality trait," she says.





Jones believes that audiences' instinct to reduce individuals to their disabilities could also be damaging art by other disabled artists. "For example," she says, "not everyone will enjoy reading *Edie*—of course, I hope they do! But if they don't, sometimes when there are so few voices then people say to themselves: I didn't like that book and so I am never reading a book by a disabled author again. But, for example, next year there could be a children's book by a disabled author that could be completely different to mine, and that reader might love it."

Jones says she feels the same way about her comedy. "I'm not everyone's cup of tea," she adds, "but because there are not enough disabled voices out there, people who don't like my sense of humour assume they don't like comedy by disabled people, which is ridiculous." Jones also understands where this prerogative comes from, in an industry that is so dominated by non-disabled voices. That's another reason why she wanted to write *Edie*, she says: she wanted to make sure that the literary world as well as the comedy world opens itself up to disabled artists.

When she was cutting her teeth in comedy, Jones says most people around her didn't even understand what ableism was—including her. "I would get abused for my comedy work and the abuse was always connected to my disability, and I just accepted that," she says. "But now we have a better understanding of what ableism actually means."

Does she think the artistic industries are improving when it comes to ableism? Yes, she says. "More and more, I find that people don't always expect everything I do and say to be about my disability. And that's what we need: more disabled comedians, singers, writers, newsreaders, people in the public eye who are known for things other than their disability."

There is still a way to go, she adds. "I worked on a project for the Paralympics in Tokyo, and I always notice that there's a spike in interest in disability around the Paralympics, and then people go back to 'normal'." But we need to integrate ideas about disability into our ideas of what is "normal", she says.

When I ask Jones what we can all do to help stamp out ableism, she has an extremely clear answer: "Just ask", she says. "If you don't know what ableism is, ask. If you don't know if a disabled person needs your help, ask. If you don't know if a disabled person is OK or not, ask." Ask, she reiterates, and listen to the answer. "If you see a disabled person and suspect they might need help, ask them. And if they say they are fine, listen to them," she says.

And so, how does it feel to have written a children's book on top of a hugely successful career as a comedian? "Just amazing," she says. "Sometimes it's so hard to stop and take stock of things, and yesterday I had a quiet moment where it hit me: I've written a book."

It won't be her last, either. Jones signed a two-book deal with Hachette for the *Edie* project, so there is a forthcoming sequel. She says that doing press for the first book is hard sometimes, because she is already so engrossed in writing the second. *Edie's* life has already moved on in her imagination—and I can't wait to read all about where her life takes her.

Jones photography: Aermen Sukkar;  
Osborne-Crowley photography: Robin Silas Christian



**Lisette Auton**

Children's fiction remains awash with dangerous tropes when it comes to characters with disabilities. It's time to ensure there is positive representation

## Difference and disability



I am a disabled and neurodivergent writer. My brain and body work in different and wonderful ways to non-disabled people's, but it took me a long time to recognise and claim this. Why? Simple: the disabled people in the children's stories I loved were evil.

When we read as children, we look for escape and adventure. We look to recognise ourselves and learn about our place in the world, and the place of our fellow human beings. Children's books tell us

that people with facial differences are the baddies; that scars are terrifying and should be feared along with the person who owns them; that disabled people are never the hero or the love interest, but that they do need rescuing, curing or fixing; that disabled people are both inspiration and warning.

This is not just in classic stories. It still happens in books that are published today.

In 2018, the Papworth Trust reported that 7% of UK children are disabled, and 10% live in a family with at least one disabled child. That's 7% of children picking up books that have no positive role models in which to see themselves reflected—just harmful and outdated tropes. That's 93% of children seeing their disabled peers in an othering and threatening light.

Stories seep into us; that is their magic. Words are powerful, and they perpetuate harm when facial difference and disability are used as a shorthand for evil. It is a dangerous trope that must stop.

### On reflection

All children deserve to see themselves in the books that they read—not as one-dimensional monsters, but as real, rounded characters with flaws, dreams and hopes. This is why the representation of disabled people in children's literature is a massive opportunity for the publishing industry, to not just rectify these past (and unfortunately still continuing) wrongs, but to supply us with new heroes and adventurers, new love interests and new stories.

My anger about representation sparked my desire to write *The Secret of Haven Point* (Puffin, February 2022). It has no token disabled sidekicks. It's an adventure set in a lighthouse with mermaids, a captain with a kitten in his beard, and a whole host of disabled characters—a gang of friends who are loving, fierce, kind and hilarious. They get things very wrong and try to put them right. It's an adventure story in which the characters are disabled, but it's not "about" disability. It's not medicalised, and no-one gets magically cured. These characters are just themselves, with all the challenges and humour that this involves.

It's a story anyone can enjoy, but one in which disabled young people can find a cast of characters to identify with. It's written for them. That's the difference, and something that the publishing world needs to think about too. Who is your audience? Who are you excluding?

I've had a wonderful experience with an agent and editors who are allies, who let me work my way at my pace. I have an editor who has been brave and seen the potential in this story, who has dared to leap. Agents and editors should not have to be brave. Publishing books featuring disabled main characters makes financial sense too: there is the disabled "purple pound" to consider, after all. And there is an appetite. Look at the recent success of Elle McNicoll's *A Kind of Spark* (Knights Of), in which Addie, an autistic young person, takes on her town.

### Speaking out

There are not enough disabled and neurodivergent authors with publishing deals. The burden of representing every disabled child is placed on too few authors—it's a burden that I find terrifying. I was helped by using an inclusivity consultant (every single publishing house should be using inclusivity readers). I'm a disabled person, but I don't have all of the impairments belonging to my eclectic cast of characters. My inclusivity reader guided me with care into doing no harm. No book including disabled characters should reach the shelves without this process.

We don't just need more disabled and neurodivergent authors; we need more disabled and neurodivergent editors and agents, copyeditors and illustrators, booksellers and librarians, marketers and sales executives. We need more disabled people in all the positions of commissioning power, supported by non-disabled allies and advocates. Not only will this ensure that we represent the full spectrum of disability, but that harmful tropes and stereotypes are spotted straight away.

No child should ever believe they are inherently evil, an object of fun, always the baddie, never the adventurer. They should believe in the magic and wonder of books, that they can be anyone they want to be.

They should believe that they can change the world.

**The burden of representing every disabled child is placed on too few authors—it's a burden that I find terrifying**



Lisette Auton is a disabled writer, activist, poet, novelist, spoken-word artist, actor, film and theatre-maker and creative practitioner. *The Secret of Haven Point*, her debut novel, will be published by Puffin in February 2022. Readers can find out more about her by visiting [lisetteauton.co.uk](http://lisetteauton.co.uk) or following her on Twitter @lisette\_auton.

# Progressive or performative? Disability staff networks come under scrutiny

A number of the larger publishers have set up internal networks to improve access to the industry for minority communities; here are six essential steps to ensure their success

**Amy Barrett**  
@amybarrett31



**W**hen it comes to diversity and inclusion, the line between “progressive” and “performative” is blurred. Acts that appear progressive—borne from a real commitment to a better future—can end up only skin-deep, while statements made for publicity alone can inadvertently lead to real change.

How can publishers address their lack of diversity without being solely performative? One initiative is in-house staff networks: groups started, maintained and chaired by minority communities within the business.

Most large publishing houses now have networks, though safe spaces for staff would benefit companies of all sizes. My publisher Immediate Media’s network was formed in the past year, but some have been going for much longer: Hachette UK’s first networks started in 2016 and now more than 1,000 employees are involved in at least one of their eight groups.

But what decides whether a network is progressive or performative?

## 01 Backing from senior members of staff

When setting up a network, it’s “worth getting as many powerful people on your team as possible,” says Ellie Drewry, founder of the disability network at Penguin Random House (PRH). Whether these senior employees are members of the community or not—and surveys show it’s more likely not, in the case of disability—they are crucial to the formation of a network. Without them, Drewry says she would have struggled to get the group off the ground.

## 02 Remove barriers to joining

Most networks welcome allies and, as one co-chair highlighted, this is key for disability networks since there are so few of us working in publishing: the 2020 Publishers Association survey suggests just 8% of trade employees have a disability or

impairment, and 14% of those were not open about their health condition at work. Therefore, it’s important that participation in these networks doesn’t require disclosure and is confidential.

## 03 Make a long-term, strategic commitment

Diversity initiatives must be supported by company-wide policies and established practices, according to the 2013 *Business Case for Equality and Diversity* report.

For PRH, a two-way relationship between HR and networks helps the company “tailor solutions so they are right for the colleagues they are supporting”. Publishers can also show commitment through partnerships with external organisations, as Hachette UK did when developing dyslexia-friendly guidelines with the British Dyslexia Association and Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

## 04 Have respect for your employees’ time

Expecting chairs to “fit the role around the day job”, as one confidante put it, simply piles more pressure on employees who are already feeling the weight of being in the minority.

Of the three “Big Five” publishers who responded to my request for comment, only PRH recognised their chairs’ work with financial compensation and formally allocated time out of their day job to manage their duties. HarperCollins said being part of a network “is paid in that it happens within work hours”, while Hachette UK’s chairs are volunteers but get “an additional 5% stretch bonus target”.

## 05 Train your staff

To see real benefits from diversity initiatives, according to the *Business Case for Equality and Diversity* report, publishers must invest in appropriate training for leaders. But I didn’t find any who had arranged formal training for chairs.

Company-wide inclusivity training was common, as were events for individual networks, but chairs need investment to confidently handle the huge responsibilities of their role.

## 06 Accept that networks cannot solve all

To be progressive is to move towards a goal. Networks can only take us so far in solving the inequalities within the industry.

Within this issue of *The Bookseller*, you’ll find more steps we need to take. It’s up to you as to whether this piece is solely performative.

Amy Barrett is a chronically ill science journalist and fiction writer. She is also the creator of *The Discriptionary*, a website dedicated to positive and truthful depictions of disability in books.

# Access Denied: disabled employees and job seekers reveal their stories

An in-depth report into the publishing industry, and how accessible it is to those with disabilities, shows there is much work to do to make the book trade truly reflective of society

Cat Mitchell @catmitchell17



**T**he industry disables me.”  
“It simply wasn’t designed for us.”

These quotes, taken from a study conducted earlier this year at the University of Derby and involving more than 200 people, epitomise the experiences of disabled job-seekers and employees in the UK publishing industry, many of whom describe feeling excluded, judged, misunderstood and unable to be fully open about their needs.

## Entering the industry

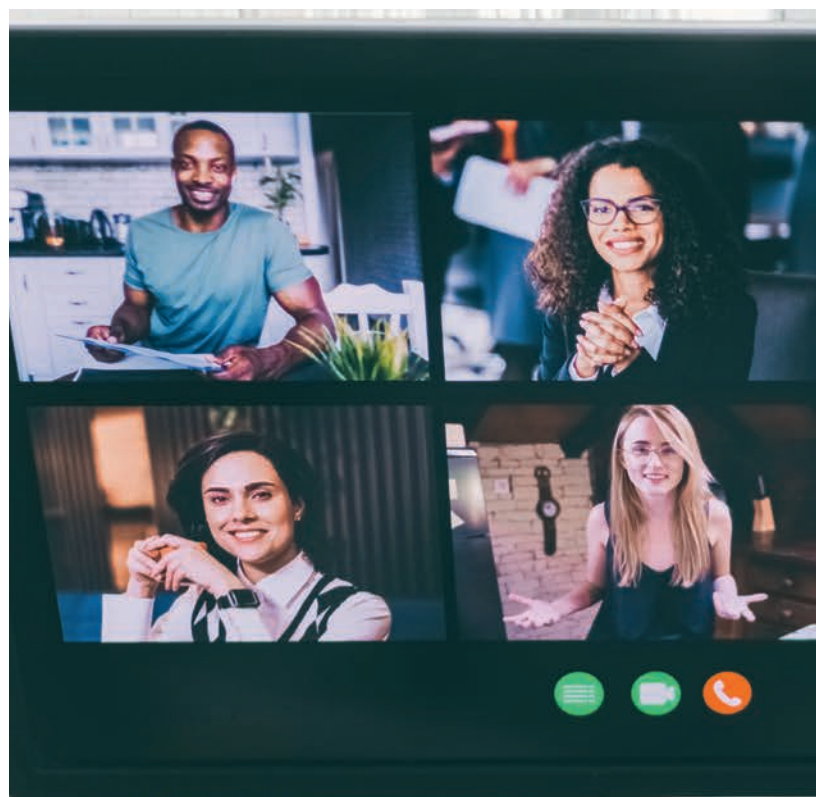
To begin with, the study revealed clear barriers for disabled people entering the industry. Forty-five per cent of disabled job-seekers have not had positive experiences of job hunting in the industry in relation to their disability, and during the application process, 35% have experienced prejudice or discrimination. Alongside inaccessible application processes—including requirements to do timed tasks or proofreading, the use of online forms that can’t be adjusted, a lack of salary transparency and very tight deadlines—strict behavioural expectations in interviews were raised as a particular issue. This included having to hold eye-contact, not being able to

“stim” (perform calming, repetitive, self-stimulating behaviour) and prioritising candidates that come across as passionate and outgoing.

Some 93.4% of job seekers said they were worried companies wouldn’t employ them due to their disability, and applicants therefore sometimes spend their energy “masking”—i.e. hiding their symptoms or traits—rather than concentrating on excelling at answering questions. Some participants also felt that interviews were dominated by discussions about their disability accommodation needs, rather than their skills for the job, which automatically puts them at a disadvantage. As one interviewee said: “You spend a lot of time reassuring people, and the problem with reassuring people is that you’re not putting your best foot forward and saying, ‘I’m the best candidate’, you’re just saying, ‘I’m capable of being here.’”

## Support and career impact

Many disabled people felt unable to be open about their disability during job application processes or at work, mostly due to fears of discrimination. Some 66.2% of employees did not disclose their disability during the job





application process before they were offered the job, and in their current role, only 37.9% said their company's HR department was fully informed about their disability. Even when participants did disclose, many spoke of not getting accommodations; only 40.2% of respondents agreed that their workplace has made all the adjustments they need to manage their disability at work.

Disability was also often seen as a potential barrier for progressing in the industry; 64.7% of employees said that their disability had negatively impacted their career, and 79.3% said that they were worried their disability would hinder their future progression. Participants mentioned missing out on opportunities to further their career because events, networking opportunities and training were not accessible to them. One industry employee, who is profoundly Deaf, also spoke about missing out on the "white noise" in the industry due to the inaccessibility of industry communications in general, including the lack of captions and alt-text descriptions on social media posts.

93.4% of job seekers said they were worried companies wouldn't employ them due to their disability

Some 34.6% of employees said they had faced discrimination or prejudice related to their disability at work, with many noting issues with bullying, abuse and feeling punished for being unwell. One participant said they were "deeply traumatised" by the treatment they received, and others mentioned leaving their job because of it. There were also examples of employees being made to take holiday days for medical appointments,

being made fun of by their managers, or being given less responsibility than their non-disabled colleagues without being consulted, due to assumptions that they wouldn't be able to handle the same amount of work. Where positive experiences were mentioned, employees were often worried about applying for other jobs or promotions in case they might get less support elsewhere.

### Workplace culture

In general, many participants mentioned feeling unwelcome in the industry. Books containing problematic representations of disabled people by non-disabled authors are still being published, and disability often isn't included in the industry's discussions about diversity. The nature of the jobs in the industry were also cited as an issue too; as one participant noted, "A lot of publishing roles are completely inaccessible to disabled people due to unreasonable workload, unpaid overtime expectations, networking and social expectations outside of the official job description."

The London-centric nature of the UK publishing industry was also raised as a barrier for disabled people entering and staying in the industry; 84.4% of employees and 86.9% of job seekers agreed that the concentration of publishing in London makes it more difficult for disabled employees to work in the industry due to the expense of living in the city, long and exhausting commutes, and the reluctance to move away from their support network at home.

### Suggestions for improvements

Overall, there were calls to make sure basic accessibility needs were met, though this was seen as the bare minimum, with a bigger issue being negative attitudes towards disability. One respondent's suggestion to their employer was to "treat me like a human being". Disability-specific hiring schemes were seen as a way to increase the number of disabled people in the industry, but until attitudes change, they



are unlikely to make a difference long-term. As one participant wrote: "People leave when they are tolerated, and not welcomed."

Many participants felt that the problem is a lack of understanding about disabilities, and only 11.7% of employees felt their manager had received adequate training on how to support disabled people at work. There was therefore a call for compulsory disability training for every employee, especially for managers and those working in HR.

Finally, although there were calls for more regional offices and home working, the main suggestion to make the industry more accessible was an increase in flexible working, with 91.5% of employees agreeing that this would help them to manage their disability. Participants called for this flexibility to go further than flexi-time and a few days each week working from home. As one interviewee said, rather than just thinking about how workplaces can be accessible or letting people work remotely, "it's more about realising that someone is not going to be at a functioning capacity every single day that they're expected to be". Workplaces that put their employees' individual needs and wellbeing first will therefore make the industry a more accessible and welcoming place—not just for disabled people, but for everyone.

Cat Mitchell is a lecturer and the programme leader of the Creative Writing and Publishing degree at the University of Derby. Before working in academia, she worked for five years in the publishing industry. The full Access Denied report can be read at <https://bit.ly/3IEq8AT>



## Michael Amherst

The needs of disabled creatives must be taken into account when diversifying the trade—and then matched with funding

# Taken for granted



The publishing industry has been at great pains recently to increase the diversity of those it publishes but the barriers to entry for many underrepresented groups are time, opportunity and money. Disabled writers are unique in often suffering a combination of all of these: illness or managing disability can require more time to finish a project; uncertainty, for ourselves as well as collaborators/publishers, can put people off; while the financial impact of all the above often mean

disabled authors can't even afford to start.

I suffer from psoriatic arthritis and Crohn's disease. The nature of my conditions means there are periods where I am unable to work, while at other times I can be in remission and my work and life are unaffected. The frustration is not just the disability, but its impact on my writing career.

When my condition was at its worst, my GP said: "We need to talk about your inability to do a regular job." Yet, while the self-employed life of an author can provide flexibility to work around disability, this is only possible once you are an established author—or if you receive appropriate levels of support in early career.

There is an expectation that writers starting out will have an additional income stream to live off before their writing takes off. Yet, fewer disabled people are in work (only half, as opposed to 80% of the rest of the population), while it is also harder for the disabled to find and sustain work around fluctuating conditions or medical appointments. Living with a disability is costly too. According to Scope, "even after receiving disability benefits such as PIP, disabled adults face average extra costs of £583 per month". As a result, it is simply not practicable to expect disabled authors to have the means of funding time to write when they start out. Often, we are either fit enough to write or earn part-time—not both. Finally, as writers are self-employed, we have no access to sick pay. Many struggle simply to make up the shortfall incurred from past illness.

**While grant-making bodies do an enormous amount to support writers, there is no dedicated national funder for disabled writers**

Even those fortunate enough to have savings, or other means of financial support, will face barriers due to these additional costs and the additional time required to write. This is a vicious circle, with the disabled author either unable to work at all, or only earning enough to get by.

In terms of the additional costs incurred in work, the 2010 Equality Act places a legal obligation on employers to make reasonable adjustments to help disabled employees, and those that aren't covered can be met by employment support scheme Access to Work, which is open to both employees and the self-employed. Additional costs can include travel, the need for support worker(s) and essential equipment or adaptations. However, it has a lower earnings limit, currently £6,240 per year, which is far greater than many writers starting out are likely to earn. As a result, while some grant-making bodies point writers to Access to Work as a means of addressing accessibility, many are ineligible.

While grant-making bodies do an enormous amount to support writers, there is no dedicated national funder for disabled writers, nor a resource centre detailing available support. All writers face financial and time pressures producing work, yet the disabled face this, and then some. I would like to see a greater openness to time and financial flexibility from grant-making bodies. Disabled writers often have a greater funding need, as outlined above, as well as requiring extra time, and therefore extra financial support, to complete any project impacted by disability. Funding bodies' recognition of these needs would go a long way to removing some of the hurdles disabled writers face.

This should be coupled with an openness to discussing with authors how their disability may impact their work. I remain anxious about approaching one funder, after illness meant my research trip was curtailed and, as a result, I have neither completed the project, nor will the work be anything like my original proposal. Publishers and funders should consider a blueprint for working with disabled authors that seeks to maintain a supportive dialogue about the time and financial pressures caused by their illness and agree ways to help. If applicants were aware of this, it would remove the barrier many face in thinking they cannot, or should not, apply.

Agents and publishers can also help. Existing schemes are great for opening up the industry. However, these schemes should consider some form of funding to make them truly accessible. This would cover additional costs associated with disability, such as travel or overnight accommodation, as well as financial support so disabled authors can afford to take part.

Ultimately, all writers want to produce and complete a project to the highest standard. Disabled authors simply require adequate support to meet that shared goal.



Michael Amherst is the author of *Go the Way Your Blood Beats* (Repeater Books), for which he received an award from Arts Council England and won the 2019 Stonewall Israel Fishman Award for Nonfiction. He is also the winner of the 2020 Hubert Butler Essay Prize. He was shortlisted for the 2021 Observer/Anthony Burgess Prize for Arts and is currently working on a novel.





**Angela Clarke**

What can be done within the publishing industry to unpick damaging stereotypes surrounding those who experience disability?

## Change the narrative



“Where do you get your ideas from?” The interviewer smiled. And that’s when it happened. The pressure that had been building inside my pelvis since we had taken our places on stage, surged. I tried not to react, aware my ankles were already wound like a contortionist’s around the legs of the bar stool I was precariously balanced on. Sweat prickled my brow. I hoped I disguised my wavering voice within my enthusiastic stage persona, as I felt my hip dislocate. Right there in

front of 200 book lovers.

I have a rare connective tissue disorder called Hypermobility Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (hEDS), and my arch nemesis is bar stools. Beloved by bookshops, festivals and all events where organisers want to raise up the authors people have come to see, bar stools taunt my fragile body with their instability and lack of support. A multi-systemic omnishambles, hEDS symptoms include: easy injuries and dislocations, mobility restrictions, chronic fatigue and having a condition that is tricky to pronounce when drunk. And yet, as a sufferer of an invisible condition that takes hours of daily work to manage, unless I’m using my walking stick, I pass as non-disabled.

To begin with I was reticent to mention my disability to work colleagues, assuming people would write me off as an unreliable author. Ironically, like a number of disabled creatives I know, I often push myself longer and harder than non-disabled people because I fear being seen as weak or not good enough. Neither are particularly healthy expressions of internalised ableism, but the latter is at least beneficial to my employers. The great thing about a writing career is its flexibility. I can slot physio, health appointments and strategic pacing naps into my self-managed working day. And apart from obvious compromises and risks to health, a number of disabled writers I know have thrived during the global pandemic. Online meetings suit many of us (though not my deaf friends) and, used to having to adapt, we came back fighting harder and quicker than many who perhaps hadn’t faced challenges to their

**Like a number of disabled creatives I know, I often push myself longer and harder than non-disabled people because I fear being seen as weak...**

health and work before. Could our disability actually be a source of strength?

Writers, agents, editors, bookshop owners and many others are repeatedly willing to lend a hand when I do confess my condition. Whether it’s facilitating an extension, sourcing a hotel room with a bath to recover my muscles in, finding me a chair at an event (amusingly sometimes by turfing someone else out of it), or with offers of paid work if I’ve been worried about my growing physio bills, publishing is full of good eggs. And having a disability helps my craft. I see things from a slightly different perspective. It gives me a unique insight, a special voice. It gives me an edge.

Publicists are delighted to work with disabled talent: imagine all the articles you can pitch around your health condition! Health-themed publicity articles can be great for raising awareness and breaking down preconceptions. But the flip side of “using” your disability for publicity fodder is that you’re betraying all your intimate medical details to the world. Unfortunately, for all the good people, there are still some who will try to fit you into their existing narrative of what it is to be a disabled person. Inspo porn, origin stories and pity pieces that cast you as the poor little brave disabled writer are at best amusing (if read out loud in a stupid voice, with friends who know you are more than your walking stick and wonky limbs). At worst, they’re hurtful, damaging articles forever linked to you on the internet. I was aware of one catastrophically misquoted interview, when family members read it and started calling my mum to say they were sorry I had tried to kill myself. I had not tried to kill myself. The interviewer obviously got carried away with the idea of a disabled girl struggling against all odds. Or perhaps they assumed if they had hEDS they would wish to end things? Pfft! I can dislocate my hip in front of 200 people with barely a blink, and only need a steadying hand to get down off a bar stool after. You wish you were as badass as me.

Other people’s assumptions are still my main reason for pausing before revealing I have a disability. You may not have worked with someone who is disabled before, and well-meaning politeness may make you feel awkward addressing this, but please just ask if they have any access requirements? Listen to what the answer is. Act accordingly. There are myriad disabilities, with myriad access requirements, but one thing is certain: the disabled person in question is the one who will know best what they need.

Nowadays I don’t regard my request to have a chair with a back on it to be any different from my preference to not have ice in my drinking water. I now recognise I am disabled more by the barriers that exist in society (those damn bar stools), than by my actual condition.

The only thing that’s wonky is other people’s mistaken beliefs.



Angela Clarke is a bestselling novelist and screenwriter. She is the author of *On My Life* (Hachette, 2019), *Trust Me* (HarperCollins, 2017), *Watch Me* (HarperCollins, 2016), *Follow Me* (HarperCollins, 2015), and the humorous memoir *Confessions of a Fashionista* (Penguin Random House, 2013).



## Breaking out beyond the niche: 'disabled literature' should inform the mainstream

Author Frances Ryan shares her experiences of publicising her book, for which she fought to appear on mainstream political shows to flag the issues disabled people face

**Frances Ryan**  
@drfrancesryan



**W**hen my debut book *Crippled*, a non-fiction title exposing the impact of government cuts on disabled people in the UK, was published by Verso in 2019, I felt like I had a mantra on repeat: “Disability is a mainstream issue.” I was very fortunate with the positive reception the book received. But throughout the process it struck me how often I had to convince people that disability was a mainstream subject, and that my book, and those like it, belong alongside commercial political titles (typically written by non-disabled authors).

By any definition, disability is far from niche. It’s the largest minority in the world—one in five

people have some sort of disability—and it will affect most of us at some point, and it interacts with the key issues of the day, from social care to coronavirus. And yet disabled literature is often sidelined in a way other books aren’t, buoyed by the myth that only those who are disabled could possibly be interested or learn something from it.

Even when diversity is championed by the industry, it’s striking that disability is often the one minority group that fails to make the cut (and intersectional stories, such as those by disabled people of colour, very rarely get mentioned.) This oversight has real consequences. It impacts what disabled authors are commissioned to write, and

if a disability-centred book is commissioned, it impacts which readers it’s aimed at, and how (or if) it is promoted.

### Looking up

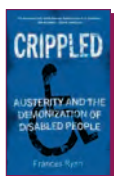
The good news is that change is more than possible. Representation on bookshelves starts in the publishing industry, so getting more disabled people into positions of power is key; a 2020 Publishers Association survey found only 8% of the workforce identified as having a disability. Change will require practical measures, from ensuring internships at publishers are paid, offering remote or flexible working, to putting out job ads that explicitly ask for disabled applicants.

Editors and agents don't need a disability to help, though. As they peruse future disability titles, they can challenge their thinking. Do I believe a non-disabled reader would buy this, and if not, why? How can marketing promote this to reach the large number of disabled readers and the "purple pound"? Publishers can also help promote disabled talent generally. Books on disability need to be given more mainstream credit, but progress will also come when disabled authors are welcomed to write about family, cooking or crime, just like any other author.

Progress will come when disabled authors are welcomed to write about family, cooking or crime, just like any other author

Publishing doesn't exist in a vacuum. The media often has a large role in how books are promoted, and marketing teams can help in how they frame disability titles in pitches to editors and producers. For example, I deliberately appeared on mainstream politics shows to present my book to audiences as a political non-fiction rather than solely a "disability title".

Tackling this is not simply the right thing to do, it's wise business. Greater diversity means more untapped talent and, in turn, more sales. It's time disability was brought in off the sidelines and put front and centre. The industry will be all the richer for it.



Frances Ryan is a *Guardian* columnist and author. Her work has been shortlisted for the Orwell Prize and Paul Foot Award. Her debut *Crippled: Austerity and the Demonisation of Disabled People* (Verso) is out now in paperback.

## Author Interview

# Activist Judith Heumann's memoir is an unflinching tale of struggle—and hope



Louise Kenward  
@louisekenward

**B**eing Heumann: *The Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* (W H Allen), produced by Judith (Judy) Heumann in collaboration with writer Kristen Joiner, tells the story of Heumann's life growing up in Brooklyn, confronted at every turn with barriers excluding her from engaging in society and living her life. This is a story we should all know: the story of the civil rights movement for disabled people. But as with most things related to disability, it has gone unseen. Heumann's story throws a much-overdue spotlight on this. Speaking to me from Washington DC, she says her readers have echoed my own response: why didn't I know this story?

Heumann's life of activism emerged from a summer camp in the 1970s (documented in "Crip Camp", currently showing on Netflix). Attendees of the camp later united to fight for equal rights, resulting in the signing of the much-resisted Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in the US, which "forbids organisations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services". This set a precedent for The Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, and the UK followed in 1995 with The Disability Discrimination Act.

"Disability has been so invisible," she tells me, "it's important for people to be able to see themselves." Books are how we learn, and how we "look at issues in a

different way and begin to ask the right questions". There is a growing interest from broader readerships, and getting "these stories out there enables us to have deeper, more thoughtful discussions".

Most people with a disability acquire it during their life, rather than being born disabled. This is likely to increase in the wake of Covid, and Heumann is concerned with the kind of information available—"much of it has been pretty negative". It is important to notice absence, and there is an absence of disability in publishing. We need "to be uncomfortable with that absence and demand that absence disappear"; to make visible what is so often invisible. "It's important publishers recognise the power of these stories. Disability is a normal part of life."

People should not live in fear of recrimination on the basis of their disability, she says. It may be temporary or permanent but we shouldn't shy away from it. It's important that "the voices of the disability community are representative of the community in the broadest way possible", and that it's a global movement. So many of us live with invisible disabilities and aren't disclosing, and we need to respect one another's choices, but it is also important that we say "I have a disability", because many of us are in positions of power in the public and private sector; not disclosing limits the power we have to make the changes that we could do—we are stronger together.

For those who struggle to identify as disabled, for whatever reason, Heumann is poignant in reminding me that you can feel alone, but "overarching issues, like discrimination in the workforce, how you are treated by the community and how you are seen... there are certain experiences that we all have."

With more than a billion disabled people in the world, "if we see ourselves as part of the community, fighting for the same changes," then the more we come together, the more impactful we can be. "We need everyone to feel they're part of the solution." We need to be able to ask, "What types of changes do we need to make in ourselves and in our communities?" We need to be "driven, not only by wanting to make one's individual life better, but in benefiting more people. These are important things that everyone should be concerned about."

At the end of "Crip Camp", Heumann says: "If you don't respect yourself and if you don't demand what you believe in for yourself, you're not going to get it. But it's hard. We can't do it alone."



*Being Heumann: The Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* was released in the UK by W H Allen in July.



**J L Hall**

The writer and academic sets out why the publishing industry must make it possible for disabled authors to tell more diverse stories

## Leaving hero culture

**O**n the shelves of Edinburgh bookshops, it is hard to find memoirs written by disabled and chronically ill writers. The few that I do uncover reveal common themes: an embattled quest for a cure which they at last discover, or a tale of recovery from a narrator who is leaving their dramatically ill, injured or disabled life behind. There are sages who learn life lessons, or humourists who see the bright side with laughs along the way. These are memoirs telling of the hero's journey:

narrators who have recovered, improved, or led an inspirational life in some way.

For those of you who are not disabled or live without chronic illness, these are not the everyday stories of our lives. I live with Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder which is unlikely to be cured. Many of my writer friends and peers also live with long-term disabilities and conditions. On top of regular, daily life, we manage symptoms, healthcare, relapses and, if there is time, writing our own stories. We lack the hero's recovery narrative arc because our conditions are ongoing, perhaps without further cure. This is common among the disabled and chronically ill lives of more than 14 million people in the UK.

In the bookshops, I learn that in stories told by partners, siblings, parents or children as part of their own memoirs, the plight of their loved ones is depicted. But, when writing about our lives, it would seem that we have a memoir mould to fit. Despite being the largest minority in the world, our life stories must be a unique or uplifting experience for a mostly well and non-disabled readership. Experiences that the book-jacket blurb can sell.

But why? Why must our stories be remarkable, telling of sudden catastrophe and how we have come to recovery or to "ultimately find joy"? Why must we demonstrate "courage", "determination" and "resilience" in "defying the odds"? Or, as an alternative, why must we be on an all-consuming "quest for a cure"? If we then don't recover or become well, why must we write "witty truths" about our bodies and lives? Why must we "share the lessons

**Why must our stories be remarkable, telling of sudden catastrophe and how we have come to recovery or to 'ultimately find joy'?**

learned?" Given these instances, how can we ever fit the publishable narrative?

As disabled and chronically ill writers, we are constantly aware of the recovery narrative arc that our own stories must fit, or that we must find these uplifting resolutions or tone. That literary agents are looking for "truly unusual" stories in memoir. As a result, writers struggle to shoehorn our lived experiences into the required arc and resultant transformation—our stories have no clear beginning, middle and end. If we are less able to publish our memoirs to fit the mould, then this keeps us marginalised.

My life-writing piece, "Lucky," in the *A Wild and Precious Life* anthology (Unbound), explored the reality: continuing to live with a condition for which there is little respite, no cure and no magical transformation. I live with illness and, some days more than others, acceptance. Since the publication of the anthology, I have been contacted by numerous writers and readers expressing their relief for the honesty of a narrative where I haven't created a mental health meme of a happy ending and, as a result, they have been able to see themselves on the page.

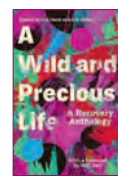
Outside of memoir, health-related titles written by disabled or chronically ill authors as experts are growing within non-fiction. These books often centre on a condition, and are underpinned with data and case studies, with a hybrid-memoir strand woven through. These books focus on knowledge rather than wholly on the authors' lived experience. They are a vital step forward, but still do not fully share the authors' own stories.

There are a few authors who have published atypical memoirs: Porochista Khakpour's *Sick*, Riva Lehrer's *Golem Girl*, Sarah Ramey's *The Lady's Handbook for Her Mysterious Illness*, Josie George's *A Still Life*, and Penny Pepper's *First in the World Somewhere* all tell different stories—a struggle for diagnosis, acceptance, and a life lived alongside chronic illness and disability—but do not conclude with magical transformation. Add to these a sprinkling of anthologies, and a handful of celebrity or Instagrammer memoirs. Sadly, these are the exceptions.

I welcome the growing arena of more representative disabled and chronically ill stories as a strand in health or psychology-related books. However, this is not enough to resolve the mismatch between our lived experiences and those we see on the shelves.

To address this, the publishing industry needs to shift memoirs' focus away from the hero's recovery narrative. There must be more memoirs published by disabled and chronically ill writers because we need to be represented in varying types of stories which reflect our varying lives. Surely, while book sales grow and readers consume more memoirs, now is the time to publish ours.

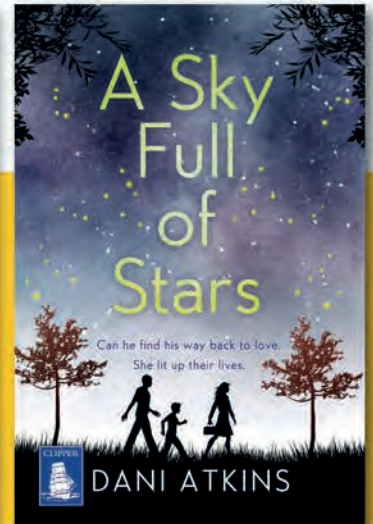
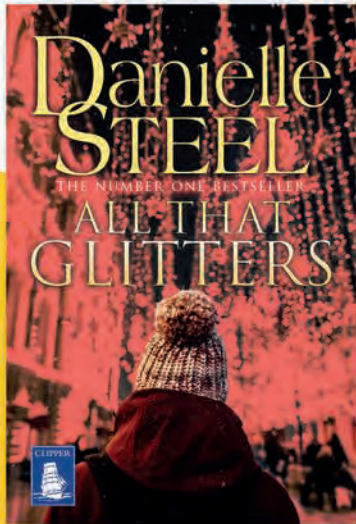
Only then can we begin to shift from the margins to the page.



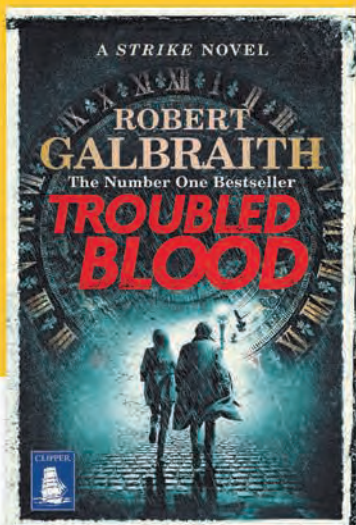
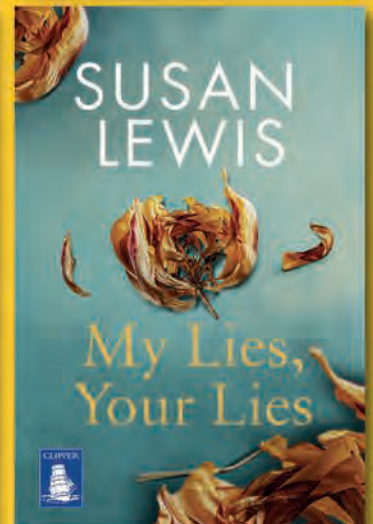
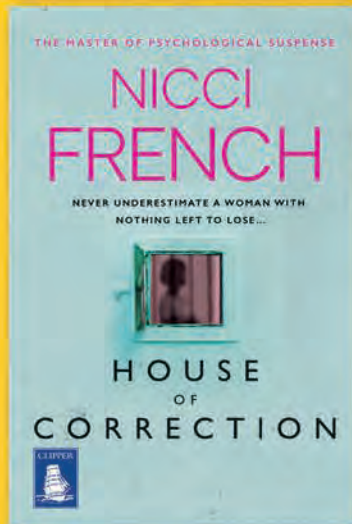
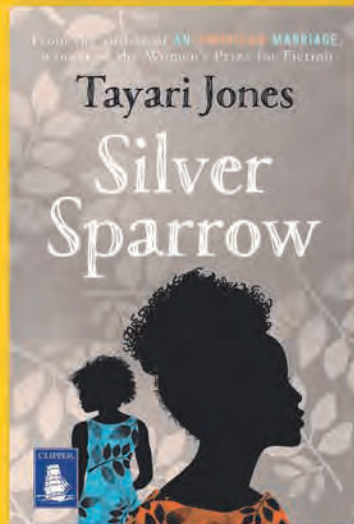
J L Hall is an award-winning writer and academic based in Edinburgh. Her fiction, non-fiction, and poetry are widely published in print, podcasts and online, including "Lucky", which features in the anthology *A Wild and Precious Life* (Unbound).

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**David Thorpe**

In order for those with disabilities to fight discrimination, they must first overcome the abuser in their head, borne of years of conditioning

## The fight within



If you have experienced abuse because of who you are, as I did in my formative years, you tend to internalise the bully's message that you're second rate, so that when you are treated unfairly, you think you deserve it. Only the exceptional, and those given support and courage by others, might have the confidence to stand up for themselves and demand fair treatment.

For many years I could not. Denial was easier; so was attempting to see if I could get away with pretending to be "normal" (i.e. non-disabled). So in that stage of my life I told myself, keep quiet, or you'll be pigeonholed as a disabled writer.

I believed that being pigeonholed would turn off the hypothetical reading public. In my head, this public was non-disabled and uninterested in fiction about disabled people. What's more, if I did "come out", I would be "making a fuss"—and wasn't I an imposter? After all I don't use a wheelchair. I'm not really disabled, not like *them*. Furthermore, I believed I would be confined by a hypothetical publisher to only being able to write about disabled issues and characters.

Neither did I want to think I would be given "special treatment" because of my disability. I wanted my writing to be considered equally, on its own merits, alongside fiction by non-disabled authors.

### Being overlooked

This self-defeating conditioned prejudice extended into my not playing "the disabled card" when appealing against a company that wanted to sack me as their publishing manager when it didn't even have an equal opportunities policy. Equally, when another publisher downgraded its promised large-scale publicity campaign around the launch of my novel without even telling me because I, believing honesty was the best policy, informed them I might be having a major operation at that time (which in the end did not happen), I did not complain. Moreover, because I expected to be treated in an inferior

way (par for the course, you can't blame them), it took a couple of years for it to dawn on me why nothing happened on publication day. And more years passed before I could summon up the ability to complain about it. (You deserved it. What good is a disabled writer?) This publisher's response? To do nothing, and in my estimation this set my career back by years.

What this experience did was confirm a childhood lesson from being bullied: "Don't confide anything—it might be used against you."

There are layers of irony in this. I may not even have become a writer if I hadn't discovered Marvel comics as a child, because at least four of Stan Lee's characters were disabled: the blind Daredevil; wheelchair-bound Professor Xavier; Iron Man (vulnerable to the shrapnel menacing his heart); and the hero I most identified with, Thor, secret identity Dr Blake, whose walking cane could turn into Mjolnir, Thor's hammer. Magic! Reading this normalised my experience, making me realise that I didn't have to be a perfect physical specimen to stand a chance of having super-powers and saving the day. (In your dreams, kid.) My first writing gig was for Marvel, and I ended up inventing what is now the main Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Irony is present, too, I poured my feelings about my body into my YA novel *Hybrids* (HarperCollins Children's Books) and I believe this gave authenticity to the character of Johnny Online, who is, essentially, me. Yet no-one would know the truth behind the words, for in those days I could only address this topic in a coded manner; although I did discuss disability with kids on school visits.

### Room for hope

I like to think that attitudes towards disability have changed since the years that formed my self-image. There is now an appetite for "authentic" confessional and diverse fiction. I wonder how long this will last. Nowadays I am unafraid to be totally out there, because I believe society needs to hear our stories, and it gives confidence to other disabled folk to see someone like them out there.

It took going to see a play, Robert Softley Gale's "My Left/Right Foot", to change me, so I can do the same for others—like in my rap musical "Validation" now in development, public readings of which recently gave me fabulous, confidence-building responses. I've also made a disabled 14-year-old wannabe slam poet the heroine of my new YA novel *Perfect Girl*, and I'm developing a disabled superhero of the same name.

Now that I can face down the bully in my head, I realise that there is no possibility of being pigeonholed, for everyone's experience of disability is different, and that the publishing industry and the public need to hear their stories.

**I may not even have become a writer if I hadn't discovered Marvel comics as a child, because at least four of Stan Lee's characters were disabled**



David Thorpe is a comics writer who came up with the Marvel Universe 616. His YA novel *Hybrids* was called "stunningly clever" by the *Times*, while *Stormteller* led to the first two Hay Literature Festival climate fiction panels. He's written a dozen books of solutions to the climate crisis. You can find him on Twitter @DavidKThorpe

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Category Spotlight

# The Disability Issue

A preview of new titles published between October 2021–September 2022

There are many fantastic tales from own-voice perspectives on the horizon, but unfortunately a number of the submissions fell way short of expectations in terms of representation

**Polly Atkin**  
Poet and author, @pollyrowena



**Y**oung readers and fans of non-fiction will be spoilt for choice in the coming year for own-voices representation. There are some brilliant disability memoirs and volumes of poetry which are an essential counterbalance to tales of “overcoming” disability.

Titles submitted to the preview included books by a parent, sibling, friend or carer of a disabled person; by people with a different disability to that portrayed in the book; and by non-disabled people featuring disabled protagonists. Some of these used terms many disabled people consider slurs, or dehumanised and demeaned disabled characters for

comic or sentimental effect, proving the importance of disability representation at every stage of book production. A disabled editor would notice this.

It is particularly disappointing to see so many picture books in which disability representation is only one wheelchair-using child in an ensemble illustration. Representation matters. Bad representation might be even more damaging than no representation. Please, no more supercrips or supervillains, Pollyannas or martyrs. It’s time for new narratives. Disabled writers need to be supported at every stage to tell those stories as beautifully, messily and honestly as we live.



**Fiction**

**Chloe Timms**  
**The Seawomen**

Hodder Studio, June, hb, £14.99, 9781529369564

Esta lives with her grandmother on an island controlled by a restrictive religious sect. The island is isolated geographically and socially from both the wider human world and the terrible seawomen, who the islanders are taught to fear and persecute, along with any human women deemed to be corrupted by them. With shades of *The Mercies*, *The Gracekeepers* and *The Carhullan Army*; an excellent addition to reproductive dystopias.

**Poetry**

**Hannah Hodgson**  
**163 days**

Seren, February, Price and Format TBC

Highly-anticipated first full collection of poetry from multi-award winning young writer living with life-limiting illness. The collection uses lyrics fragments to chart 163 days Hodgson spent in an isolation ward when she was in her late teens. An extract from this debut collection won a Northern Writer’s Award from New Writing North in 2020, to support its completion.

**YA**

**Alice Wong (ed)**  
**Disability Visibility: 17 First-Person Stories for Today**

Random House, 26th October, £13.99, hb, 9780593381670

A new version of this vital collection of personal essays, edited to be accessible to a YA audience from the critically acclaimed adult book, *Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*. Editor Alice Wong is a disabled activist, media maker and research consultant based in San Francisco, and the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project and Podcast.

**Middle-grade**

**Sophie Cleverly; Hannah Peck (illus)**  
**The Violet Veil Mysteries: A Case of Misfortune**

Harper Children’s, 6th January, £6.99, pb, 9780008308018

Violet Veil is an undertaker’s daughter and a detective. Although her brother, Thomas, says girls can’t be detectives that can’t stop Violet. A gripping gothic detective drama which will hook readers in from the start. This is the second Violet Veil Mystery from established author Cleverly, who lives with Crohn’s Disease.

**Memoir**

**Jan Grue; Becky Crook (trans)**  
**I Live a Life Like Yours**

Pushkin, 4th November, £14.99, hb, 9781782276555

“A diagnosis”, Grue writes, “has its own gravitational field”. Grue was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy at the age of three, a diagnosis removed in adulthood, and replaced with uncertainty. This is a brilliant disability memoir—lyrical, fragmented—frank about pain and about love, about independence and interdependence, about the clinical gaze and internal ableism, about disabled anger as well as disabled joy.

**Anthology**

**Lisa Kelly, Sophie Stone (eds)**  
**What Meets the Eye? The Deaf Perspective**

Arachne, 25th November, £9.99, pb, 9781913665487

A ground-breaking anthology mixing poems, short fiction and short scripts from UK-based Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing writers responding to the theme of “movement”. It includes work from Colly Metcalfe, Hala Hashem, Josephine Dickinson, Ksenia Balabina, Lynne Buckle and many more, and a foreword by prize-winning poet Raymond Antrobus.

## Board Books

**Tessa Strickland;**  
**Esteli Meza (illus)**

**Yoga Tots: Brave Bear**  
Barefoot Books, 7th February,  
£5.99, hb, 9781646864911  
Brave Bear helps guide children through a series of grounding yoga poses, as they pretend to be a bear too. Simple, descriptive language and fun illustrations encourage movement for everyone. The ensemble cast includes children with visible disabilities, and the cover shows a child with a prosthetic arm.

**Tessa Strickland;**  
**Esteli Meza (illus)**

**Yoga Tots: Happy Tiger**  
Barefoot Books, 7th February,  
£5.99, hb, 9781646864928  
Happy Tiger helps children to move like a big cat, flicking their tails, and stretching gently and playfully. The poses chosen are intended to encourage feelings of happiness. Like *Brave Bear*, the illustrations include children with visible disabilities among its diverse cast.

## Picture Books

**Laura Henry-Allain;**  
**Onyinye Iwu (illus)**

**I Can, You Can**  
Ladybird, 14th October,  
£9.99, hb, 9780241512739  
A sequel to *My Skin, Your Skin*, this is aimed at boosting body positivity and giving positive representation to disabled children, as well as promoting empathy and understanding of difference. Henry-Allain is the creator of CBeebies' "JoJo and GranGran", the first animation centred on a Black British family.



**Learn With Ladybird:**  
**First Words**

Ladybird, 31st March, £4.99,  
pb, 9780241515594  
Part of a new 14-book series. Zara penguin, who has cerebral palsy, joins the animals in the Ladybird Class, as does autistic panda Noah. Zara wears ankle-foot orthosis and uses mobility aids including crutches and

a powerchair, showing how need for aids varies on different days and depending on activity.

**Kate Hoefler;**  
**Jessica Bagley (illus)**

**Courage Hats**  
Chronicle, 5th April, £12.99,  
hb, 9781797202761  
It's best to have courage in your heart, but if you don't, you can always try wearing it on your head. A heartwarming, beautifully illustrated tale about a girl, Mae, and a bear, Bear, who take a train ride together and find courage at the end of it.

**Zach Manbeck**

**You Are Here**  
Chronicle, 26th April, £12.99,  
hb, 9781797210100  
You know you are here, but how do you get to where you want and need to be? And how do you know it's the right place to go to? Luscious, stylised illustrations which include a wheelchair user among a diverse cast.

**Rebecca Patterson**

**Four Bad Unicorns**  
Andersen Press, 5th May,  
£12.99, hb, 9781839131035  
Wheelchair user Connie loves unicorns more than anything, and when she and her big sister play, it is as unicorn farmers. But when their neighbours spoil the game, they have to become bad unicorns to put it right. Informed by Patterson's experience of growing up with a disabled sister.

**Rachell Abalos;**  
**Gabriela Larios (illus)**

**Our Nipa Hut: A Story in the Philippines**  
Barefoot Books, Spring 2022,  
£7.99, pb, 9781646865017  
Yelena and Papa care for their nipa hut, and it cares for them and shelters them as one of the family, but can they all stay safe in the typhoon? Filipino American author Abalos' landscapes and people are brought to life beautifully and characterfully by Larios, including Papa's prosthetic leg.

**Molly Potter;**  
**Sarah Jennings (illus)**

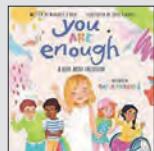
**The Same but Different**  
Featherstone, 14th October,  
£10.99, hb, 9781472978028  
Featuring an ensemble cast of visibly diverse

children, this colourful book explores ideas of difference and shared experiences, reflecting on how everyone is different but can find common ground and common feeling. A good starting point for conversations about inclusion.



**Tracey Turner;**  
**Asa Gillard (illus)**

**We Are All Different**  
Macmillan Children's,  
14th October, £12.99,  
hb, 9780753446294  
Gorgeously quirky illustrations bring to life the diverse school at the centre of this exploration of inclusivity, which includes discussion of autism, physical and learning disabilities, blindness and deafness, as well as ethnic and cultural differences, and unique personalities, concluding "there are billions of wonderful ways to be human".



**Sofia Sanchez**  
& **Margaret O'Hair;**  
**Sofia Cardoso (illus)**

**You Are Enough:**  
**A Book About Inclusion**  
Scholastic, 6th January,  
£12.99, hb, 9781338630749  
Written by 12-year-old model, actress and advocate Sofia Sanchez, who has Down's Syndrome, this is a book about embracing what makes you different and unique. Her message is simple: we all belong. Featuring a diverse ensemble cast, and information about Down's Syndrome.

**Michael Rosen;**  
**Tony Ross (illus)**

**Sticky McStickstick:**  
**The Friend Who Helped Me Walk Again**

Walker Books,  
4th November, £12.99,  
hb, 9781529502404  
When much-loved poet and writer Ross was recovering from Covid-19 in 2020, he had to learn

to walk again—and it was Sticky McStickstick who helped him on the way. A love letter to mobility aids, and an important perspective on the Covid-19 pandemic, with fun, distinctive illustrations.

**Jordan Scott;**  
**Sydney Smith (illus)**

**I Talk Like a River**  
Walker Books, 6th January,  
£7.99, pb, 9781529502817  
A boy struggles to speak, but finds solace in the river, who talks just like him: churning, whirling, crashing, stuttering. This book draws on the poet-author's own experience of stuttering, to present a story of gentle understanding and quiet togetherness instead of overcoming. With stunning illustrations.

**Raymond Antrobus;**  
**Polly Dunbar (illus)**

**Can Bears Ski?**  
Walker Books, 3rd February,  
£7.99, pb, 9781406394627  
Boy Bear can't understand why people keep asking him: "Can bears ski?" But when his dad takes him to an audiologist, he gets hearing aids, and realises they were asking: "Can you hear me?" Prize-winning poet Antrobus and illustrator Dunbar are both deaf. This is Antrobus' first picture book.

**Shannon Stocker;**  
**Devon Holzworth (illus)**

**Listen: How Evelyn Glennie, a Deaf Girl, Changed Percussion**  
Puffin, 14th April, £7.99,  
hb, 9780241547694  
Listen follows Evelyn Glennie's story from childhood hearing loss, showing how she learned to listen in different ways, to not only continue playing music, but excel in her field. Includes a note from Glennie and colourful, expressive illustrations. Stocker is a hearing writer, who has been a wheelchair user.

**Abigail Rayner;**  
**Ruttan Molly (illus)**

**Violet and the Crumbs:**  
**A Gluten-Free Adventure**  
NorthSouth, 19th April,  
£13.99, hb, 9780735844858  
Going to parties has been a bit hard for Violet since she was diagnosed with coeliac disease. She can't share pizza or cake or anything delicious. It's lonely not being able to

eat with others. Gently informing about coeliac disease, and offering a happy solution, Violet gets a gluten-free party!

## Middle-grade



**Chrissie Sains;**  
**Jenny Taylor (illus)**

**The Treasure Under the Jam Factory**  
Walker Books, 7th April,  
£6.99, pb, 9781406396140  
A fun adventure aimed at readers aged six and over, with charming illustrations. Budding inventor Scooter, who has cerebral palsy, his friend Cat and Fizzbee the alien, hunt for treasure under McLay's Jam Factory, battling new nemeses in this follow-up to *An Alien in the Jam Factory*.

**Lisette Auton**

**The Secret of Haven Point**  
Puffin, 3rd February, £7.99,  
pb, 9780241522035  
As a baby, Alpha washed up below the lighthouse at remote Haven Point, becoming the first of many foundlings who would make their home there, among mermaids and magic. Featuring a diverse disabled cast, this is the first book from activist, poet and novelist Auton, who is disabled herself.

**Rosie Jones;**  
**Natalie Smillie (illus)**

**The Amazing Edie Eckhart II: The Big Trip**  
Hachette Children's,  
4th August, £6.99, pb,  
9781444958379  
Everything is going well for Edie at secondary school, until her class organises a totally inaccessible camping trip. Written by comedian Rosie Jones, drawing on her own experiences of growing up with cerebral palsy, this is the second in what looks to be a fantastic series.

**Stewart Foster**

**Can You Feel the Noise?**  
Simon & Schuster, 7th July,  
£7.99, pb, 9781471191275  
When Sophie wakes up one morning suddenly deaf, her life changes completely. She tries to

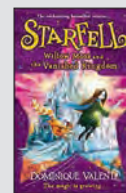
lip-read between endless hospital appointments, and it seems impossible to compete in the Battle of the Bands as she had hoped. Then she realises she can still feel noise, and an old set of drums become her passage back onto the stage.

**Emily Kenny**

**The Extraordinary Adventures of Alice Tonks**  
Oneworld, 26th May, £6.99,  
pb, 9780861542055  
Alice Tonks can talk to animals. It's much harder trying to talk to her classmates in her new boarding school, but when animals start going missing, she needs human and animal help. A tale of friendship with an autistic protagonist, by an autistic author, this promises to be a great new series.

**Ali Stroker &**  
**Stacy Davidowitz**

**The Chance to Fly**  
Abrams, out now, hb,  
£11.99, 9781419743931  
Thirteen-year-old Nat Beacon dreams of being in musicals. But is there a place for a girl like her, a wheelchair user, on stage? When she is cast in a production of "Wicked", she knows she has to "defy gravity". Co-written by Ali Stroker, the first wheelchair user on Broadway.



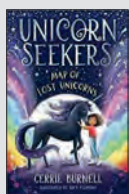
**Dominique Valente;**  
**Sarah Warburton (illus)**

**Starfell: Willow Moss and the Vanished Kingdom**  
Harper Children's, 3rd February, £7.99, pb,  
9780008308483  
Things are changing for Willow Moss. Magical children are allowed to go to school with their non-magical peers for the first time, but something is wrong. Willow must protect the children of Starfell. The third book in this magical series from Valente, who was born with a limb difference.

**Adam Hills;**  
**Luna Valentine (illus)**

**Rockstar Detectives**  
Puffin, 3rd February, £6.99,  
pb, 9780241505977

Twelve-year-old Charley is set to make it big as a singer, and her best friend George as a comedian, when they find their names in the papers for a very different reason—as international art thieves. Début from comedian Adam Hills, of Channel 4's "The Last Leg".



**Cerrie Burnell;**  
**Lucy Fleming (illus)**  
**Unicorn Seekers: The Map of Lost Unicorns**

Scholastic, 3rd March, £6.99, pb, 9780702306969  
When Elodie Lightfoot starts to see unicorns everywhere she goes, she begins to understand that unicorns are around us all the time, but unseen, hidden to all but Unicorn Seekers like herself while their magic is forgotten. One of two brilliant books by Burnell out this year.

**Cerrie Burnell**  
**Wilder than Midnight**

Puffin, 5th May, £7.99, pb, 9780241457160  
A girl raised by wolves and a girl trapped in a high tower come together to change the future of the fairytale land of Silverthorne, to unlock the doors and untangle the briars. Like Burnell herself, the main protagonist has a limb difference.

**Stephanie Burgis**  
**The Raven Throne**

Bloomsbury, Autumn 2022, TBXXXXXXXXXX  
Cordelia is one of triplets born to a duchess, who is also a witch. The triplets have magic of their own—Cordelia is a shapeshifter—but they only really discover how powerful it is when they are under threat. A second book in the series, following 2021's *The Raven Heir*.

**Caryl Lewis**  
**Seed**

Macmillan Children's, 12th May, £7.99, pb, 9781529077667  
Marty's lifeline is the community garden his Grandad tends. When Grandad gives Marty a magic seed and it

grows into an enormous pumpkin, Marty's life changes forever. Caryl Lewis is an award-winning established author, who writes in English and in Welsh, for children and adults.

**Chrissie Sains & Cara Mailey**  
**I Got This**

Scholastic, 14th April, £6.99, pb, 9780702314988  
Starting secondary school throws up some challenges for Erin, but also opportunities. When a competition launches to be in a pop video, Erin knows the winner has to be her. Co-written by Sains and pre-teen Mailey, who has achondroplasia, this is a great, heartwarming own-voices story.

**Justyn Edwards**  
**The Great Fox Illusion**

Walker Books, 7th April, £6.99, pb, 9781529501940  
Teen-magician Flick Lions has the chance to compete to win the legacy of famous magician The Great Fox. But the real prize she has her eye on is justice for her family. Flick is an amputee and wears a prosthetic leg. Début from Edwards, and the beginning of a promising new series.



**Timothée de Fombelle;**  
**Sarah Ardizzone (trans)**  
**Saving Celeste**

Walker Books, 4th November, £6.99, pb, 9781406397192  
Celeste is dying, sick from pollution just like the world she lives in. One boy and his friend has the chance to save her, and maybe the planet too. "Cli-fi" for children, this is a moving and gripping tale of a possible future.

**Kate Foster**  
**Paws**

Walker Books, 4th August, £6.99, pb, 9781406399240  
Eleven-year old Alex and his cockapoo Kevin (age unspecified) negotiate the unsettling changes involved in moving up to Big School together. Based on Foster's experience of a dog helping her autistic son,

and her own diagnosis of autism in adulthood.

**Robin Stevens & Serena Patel (eds);**  
**Harry Woodgate (illus)**  
**The Very Merry Crime Club**

Farshore, 28th October, £12.99, hb, 9780755503681  
What could be more festive than a beautiful illustrated hardback collection of new seasonal mysteries from some of the best crime writers for young readers? Featuring 13 new stories from authors including Abiola Bello, Elle McNicoll, Dominique Valente, Maisie Chan, Nizrana Farook, Patrice Lawrence, Roopa Farooki, Serena Patel and Sharna Jackson.

**Aoife Dooley**  
**Frankie's World**

Scholastic, 6th January, £8.99, pb, 9780702307355  
Twelve-year-old Frankie sometimes feels like she lives in a parallel world to everyone else. She's different, but she doesn't know why. Maybe if she finds her dad, it will explain everything. This quirky, funny graphic novel gives a fantastic own-voices perspective on growing up with autism.

### Children's non-fiction

**Danielle Jata-Hall & Harry Thompson;**  
**Mollie Sherwin (illus)**  
**I'm Not Upside Down, I'm Downside Up: Not a Boring Book About PDA**

Jessica Kingsley, 21st April, £10.99, pb, 9781839971174  
Designed to help children understand and manage Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Although a controversial diagnosis among the autistic community, and not recognised by all clinicians, PDA is increasingly used to describe an overwhelming need to avoid or resist demands. This book seeks to demystify for those who have a diagnosis.

**Camilla Pang**  
**Perfectly Weird, Perfectly You: A Scientific Guide To Growing Up**

Wren and Rook, 17th March £8.99, pb, 9781526364326  
When Camilla Pang was diagnosed as autistic aged eight, science became her translator. She could understand things through science

that she couldn't otherwise. Now a scientist and award-winning author, this is her survival guide through science, urging readers to embrace weirdness—it's what makes you you.



**Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara;**  
**Queenbe Moneyi (illus)**  
**Amanda Gorman**

Frances Lincoln, 1st February, £9.99, hb, 9780711270695  
Little People, Big Dreams biography of the poet Amanda Gorman, who shot to international fame in 2021 as she was chosen to read at Joe Biden's presidential inauguration. As a child Gorman was an avid reader, but between an auditory processing disorder and a speech impediment, she found talking in public difficult. Poetry helped her find her voice.

### YA



**Marta Pacini**  
**The (Un)lawful Killing of Daniel Brown**

Disturbance Press, 17th February, £8, pb, 9781916871304  
Marcus knows that Police Sergeant Talbot Blair shot his father in a racially motivated attack, but Blair has been cleared of all blame. This is the story of Marcus' quest for justice. This is the first YA novel from Pacini, who lives with multiple chronic illnesses.

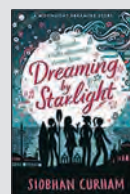
**Joseph Elliott**  
**The Burning Swift**

Walker Books, 6th January, £7.99, pb, 9781406385885  
In this concluding part of the Shadow Skye trilogy, a deadly army is approaching from the South, and Jaime and Agatha must risk their lives to save their world. Agatha has Down's Syndrome, though it is

not understood as such in the alternative fantasy historical Scotland of Scotia.

**Kelis Rowe**  
**Finding Jupiter**

Walker Books, 2nd June, £7.99, pb, 9781529500639  
Ray is into roller-derby, found poetry and not boys. Orion is a hopeless romantic pretending to be a jock. A kind of "Romeo and Juliet", but set in Memphis in 2022, Rowe says she aimed "to give Black teens a love to root for that was joyful", but doesn't shirk away from loss and grief.



**Siobhan Curham**  
**Dreaming by Starlight**

Walker Books, 3rd March, £6.99, pb, 9781529504019  
When you've grown up surfing in Sydney, Brighton doesn't seem so exciting. Jazz is finding it hard to adjust until her cousin tells her about the Moonlight Dreamers, a secret society she formed, and encourages her to do the same. Third in this series about friendship and following your dreams.

**Finn Longman**  
**The Butterfly Assassin**

Simon & Schuster, 26th May 2022, £7.99, pb, 9781398507340  
Being a teenage girl is hard enough; what if you are also a trained assassin? When Isabel blows her cover by murdering a burglar, can she escape the attention of the guilds that control the city? Longman is a queer disabled writer and medievalist. This is their first novel.

### Poetry

**Hannah Hodgson**  
**Queen of Hearts**

Smith Doorstop, 1st June, £5, pb, 9781338630749  
A winner of the 2021 New Poets Prize, this is Hodgson's third pamphlet, exploring life-limiting illness in all its peculiarity, surreality and particular mundanity, from the isolation of shielding during the pandemic to

the reality of managing a stoma bag. Judge Kim Moore called the poems "unfurlingly precise" and "wildly imaginative".

**Karl Knights**  
**Kin**

Smith Doorstop, 1st June, £5, pb, 9781914914287  
Début pamphlet from freelance journalist Knights, who writes eloquently about life as a young, queer autistic person with cerebral palsy under austerity. A winner of the 2021 New Poets Prize, judge Kim Moore commented on their "wry humour and anger". Moving, sharp poems that do not shy away from hard truths.

**Sarah Barnsley**  
**The Thoughts**

Smith Doorstop, 1st January, £10.95, pb, 9781914914027  
This formally innovative début collection explores living with intrusive thoughts as a facet of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), balancing the debilitating aspects of mental illness with small joys, falling in love, and all the matter of a life. Penny Boxall writes: "Her voice is wry, considered and convincing".

**Helen Seymour**  
**The Underlook**

Smith Doorstop, 1st January, £10.95, pb, 9781914914003  
In turns funny, surreal and illuminating, this début collection, from an award-winning writer for stage and page, articulates a life lived under the bed, at the bottom of a well, in the glances exchanged between doctors. It's informed by her experiences of disability, surgery and medical trauma.



**Jane Burn**  
**Be Feared**

Nine Arches, 11th November, £9.99, pb, 9781913437275  
Much-anticipated début collection from this highly original poet and artist. Burn has a distinctive voice and perspective on survival, sisterhood, self and sexuality, on working-class womanhood and

autistic identity. The cover is her own artwork, “an honest expression of my own neurodivergent art... inscrutable, discomfiting, not easily interpreted”.



**D L Williams**  
**Interdimensional Traveller**  
Burning Eye, 14th October, £9.99, pb, 9781913958114  
As a deaf, queer poet, Williams moves between the two-dimensional audiocentric world of hearing people and the multi-faceted three-dimensional world shaped by sign language—just as the poems in this book do. Featuring QR codes, images and videos of British Sign Language poems, this book spills out from the flat page gloriously.

### Short Stories

**Jen Campbell;**  
**Adam De Souza (illus)**  
**The Sister Who Ate Her Brothers**  
Thames & Hudson, 7th October, £14.99, hb, 9780500652589  
Campbell embraces the dark origins of fairytales and folktales in this new short story collection, which retells and reforms traditional tales to include positive representation of queer and visibly disabled characters. The perfect Gothic hit for dark nights, for older children and adults alike.

**Lauren Foley**  
**Polluted Sex**  
Influx Press, 21st April, £7.99, pb, 9781910312919  
Powerful debut short story collection from this prize-winning Irish/Australian writer, exploring queer friendship, sexuality and gender through tales of womanhood and girlhood in Ireland, and questions of bodily autonomy. Foley lives with Lupus, and dictates most of her work.

### Fiction

**Madeline Ryan**  
**A Room Called Earth**  
Scribe, 14th April, £9.99, pb, 9781914484063

A distinctive debut novel that follows the thought-processes and viewpoint of a young woman as she prepares for a party, and tries not to feel too overwhelmed. A candid insight into neurodiverse experience by a neurodiverse author, this is funny, sharp and moving.

**Polly Crosby**  
**The Unravelling**  
HQ, 6th January, £14.99, hb, 9780008358457  
Tartelin Brown takes a job on the remote island of Dohhalun as an assistant to reclusive lepidopterist Marianne Stourbridge, but ends up finding far more than butterflies. What are they both hiding? With a dual timeline and an eerie, atmospheric setting, this will have readers gripped.

**Penny Parkes**  
**Home**  
Simon & Schuster, 20th January, £8.99, pb, 9781471180187  
Anna has lived in beautiful houses in beautiful places all over the world, but none of them are her home—she is only housesitting, playing at belonging—until she finds home is not about a house at all, but the people in it. Parkes lives with invisible disabilities which inform her writing.

**Frances Quinn**  
**That Bonesetter Woman**  
Simon & Schuster, 4th August, £14.99, hb, 9781471193446  
Endurance Proudfoot stands out. She is big, strong and stubborn. She also has a talent for the family trade of bonesetting. This is the story of how she becomes the first female bonesetter, while her sister becomes a celebrity in Georgian London. Quinn has Charcot Marie Tooth Disease, and includes disabled protagonists in her work.

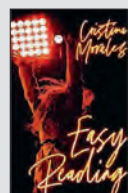
**Nicola Griffith**  
**Spear**  
Tor, 19th April, £14.99, hb, 9781250819321  
A girl who grows up in a cave has visions of a distant lake and rides out from safety to meet her destiny. An assured retelling of Arthurian legend to include disabled and queer characters, people of colour and gender non-conforming people,

too often written out of historical fiction.



**Alison Stine**  
**Trashlands**  
HarperCollins, 26th October, £20.99, hb, 9780778311270  
In a drowned world in a post-climate collapse future, Coral is a “plucker”, gathering plastic to sell in Trashlands, saving to buy back her son from indentured labour in the recycling factory. This is a bleak world, but Coral makes art from it. Could there be a different way to live?

**Natalie Zina Walschots**  
**Hench**  
William Morrow, 28th October, £9.99, pb, 9780062978585  
*Hench* turns the archetypes of supercrip and disabled villain on their heads entirely, in this clever, witty take on a superhero narrative, which explores the costs and penalties of justice through Anna's experience of acquired disability.



**Cristina Morales;**  
**Kevin Gerry Dunn (trans)**  
**Easy Reading**  
Vintage, 24th March, £14.99, pb, 9781787332676  
Four disabled women in their thirties and forties share a subsidised flat in Barcelona. Cousins, together they fight for their right to live independent lives, for sex lives, for beauty and joy outside state control. Winner of the prestigious Herralde Prize in 2018 and Spain's National Book Award in 2019.

**Amber Crewe**  
**That Jewish Thing**  
Hodder & Stoughton, 13th January, £8.99, pb, 9781529366921  
Tamsyn's family want to see her settled. Tamsyn is not so sure, but when she interviews a hot

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The Ocean ISBN: 978-1-63823-056-4 Tutti-Fruity ISBN: 978-6-3692-6106-3

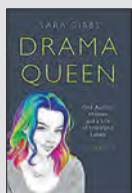
# BOOKS Category Spotlight The Disability Issue

chef for work, things get cooking. London-based rom-com about a young Jewish woman struggling to reconcile her family's hopes for her future with her own. Crew is the alter-ego of autistic author Nicole Burstein.

## Memoir

### Riva Lehrer *Golem Girl*

Little, Brown, 7th October, £12.99, pb, 9780349014838  
Born with spina bifida in 1958, artist Riva Lehrer grew up feeling broken, worthless. This Barbellion Prize-winning memoir tells the story of how finding community with other disabled creatives helped her to understand her body and disability as sites of resistance and possibility, not as things to be fixed.



### Sara Gibbs *Drama Queen*

Headline, 6th January, £10.99, pb, 9781472274366  
Comedy scriptwriter Gibbs had been called many things in her life, but more often than anything else, a drama queen. She was always making a fuss, people said. Then, aged 30, she found out she wasn't a drama queen at all, but autistic. A funny, honest memoir of coming to an understanding with oneself.

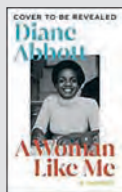
### Josie George *A Still Life: A Memoir*

Bloomsbury, 3rd February, £8.99, pb, 9781526612007  
A memoir written mostly in bed, *A Still Life* charts a year in the life of artist and writer Josie George, who has been chronically and often debilitatingly ill since childhood, without a definite diagnosis. She has learnt, through her life, to take things slowly, a useful lesson for us all.

### Chloé Cooper Jones *Easy Beauty*

Virago, 7th April, £16.99, hb, 9780349013824  
This beautiful, lyrical memoir examines the abled gaze from a disabled perspective,

catalysed by a conversation in a bar between two men who saw Cooper Jones' life as a tragedy. Pulitzer Prize-winning Cooper Jones unpicks her own way of seeing things, and invites readers to share her vision of disabled beauty.



### Diane Abbott *A Woman Like Me*

Viking, 2nd June, £18.99, hb, 9780241536414  
Abbott is well known as the first Black woman elected to Parliament. During the 2017 General Election campaign, she revealed she has type II diabetes, and was open about the pressures placed on her body by campaigning. This memoir is Abbott's first book.

### Sophie Morgan *Driving Forwards: A Journey of Resilience and Empowerment After Life-Changing Injury*

Sphere, 17th March, £16.99, hb, 9780751582246  
Aged 18, Morgan crashed her car and was paralysed from the waist down. *Driving Forward* is the memoir of how she changed her expectations to meet her changed circumstances, and turned adversity to opportunity. Morgan is an award-winning disability advocate and TV presenter.



### Ben Parkinson *Losing the Battle, Winning the War: How We Can All Defy the Odds We're Given*

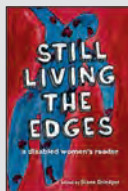
Little, Brown, 26th May, £8.99, pb, 9780751580259  
In September 2006, Lance Bombardier Ben Parkinson was stationed in Afghanistan when his transport hit a mine. He had 37 injuries, including a brain injury, and lost both his legs. This is the story of his injury, and recovery,

after which he went on to win an Overcoming Adversity award.

### Ed Jackson *Lucky*

HQ, 4th August, £9.99, pb, 9780008423407  
Billed as "an inspirational story of triumph over adversity against the odds", this memoir recalls how rugby player Jackson was paralysed aged 28 after diving into a swimming pool. Against the odds, he recovered the ability to walk, then set up a charity to support people with spinal injuries.

## Nonfiction



### Diane Driedger (ed) *Still Living the Edges: A Disabled Women's Reader*

Inanna, 30th November, £14.95, pb, 9781771338332  
This collection of articles, poetry, essays, and visual art brings together the diverse voices and experiences of disabled women from Canada, the US, Australia, Russia, the UK and Zimbabwe (and more), in a follow-up to the original collection *Living the Edges*.

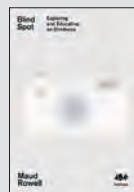
### Wes Ely *Every Deep-Drawn Breath: An Intensive Care Doctor's Notes on Healing*

Scribe, 14th October, £16.99, pb, 9781913348670  
A doctor's record of working in Intensive Care, focusing on Ely's unconventional methods to limit harm to ICU patients, and help them recover—all the more relevant in the times of Covid. Disability adjacent. All profits from the book will go to a fund for ICU survivors.

### Katie Booth *The Invention of Miracles: Language, Power and Alexander Graham Bell's Quest to End Deafness*

Scribe, August, £25, hb, 9781913348403  
This revisionist biography of Alexander Graham Bell will change everything you thought you knew about the telephone. The author's experience of growing up in a mixed

hearing/deaf family gives a personal slant to her examination of Bell's project to eliminate Deaf culture and language, and its long shadow.



### Maud Rowell *Blind Spot: Exploring and Educating on Blindness*

404 Ink, 28th October, £7.50, pb, 9781912489428  
Journalist and writer Maud Rowell went blind aged 19 while travelling. This book, part of a new series of compact non-fiction titles from 404 Ink, aims to dispel myths about blindness, blind people and their daily lives, informing readers about the realities of living with sight loss from lived experience.

### Keith Kahn-Harris *The Babel Message/ A Love Letter to Language*

Icon, 4th November, £12.99, hb, 9781785787379  
The only book in this preview which pays close, exacting attention to the language of the Kinder Egg, this is, as the title tells us, a love letter to language. Kahn-Harris delves into the histories of modern languages, asking what brings them together, rather than what sets us apart.

### Evie Meg *My Nonidentical Twin: What I'd Like You to Know About Living with Tourette's*

Sphere, 28th October, £14.99, hb, 9780751584066  
A chatty, personable memoir about living with Tourette's from Evie Meg—known on TikTok as "This Trippy Hippie"—which also acts as a guide to the condition. Funny, warm and encouraging, this will be an important and useful book for disabled and non-disabled readers alike.

### Devon Price *Unmasking Autism*

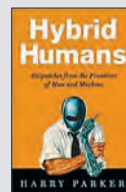
Octopus, 7th April, £16.99, hb, 9781800960541  
An exploration of the many manifestations of neurodiversity, focused on the phenomenon of

"masking": of hiding visible autistic traits beneath a veneer of neurotypicality. Devon Price is a social psychologist, professor and proud autistic person. In this book, they make a case for radical authenticity, for unmasking our true selves.



### Blair Imani *Read This to Get Smarter: About Race, Class, Gender, Disability & More*

Ten Speed Press, 26th October, £12.99, pb, 9781984860545  
An accessible guide to intersectionality and a host of social issues, designed to help learners of all levels understand terms and their backgrounds, and to get smarter about social justice of all kinds. Historian and activist Imani identifies as queer, Black, bisexual and Muslim.



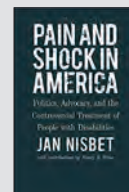
### Harry Parker *Hybrid Humans: Dispatches from the Frontiers of Man and Machine*

Profile, 3rd February, £14.99, hb, 9781788163101  
Harry Parker lost both legs to an IED in Afghanistan in 2009. In this book, Parker grafts his own experience to that of innovators from DIY biohackers to experimental robotics engineers to ask what happens when human bodies become hybridised with technology—when we become cyborg.

### E D Morin & Jane Cawthorne (eds) *Impact: Women Writing After Concussion*

University of Alberta Press, 15th October, pb, £20.99, 9781772125818  
In this essay collection, 21 women writers discuss the effect of concussion on their lives, and the

complexity of recovery (or lack of recovery) after a traumatic brain injury. These essays make the invisible and often-overlooked effects of concussion visible. Shelagh Rogers says: "This book creates affirmation, validation, and understanding".



### Jan Nisbet with Nancy R Weiss *Pain and Shock in America: Politics, Advocacy, and the Controversial Treatment of People with Disabilities*

Brandeis University Press, 8th October, £32, hb, 9781684580743  
A history of the notorious Judge Rotenberg Center in Massachusetts, and the fight to ban the use of electric shock treatment and other severe punishments on disabled children and adults. This is a historical case study that remains sadly relevant, as aversion therapies are still encouraged in many places.

### Elinor Cleghorn *Unwell Women: A Journey Through Medicine and Myth in a Man-Made World*

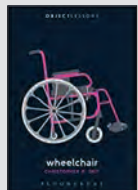
Orion, July, pb, out now, £14.99, 978474616867  
Informed by her own long quest for diagnosis of Lupus, Cleghorn traces an alternative history of medicine through a lineage of false assumptions made about women's pain and disorders to work out how we got to the situation we've inherited today, charted so keenly in other recent books.



### John D Kemp *Disability Friendly: How to Move from Clueless to Inclusive*

Wiley, 12th April, £21.99, hb, 9781119830092  
Disability activist Kemp breaks down the

institutional barriers faced by disabled people, and looks at how organisations and leaders can become more inclusive, to welcome in the millions of disabled people excluded for so long. This is a leadership manual for real change.



**Christopher R Smit**  
**Wheelchair**

Bloomsbury, 22nd June, £9.99, pb, 9781501341984  
What does the wheelchair symbolise, and to whom? Does it mean freedom, mobility and agency, or isolation, sickness and dependency? In this addition to the Object Lessons series, Smit considers the wheelchair as an object, and

everything it evokes, in different times and to different people.

**Crime & thriller**



**Nell Pattison**  
**Hide**

Avon, 9th December, £7.99, pb, 9780008468026  
A Boxing Day hike for a nature club isn't quite the bonding exercise it's planned to be. Emily loses her cochlear implant in the snowy dark—can she keep hidden from the killer? Pattison, who describes herself as a “bit Deaf”, is known for her Silent series featuring a Deaf protagonist.

**Vikki Pattis**  
**Return to**

**Blackwater House**

Hodder & Stoughton, 6th January, £20.99, hb, 9781529394542

When Rebecca Bray moves back to her home town in Cornwall, the perfect life she has built for herself begins to crumble. When her stepdaughter Ava goes missing on New Year's Eve, she knows she must finally confront the ghosts of her past. Features disabled characters, drawing on lived experience.

**Victoria Hawthorne**  
**The House at Helygen**

Quercus, 14th April, £20.99, hb, 9781529419153

Helygen House has always been passed down to the eldest male heir. When the current owner Henry Fox is found in the grounds, shot to death, it sparks his pregnant wife Josie to uncover secrets going back centuries, as a parallel narration in the 1800s sets the mystery in motion.

**Louise Jensen**

**All for You**

HQ, 20th January, £8.99, pb, 9780008330163

Lucy and Aidan Walsh and their son Connor all have secrets, but which are worth dying—or killing—for? Who is protecting who, and why? A fast-paced psychological thriller from bestselling author Jensen, who lives with mobility problems following a car crash.

**Helen Sedgwick**  
**What Doesn't Break You**

Point Blank, July, £12.99, pb, 9780861541942

A peculiar drug, taken with fresh blood; rituals, deaths and threats. There is evil lurking in the village of Burrowhead, and DI Georgie Strachan is determined to uproot it and cut it out. The third in the series from Sedgwick, whose chronic illness seeps into her work obliquely.

**Carys Jones**

**We Are All Liars**

Orion, 9th December, £7.99, pb, 9781409196013

Allie, Stacie, Diana, Emily and Gail have been friends forever (the “Fierce Five”), but when five go into the mountains in a snowstorm, and one is found dead, who can be trusted? They know they are all liars. A pacey, innovative thriller told through transcripts, interviews and flashbacks.

**Laura Laakso**  
**The Doves in the Dining Room**

Louise Walters Books, £7.99, 4th November, pb, 9781916112360

Someone is trying to sabotage the wedding of Yannia's friend Jessica, and she is tasked with finding out who, with the help of the groom (a wheelchair-using detective fiction fan), and her hearth-spirit Wisheart. This paranormal crime novella



continues on from Laakso's Barbellion-longlisted third novel *Roots of Corruption*.





**Cookery**

**Lydia Wilkins;**  
**21andSensory (illus)**  
**The Autism Friendly Cookbook**

Jessica Kingsley, Jan 2023, pb, £12.99, 9781839970825  
A specialised cookbook aiming to make the kitchen more accessible, with particular attention to sensory issues affecting autistic people. Written in clear language with easy-to-follow recipes and illustrations, this aims to make cooking fun and make living independently easier.

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## EIBF backs Inklusion accessibility guide



Julie Farrell and Ever Dundas have been funded by Edinburgh International Book Festival to develop a guide to making book events more accessible—and are seeking further help

**A** project to develop a guide for making literature events accessible for disabled people has received £4,000 from the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) and is now appealing to raise the rest of the funds it needs.

The Inklusion guide was conceived by disabled writers Julie Farrell and Ever Dundas after they became frustrated by “the litany of excuses” about why literature events couldn’t be made accessible. Covering accessibility

for both event speakers and audience members, the guide will outline best-practice access for book launches, festival events, conferences, panels, workshops, fellowships and residencies. It will include information on running in-person, online and hybrid events.

The guide will be available as a free PDF and print booklet. Farrell and Dundas hope it will “take the onus and emotional labour off disabled individuals” to educate events providers and publishers.

They are seeking to raise a further £16,000, which will enable them to complete the guide.

The project has the backing of prominent authors including Val McDermid and Kit de Waal. McDermid said: “Paradoxically, lockdown made festival access easier for many disabled people because everything went digital. What’s important as we emerge from that is to make sure this access is replicated in the face-to-face world. A guide to make that more straightforward for everyone organising a book event of any kind is exactly what we need. I want to live in a world that is inclusive; books break down all kinds of walls, and access to books and writers should also be free from barriers.”

Alongside £4,000 in funding, EIBF also commissioned

Inklusion to carry out a venue assessment in August 2021, looking at the accessibility and equality of access at its new site at Edinburgh College of Art.

Farrell said: “The funding we have had from EIBF has been incredible, as has the support we have had from world-famous authors like Val McDermid, Kit de Waal, Frances Ryan and Helen Sedgwick. The pandemic has seen a rapid increase in access and inclusion in the arts all over the world, and for the first time disabled people are feeling included. For so long we were told access was ‘too complicated’ or that organisers didn’t have resources, or it was ‘logistically challenging’. The pandemic has proved this is not the case—and we must not go back to our old ways.”

Dundas added: “One in four of us is disabled, and it’s time we were included. We want to make access in the literature sector consistent, transparent and reliable. And fun! In all our hours consulting with organisations in the sector, the most common response to accessibility was fear of the unknown. We’re here to demystify access provision and instil confidence in every event provider.”

The pair hope to launch the guide at an event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2022. Anyone interested in funding the project can email [hello@inklusionguide.org](mailto:hello@inklusionguide.org).



## Mitchell and Drewry launch disability network

An industry-wide disability network is launching this autumn, run by Penguin Random House Children’s assistant editor Ellie Drewry pictured and Cat Mitchell, lecturer in publishing at the University of Derby.

The network will seek to improve working conditions for disabled people in the industry and create a community of disabled publishing professionals. This will include people who are neurodiverse and/or chronically ill, or who are currently coming to

terms with a shift in identity.

Its longer-term goal will be to improve the representation of disability in books, and to make sure there are better opportunities for disabled writers looking to get published.

Speaking about the network, Mitchell said: “With my disability research [see p22-23], my main aim was to raise awareness of the difficulties disabled people face in the industry, and launching an industry-wide network seemed like the best next step for making

tangible, practical changes.”

Drewry added: “I’m excited to work with disabled people from across all areas of the publishing industry to create meaningful change. This industry-wide network is a way to tackle accessibility and disability representation in the publishing industry together, and to find ways for us to thrive and flourish.”

To keep up to date with the network, readers can sign up to its newsletter at <https://bit.ly/3EzYqCg>.





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## Illustration spotlight



The Association of Illustrators (AOI) is hosting “a friendly, honest conversation” about working with disabled illustrators next month.

Aimed at both commissioners and illustrators, the event takes place on 6th October from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. It is free and hosted online via the AOI website. It will celebrate the launch of a new resource called “Working with Disabled Illustrators” and will feature illustrators Megan Rhiannon (*pictured*), Hayley Wall and agent James Catchpole in conversation with Jhinuk Sarkar.

The AOI explained: “We will consider why disability in illustration has so little visibility, and how this is changing. As well as practical considerations such as accommodations that can be made when commissioning disabled illustrators, we will look at how the recognition of a disability can influence illustrators’ commissions. With practical examples and a spotlight on creative projects, this friendly, honest conversation is an important event for commissioners and illustrators alike.”

## Access to Literature seeks to spotlight barriers to access for disabled writers

Disability arts hub CRIPtic Arts and writer development charity Spread the Word are collaborating on research to understand the literature sector’s barriers to access for d/Deaf and disabled writers, poets and audiences.

Called Access to Literature, the research seeks to improve access to in-person and online literature opportunities. Through collecting responses via surveys and consulting focus groups, it will build a data and evidence base to support change and the opening up of opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled writers and audiences.

Two focus groups took place in September, facilitated by poet Jamie Hale and playwright Vici Wreford-Sinnott. One was for d/Deaf and disabled writers, and the other was for organisations such as literature festivals, writer and reader development groups, and live literature producers. The Access to Literature surveys and focus group research will be compiled into a report and online best practice guidance will be made available online via the Spread the Word and CRIPtic Arts websites.

Three training sessions for creative practitioners, funded and non-funded literature organisations will take place in October. The research is funded by Arts Council England. Anyone who is interested in the training sessions and the area of work can email [hello@spreadtheword.org.uk](mailto:hello@spreadtheword.org.uk). Spread the Word and CRIPtic Arts have previously collaborated on two online retreats for d/Deaf and disabled writers in the past year and a half, and are hosting free, online bimonthly writers salons for d/Deaf and disabled writers.

## Barbellion Prize opens its doors to submissions

Submissions are now open for the 2021 Barbellion Prize, launched last year for the furtherance of ill and disabled voices in writing.

The prize is awarded annually to an author whose work has best represented the experience of chronic illness and/or disability.

The awarded work can be of any genre in fiction, memoir, biography, poetry or critical non-fiction from around the world, whether it is in English, in translation, traditionally published or self-published.

It is named in tribute to English diarist W N P Barbellion, who wrote eloquently on his life with multiple sclerosis before his death in 1919. Self-published author Jake Goldsmith, who suffers with cystic fibrosis and other conditions, decided to found the competition last year while writing his own memoir.



In February, the inaugural award was won by artist and author Riva Lehrer for *Golem Girl: A Memoir* (Virago). Lehrer (*pictured*) took home £1,000, a custom-made crystal glass Barbellion Prize trophy and certificate, as well as a copy of Barbellion’s *The Journal of a Disappointed Man*.

Submissions for the prize are now open, and close on 31st October 2021. For more information, visit [thebarbellionprize.com](http://thebarbellionprize.com).

*Beautifully written, this book beats back the darkness.* - Anne Enright



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# Débutants Renke and Lancaster join the roster at Cotton's Happy Place Books

Ebury imprint Happy Place Books, which is overseen by Fearne Cotton, has signed the first books from Jono Lancaster and Samantha Renke

Reporting **Mark Chandler**

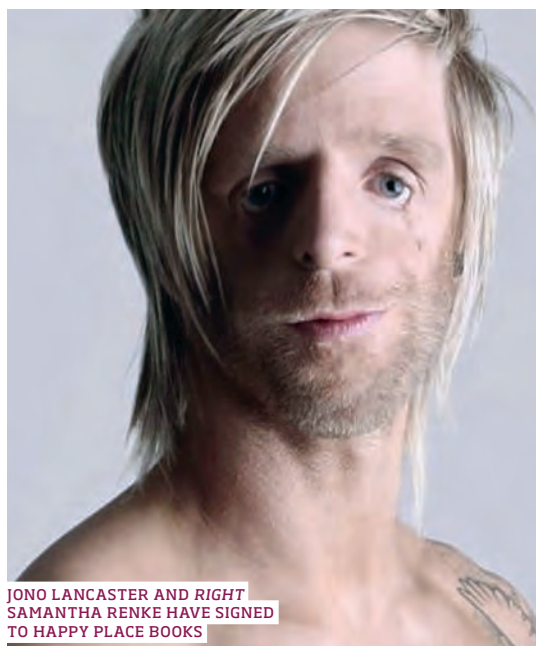
**F**earne Cotton's Happy Place Books has scooped début titles from Samantha Renke and Jono Lancaster.

Renke, an activist, broadcaster, columnist, charity ambassador and disability consultant, will be publishing her first, currently untitled, book next summer. World all-language rights were bought by editor Michelle Warner from Diana Beaumont at Marjacq, in association with Andrew Roach Talent.

The publisher said: "In her uplifting and laugh-out-loud memoir, Samantha Renke shares powerful life lessons and messages of how to live boldly and follow your dreams whatever life throws at you."

Renke has a rare genetic condition called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, more commonly known as "brittle bone condition", and is a full-time wheelchair user. She has had 200 broken bones and more than 10 operations, including spinal fusion and telescopic leg rodning.

She said: "Like most things I have succeeded with in life, I've visualised writing this book for many years. I have a story to tell of a pretty darn exceptional life. It has been weird, exhilarating and, quite often, terrifying. I'll be sharing my experiences of living with a disability, but



JONO LANCASTER AND RIGHT SAMANTHA RENKE HAVE SIGNED TO HAPPY PLACE BOOKS



this is not a book about being disabled—my book is about a person trying to find their place in the world and living life to the full. Life isn't always easy but it sure isn't boring, and that is the joy in being alive."

In 2023, Happy Place will also launch début author Lancaster with his first title *Not All Heroes Wear Capes: How Self-Love Will Save Your Life*.

Lancaster spends his time travelling around the country, and the world, visiting schools, hospitals and foster organisations, meeting families and children with similar craniofacial conditions, and championing various charities including his own, Love My Face.

He has shared his story of growing up in foster care with Treacher Collins Syndrome on a range of national TV and radio platforms, but this is the first time he will discuss how he found self-love and how it transformed his life. The book shares eight simple steps, tools and daily positivity exercises to turn to when you don't wake up feeling

I've visualised writing this book for many years. I have a story to tell of a pretty darn exceptional life

Samantha Renke

good about yourself.

Lancaster said: "Thousands of people reach out to me for support with body image, self-acceptance, loneliness and trauma from abandonment—parents, teens, pre-teens, outwardly 'beautiful' people suffering from secret eating disorders and mental wellbeing issues.

"I feel like I am at a point in my life, having found genuine happiness, that I can reflect on the process that got me here—and the actions I still take each day to reaffirm that mindset. The process is not always easy, but it is revolutionary. I have found parts of myself I am proud of; the world

opened up and continues to open up to me, offering friendship, love and opportunities I never imagined as a kid. If I can get to this place, so can anyone."

World all-language rights were bought by publishing director Laura Higginson directly from the author.

Cotton said of the acquisitions: "Listening to one another can be the best way to be introduced to new ways of thinking and living, to access new perspectives that enrich our lives and enable us to support those that have been marginalised and underrepresented. I'm constantly floored by the generosity and courage displayed by members of the disability community as they work to advocate for themselves and others. A key mission of mine in curating the Happy Place Books imprint is to elevate voices that need to be heard and cover diverse subject matters to ensure that everybody out there feels like they are being spoken to—I think there is no better way to use the platform."

# Jessica Kingsley Publishers picks up two guides to autism advocacy

The John Murray Press division Jessica Kingsley Publishers has signed two books on autism, one an anthology of advice and the other a handbook for advocacy



Reporting **Mark Chandler**

**J**essica Kingsley Publishers has signed world rights for two books, including *The #ActuallyAutistic Guide to Advocacy* by Jennifer Brunton and Jenna Gensic.

Publishing on 21st February 2022, the book provides direct advice from the autism community on how to effectively advocate and ally with autistic people. The step-by-step guide discusses various aspects of how autism is perceived, explores how best to speak up for individual needs, and introduces advocacy for the wider autistic community. There are more than 100 contributors to it, including established names such as Temple Grandin and Liane Holliday Willey.

On the same date, the publisher will also release *The Autism and Neurodiversity Self*

*Advocacy Handbook* by Barb Cook and Yenn Purkis, billed as “the ultimate guide to self-advocacy for autistic people”.

The publisher said: “Written by two autistic activists, this book will give you the tools and strategies to advocate for yourself in any situation. It covers specific scenarios, including work, school, family and relationships, as well as looking at advocacy for the wider community, whether that’s through social media, presentations or writing. Additionally, the book provides advice on building independence, developing your skills, standing up for others and resolving conflict.”

Written by two autistic activists, this book will give you the tools and strategies to advocate for yourself

JKP on *The Autism and Neurodiversity Handbook*



YENN PURKIS AND ABOVE BARB COOK HAVE PENNED AN AUTISM HANDBOOK



## Audio list Little Acorns launches

**O**akhill Children’s, an audiobook imprint of Ulverscroft, has announced a new brand identity, to be launched in April 2022.

Developed by the in-house marketing and design team, the rebrand includes a new name, Little Acorns, a new logo and the strapline “From Little Acorns mighty listeners grow”. There is also a dedicated social media plan, with an author roster to be revealed at a later date.

The publisher said there would be a greater emphasis on making the best children’s literature available in audiobook format, with a continued focus on providing a diverse publication schedule.

Rights executive Laura Mayers, who will manage rights acquisitions, said: “I’m absolutely thrilled that our children’s audio list is rebranding in 2022. We have long championed the best stories for our younger listeners in our Oakhill Children’s list, and so the relaunch as Little Acorns will see our content go from strength to strength.”



## Tiny Tree picks up disability advocate Andrews’ début

**D**ébut author Ben Andrews has signed a multi-book deal with publisher Tiny Tree Children’s Books.

Better Places is a series of picture books aimed at helping children to think about how the world around them can be improved for the benefit of disabled people.

Andrews, a disability rights advocate who runs company Beyond Empower, took inspiration

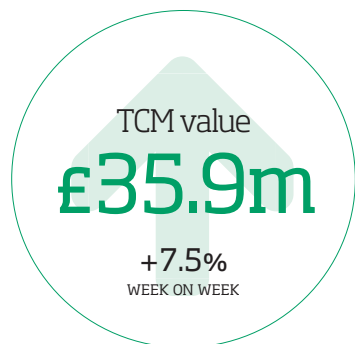
from his own experience of having a blinding degenerative condition, Retinitis Pigmentosa, which involves the rapid deterioration of his eyesight.

“We’re incredibly excited to work with someone as passionate and creative as Ben is,” said James Shaw, Tiny Tree Children’s Books publisher and m.d., who acquired world rights direct from the author. He said: “That passion and creativity has driven this project from the very beginning and we are so proud to be working with Ben to bring this series to life”.

Better Places will launch in 2022, with five titles currently written and the search for an illustrator underway. The books will be supported by additional online resources for schools and parents.

# The Official UK Top 50

## Osman's second helping soars to the top



As new releases pepper the charts, including six in the top 10, Richard Osman's blockbuster sequel charged its way to the summit



**Kiera O'Brien**  
@kieraobrien

**R**ichard Osman's *The Man Who Died Twice* has bombarded into the Official UK Top 50 number one spot, selling an earth-scorching 114,202 copies in its first three days on sale. This makes it the seventh fastest-selling novel since BookScan records began (excluding children's novels and lockdown weeks), though an honourable mention should go to Dan Brown's first post-*Da Vinci Code* title, *The Lost Symbol*, which is both the fastest and sixth-fastest seller, in hardback and paperback format respectively.

*The Man Who Died Twice* breezed past the first-week sales of fellow blockbuster sequels Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and Hilary Mantel's

	Title	Author; Illustrator	Imprint	ISBN	TCM total	Volume
1	+ <b>The Man Who Died Twice</b>	Richard Osman	Viking	0241425428	114,287	114,202
2	+ <b>And Away...</b>	Bob Mortimer	Simon & Schuster	1398505292	42,614	42,094
3	→ <b>The Thursday Murder Club</b>	Richard Osman	Penguin	0241988268	452,244	23,966
4	↓ <b>Beautiful World, Where Are You</b>	Sally Rooney	Faber & Faber	0571365425	65,858	19,782
5	→ <b>Together</b>	Jamie Oliver	Michael Joseph	0241431177	42,285	12,723
6	+ <b>An Innocent Baby</b>	Cathy Glass	HarperCollins	0008466480	11,780	11,730
7	+ <b>This Much is True</b>	Miriam Margolyes	Hodder	1529379884	11,257	11,143
8	+ <b>Family Comforts</b>	Rebecca Wilson	DK	0241534694	10,839	10,794
9	↓ <b>The Midnight Library</b>	Matt Haig	Canongate	1786892737	336,503	9,386
10	+ <b>Big Panda and Tiny Dragon</b>	James Norbury	Michael Joseph	0241529324	9,278	9,176
11	↓ <b>Piranesi</b>	Susanna Clarke	Bloomsbury	1526622433	23,093	8,633
12	+ <b>Turn a Blind Eye</b>	Jeffrey Archer	Pan	1509851386	8,518	8,432
13	↓ <b>Find You First</b>	Linwood Barclay	HQ	0008332082	30,328	6,858
14	↑ <b>It Ends with Us</b>	Colleen Hoover	Simon & Schuster	1471156267	73,774	6,462
15	+ <b>Daughters of War</b>	Dinah Jefferies	HarperCollins	0008427023	6,072	6,045
16	↓ <b>One August Night</b>	Victoria Hislop	Headline Review	1472278449	103,339	6,020
17	+ <b>Belonging</b>	Alun Wyn Jones	Macmillan	1529058086	5,885	5,832
18	+ <b>Guinness World Records 2022</b>	-	Guinness World...	1913484118	5,713	5,613
19	↓ <b>The Boy, the Mole, the Fox...</b>	Charlie Mackesy	Ebury	1529105100	1,227,910	5,562
20	+ <b>The Seven Husbands of Evelyn...</b>	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Simon & Schuster	1982147662	79,578	5,553
21	+ <b>A Beautiful Spy</b>	Rachel Hore	Simon & Schuster	1471187216	5,365	5,334
22	↓ <b>The Book of Two Ways</b>	Jodi Picoult	Hodder	1473692435	41,759	5,269
23	+ <b>The Family Man</b>	Kimberley Chambers	HarperCollins	0008365998	5,144	5,104
24	+ <b>Joshua Weissman... Cookbook</b>	Joshua Weissman	Alpha	1615649983	5,165	5,091
25	+ <b>Fit Foods and Fakeaways</b>	Courtney Black	Thorsons	0008468545	5,066	5,013
26	↓ <b>A Time for Mercy</b>	John Grisham	Hodder	1529342369	94,168	4,713
27	↓ <b>The Wolf Den</b>	Elodie Harper	APOLLO	1838933555	15,197	4,696
28	↓ <b>A Slow Fire Burning</b>	Paula Hawkins	Doubleday	0857524447	19,800	4,664
29	↓ <b>Jane's Patisserie</b>	Jane Dunn	Ebury	1529109429	91,363	4,658
30	↓ <b>The Evening and the Morning</b>	Ken Follett	Pan	1447278801	61,079	4,572
31	↓ <b>An Inspector Calls</b>	J B Priestley	Heinemann	0435232825	698,296	4,529
32	↓ <b>The Night Hawks</b>	Elly Griffiths	Quercus	1787477841	43,066	4,459
33	+ <b>The Wisdom of Crowds</b>	Joe Abercrombie	Gollancz	0575095960	4,436	4,387
34	↑ <b>They Both Die at the End</b>	Adam Silvera	S&S Children's	1471166204	157,054	4,368
35	↓ <b>Where the Crawdads Sing</b>	Delia Owens	Corsair	1472154668	454,303	4,330
36	↓ <b>Win</b>	Harlan Coben	Arrow	1787462991	55,982	4,303
37	+ <b>Apples Never Fall</b>	Liane Moriarty	Michael Joseph	0241396087	4,308	4,281
38	+ <b>The Survivors</b>	Jane Harper	Abacus	0349143743	4,316	4,266
39	↓ <b>You Are a Champion</b>	M Rashford & C Anka	Macmillan...	1529068177	142,343	4,115
40	↓ <b>Before She Disappeared</b>	Lisa Gardner	Arrow	1787464377	13,709	4,060
41	↓ <b>Shuggie Bain</b>	Douglas Stuart	Picador	1529019292	188,807	4,044
42	↓ <b>The Coffinmaker's Garden</b>	Stuart MacBride	HarperCollins	0008208349	28,714	3,964
43	↓ <b>Megamonster</b>	D Walliams; T Ross	HarperCollins	0008487591	254,693	3,960
44	↑ <b>Cat's Cookbook</b>	J Donaldson; A Scheffler	Macmillan...	1529034363	76,033	3,954
45	↓ <b>The Official Highway Code</b>	-	TSO	0115533426	971,416	3,908
46	↓ <b>Hamnet</b>	Maggie O'Farrell	Tinder	1472223821	235,036	3,864
47	↓ <b>Grown Ups</b>	Marian Keyes	Penguin	1405918787	129,602	3,679
48	↓ <b>The Night Gate</b>	Peter May	riverrun	1784295080	48,435	3,654
49	+ <b>Bring Me the Head... Taskmaster</b>	Alex Horne	Bantam	1529148435	4,023	3,638
50	+ <b>Redhanded</b>	S Bala & H Maguire	Trapeze	1398707139	3,666	3,620

Week ending 18th September 2021. Key + New ↑ Up → Same ↓ Down  
Unless otherwise stated, charts use data from Nielsen BookScan Total Consumer Market, representing print book sales through around 6,500 retailers. Any title discounted by more than 74.5% is ineligible for inclusion.



This week's number one

RICHARD OSMAN STORMED TO THE SUMMIT OF THE CHARTS

*The Mirror and the Light*, and indeed Dan Brown's most recent title, 2017's *Origin*, which sold "only" 100,095 copies upon its launch.

It's interesting to see the power of the sequel in pushing first-week sales to dizzying heights.

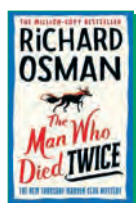
Of course, those pre-orders have to come from somewhere, and surely *The Man Who Died Twice* has been racking up those sales since *The Thursday Murder Club* first graced the shelves. Technically the fastest-selling standalone novel is J K Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*, but that

hugely benefitted from the Harry Potter phenomenon that came before it. Similarly, Zoe "Zoella" Sugg's YA novel *Girl Online* was widely regarded as the fastest-

selling debut since records began, though she did have the power of 10 million YouTube subscribers behind her.

Even celebrity doesn't hold as much sway in Adult Fiction, compared to Non-Fiction and Children's. Osman is the highest-ranking celeb in the fastest-seller fiction chart by a long way—Brown, Rowling, Harper Lee and E L James are all very famous, but found their fame through books.

Continues overleaf →



## Digital Bestseller Lists

### Two's company for Osman sequel

Kiera O'Brien @kieraobrien

**R**ichard Osman's *The Man Who Died Twice* scored the Bookstat e-book number one for the week ending 18th September, doubling up on its print number one—and leapfrogging Sally Rooney's *Beautiful World, Where Are You* in both charts. *The Thursday Murder Club* also returned to the e-book chart, swiping fourth place.

Crime writer J M Dalgliesh debuted in second place with *To Die For*, as Melinda Leigh's *Right Behind Her* entered in seventh place. The current Paperback Non-fiction number one in print, Cathy Glass' *An Innocent Baby*, charted ninth in the Bookstat chart.

J D Robb's *Forgotten in Death* zipped into the Publisher E-Book Ranking top spot for the week ending 11th September, followed by Gillian McAllister's *That Night* in second place.

Girls Aloud singer Sarah Harding's memoir, *Hear Me Out* made its debut in the Publisher E-Book Ranking, in the same week her death at the age of 39 was announced.



J D ROBB TOPS THE PUBLISHER RANKING

**Clarification** Hachette has stated that *One August Night* sold 12,871 copies; and *The Road Trip* 5,500.

## Bookstat E-Book Top 10

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	Volume
1	+ <b>The Man Who Died Twice</b>	Richard Osman	Penguin	0241425428	33,450
2	+ <b>To Die For</b>	J M Dalgliesh	Hamilton	1800802629	11,448
3	↓ <b>One August Night</b>	Victoria Hislop	Headline	1472278449	10,122
4	↑ <b>The Thursday Murder Club</b>	Richard Osman	Penguin	0241425442	8,021
5	↓ <b>The Holiday</b>	T M Logan	Zaffre	1542028639	7,108
6	↓ <b>The Road Trip</b>	Beth O'Leary	Quercus	1529409093	5,750
7	+ <b>Right Behind Her</b>	Melinda Leigh	Montlake	1542007047	5,620
8	↑ <b>The Therapist</b>	B A Paris	HQ Digital	0008412043	5,558
9	+ <b>An Innocent Baby</b>	Cathy Glass	Harper Element	0008466480	5,490
10	+ <b>Apples Never Fall</b>	Liane Moriarty	Penguin	0241396087	5,354



**Data source** Bookstat. **Week ending** 18th September 2021. Bookstat generates its charts by tracking the movement of e-books, print books and audio titles on online retailers' websites and calibrating against publisher-supplied data; the volume and value figures are estimates. For more information, contact info@bookstat.com.

## The Publisher E-Book Ranking

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	List price
1	+ <b>Forgotten in Death</b>	J D Robb	Piatkus	0349426310	£9.99
2	+ <b>That Night</b>	Gillian McAllister	Michael Joseph	1405942454	£2.99
3	↓ <b>The Heron's Cry</b>	Ann Cleeves	Macmillan	1509889662	£9.99
4	↑ <b>Maggie</b>	Elizabeth Day	Fourth Estate	0008374969	£7.99
5	+ <b>Hear Me Out</b>	Sarah Harding	Ebury	1473593350	£9.99
6	↑ <b>Troubled Blood</b>	Robert Galbraith	Sphere	0751579963	£4.99
7	+ <b>Don't You Forget About Me</b>	Mhairi McFarlane	HarperCollins	0008169329	£2.99
8	↓ <b>A Slow Fire Burning</b>	Paula Hawkins	Transworld	1473542228	£8.49
9	→ <b>Where the Crawdads Sing</b>	Delia Owens	Corsair	1472154637	£4.99
10	+ <b>Exit</b>	Belinda Bauer	Transworld	1473562127	£2.99

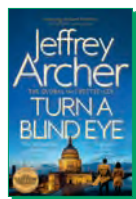
**Week ending** 11th September 2021. **Key** + New ↑ Up → Same ↓ Down. Titles with a selling price below £2 are excluded, as are titles priced £4.50 or below with any print versions priced above £17.99. Participating publishers: PRH UK, Hachette, HarperCollins, Pan Macmillan, Bloomsbury, Simon & Schuster, Bonnier Zaffre, Canongate & Joffe Books.

*The Thursday Murder Club* has spent more time in the category chart top spots than out of it since its release in hardback a year ago.



With the hardback scoring 29 weeks atop Original Fiction, it only fell from the top spot upon its paperback publication in May. The paperback has gone

on to score a further 17 weeks as Mass-Market Fiction number one, including last week, when it rose 76% in volume—presumably due to the knock-on effect of *The Man Who Died Twice* hype. An author holding both the Original Fiction and Mass-Market Fiction number

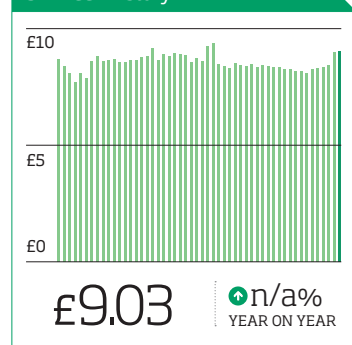


ones in the same week is certainly a rare feat—the last person to achieve it was the ultra-prolific James Patterson, whose *16th Seduction* and *Never Never* did

the double in March 2017.

Naturally, the Osman avalanche boosted the print market. Last week was the

TCM actual selling price  
52-week history



## Original Fiction

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	↑ <b>The Man Who Died Twice</b>	Richard Osman	Viking	0241425428	£11.36	114,202
2	↓ <b>Beautiful World, Where Are You</b>	Sally Rooney	Faber & Faber	0571365425	£13.19	19,782
3	↑ <b>The Family Man</b>	Kimberley Chambers	HarperCollins	0008365998	£9.56	5,104
4	↓ <b>A Slow Fire Burning</b>	Paula Hawkins	Doubleday	0857524447	£11.87	4,664
5	↑ <b>The Wisdom of Crowds</b>	Joe Abercrombie	Gollancz	0575095960	£17.06	4,387
6	↑ <b>Apples Never Fall</b>	Liane Moriarty	Michael Joseph	0241396087	£13.53	4,281
7	↓ <b>The Heron's Cry</b>	Ann Cleeves	Macmillan	1509889686	£12.18	3,453
8	↓ <b>Magpie</b>	Elizabeth Day	Fourth Estate	0008374945	£9.58	3,255
9	↓ <b>The Dark Remains</b>	I Rankin & W McIlvanney	Canongate	1838854102	£13.51	2,857
10	↓ <b>The New Kingdom</b>	W Smith & M Chadbourne	Zaffre	1785767975	£10.99	2,744
11	↑ <b>Harlem Shuffle</b>	Colson Whitehead	Fleet	0708899441	£15.08	2,587
12	↓ <b>Freckles</b>	Cecelia Ahern	HarperCollins	0008194925	£9.31	2,132
13	↓ <b>The Whistleblower</b>	Robert Peston	Zaffre	1838775247	£10.01	2,109
14	↓ <b>Snow Country</b>	Sebastian Faulks	Hutchinson	1786330185	£18.17	2,006
15	↓ <b>Billy Summers</b>	Stephen King	Hodder...	1529365726	£12.28	1,728
16	↑ <b>Tenderness</b>	Alison MacLeod	Bloomsbury...	1408884669	£18.70	1,646
17	↑ <b>Iced</b>	Felix Francis	Simon & Schuster	1471196614	£15.76	1,558
18	↓ <b>The Women of Troy</b>	Pat Barker	Hamish Hamilton	0241427231	£17.34	1,509
19	↓ <b>Empire of the Vampire</b>	Jay Kristoff	HarperCollins	0008350437	£16.59	1,424
20	↑ <b>Beautiful World, Where Are You</b>	Sally Rooney	Faber & Faber	0571365432	£12.25	1,370

## Mass-Market Fiction

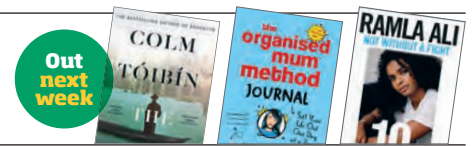
	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	→ <b>The Thursday Murder Club</b>	Richard Osman	Penguin	0241988268	£5.69	23,966
2	↑ <b>The Midnight Library</b>	Matt Haig	Canongate	1786892737	£5.65	9,386
3	→ <b>Piranesi</b>	Susanna Clarke	Bloomsbury	1526622433	£7.29	8,633
4	↑ <b>Turn a Blind Eye</b>	Jeffrey Archer	Pan	1509851386	£4.73	8,432
5	↓ <b>Find You First</b>	Linwood Barclay	HQ	0008332082	£4.67	6,858
6	↑ <b>It Ends with Us</b>	Colleen Hoover	Simon & Schuster	1471156267	£6.74	6,462
7	↑ <b>Daughters of War</b>	Dinah Jefferies	HarperCollins	0008427023	£4.58	6,045
8	↓ <b>One August Night</b>	Victoria Hislop	Headline	1472278449	£5.50	6,020
9	↑ <b>The Seven Husbands of Evelyn...</b>	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Simon & Schuster	1982147662	£6.82	5,553
10	↑ <b>A Beautiful Spy</b>	Rachel Hore	Simon & Schuster	1471187216	£4.99	5,334
11	↓ <b>The Book of Two Ways</b>	Jodi Picoult	Hodder	1473692435	£5.05	5,269
12	↑ <b>A Time for Mercy</b>	John Grisham	Hodder	1529342369	£5.37	4,713
13	↓ <b>The Wolf Den</b>	Elodie Harper	Apollo	1838933555	£7.09	4,696
14	↓ <b>The Evening and the Morning</b>	Ken Follett	Pan	1447278801	£6.14	4,572
15	↓ <b>The Night Hawks</b>	Elly Griffiths	Quercus	1787477841	£5.29	4,459
16	↓ <b>Where the Crawdads Sing</b>	Delia Owens	Corsair	1472154668	£6.58	4,330
17	↓ <b>Win</b>	Harlan Coben	Arrow	1787462991	£5.39	4,303
18	↑ <b>The Survivors</b>	Jane Harper	Abacus	0349143743	£6.11	4,266
19	↓ <b>Before She Disappeared</b>	Lisa Gardner	Arrow	1787464377	£4.65	4,060
20	↑ <b>Shuggie Bain</b>	Douglas Stuart	Picador	1529019292	£6.41	4,044

## Heatseekers Fiction



The Heatseekers charts are compiled using titles by authors who have not appeared in The Official UK Top 50 since Nielsen BookScan records began. As such, they reveal books that are selling well, but not well enough to make the overall list in a seven-day period. For more Heatseekers charts, visit [thebookseller.com](http://thebookseller.com).

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	→ <b>Dune</b>	Frank Herbert	Hodder	0340960196	£8.13	2,516
2	↑ <b>The Last House on Needless...</b>	Catriona Ward	Viper	1788166188	£6.15	2,374
3	↑ <b>The Whistleblower</b>	Robert Peston	Zaffre	1838775247	£10.01	2,109
4	↑ <b>Tenderness</b>	Alison MacLeod	Bloomsbury...	1408884669	£18.70	1,646
5	↓ <b>The Marlow Murder Club</b>	Robert Thorogood	HQ	0008435912	£5.79	1,530
6	↓ <b>Meet Me in Tahiti</b>	Georgia Toffolo	Mills & Boon	0008375911	£3.14	1,524
7	↑ <b>Everything is Beautiful</b>	Eleanor Ray	Piatkus	0349427416	£4.83	1,498
8	↓ <b>Whisper Cottage</b>	Anne Wyn Clark	Avon	0008459970	£4.11	1,455
9	↓ <b>Lord of the Flies</b>	William Golding	Faber & Faber	0571191475	£7.40	1,319
10	↓ <b>The Bird in the Bamboo Cage</b>	Hazel Gaynor	HarperCollins	0008393670	£4.87	1,303



best September week since records began, with just under four million books sold for £35.9m—1.9% up in volume and 6.3% up in value against the same week last year. But even without *The Man Who Died Twice's* cool £1.3m earned, weekly value still would have been up year on year.



Bob Mortimer's memoir, *And Away...*, debuted in second place in the Top 50, selling 42,094 copies in its first week on sale and knocking Jamie Oliver's *Together* from the Hardback Non-fiction number one spot. Celebrity memoirs—and *Guinness World*



*Records 2022*—flooded into the category top 20 in true autumnal tradition, as did James Norbury's illustrated *Big Panda and Little Dragon*, poised for the Charlie Mackesy Christmas gift market.

Cathy Glass' *An Innocent Baby* topped the Paperback Non-fiction chart—the foster carer author's second category chart number one this year, after *A Life Lost* hit the summit during lockdown.

Continues overleaf →

## Hardback Non-fiction

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	+ <b>And Away...</b>	Bob Mortimer	Simon & Schuster	1398505292	£14.05	42,094
2	→ <b>Together</b>	Jamie Oliver	Michael Joseph	0241431177	£12.49	12,723
3	+ <b>This Much is True</b>	Miriam Margolyes	Hodder	1529379884	£15.43	11,143
4	+ <b>Family Comforts</b>	Rebecca Wilson	DK	0241534694	£12.78	10,794
5	+ <b>Big Panda and Tiny Dragon</b>	James Norbury	Michael Joseph	0241529324	£11.41	9,176
6	+ <b>Belonging</b>	Alun Wyn Jones		1529058086	£17.72	5,832
7	+ <b>Guinness World Records 2022</b>	Guinness World Records	Guinness World...	1913484118	£10.01	5,613
8	↓ <b>The Boy, the Mole, the Fox...</b>	Charlie Mackesy	Ebury	1529105100	£10.66	5,562
9	+ <b>Joshua Weissman... Cookbook</b>	Joshua Weissman	Alpha	1615649983	£15.60	5,091
10	+ <b>Fit Foods and Fakeaways</b>	Courtney Black	Thorsons	0008468545	£11.17	5,013
11	↓ <b>Jane's Patisserie</b>	Jane Dunn	Ebury	1529109429	£11.06	4,658
12	+ <b>Bring Me the Head... Taskmaster</b>	Alex Horne	Bantam	1529148435	£11.41	3,638
13	+ <b>Redhanded</b>	S Bala & H Maguire	Trapeze	1398707139	£14.39	3,620
14	+ <b>Rick Stein at Home</b>	Rick Stein	BBC	1785947087	£16.60	3,582
15	↓ <b>Pinch of Nom... Quick &amp; Easy</b>	Featherstone et al	Bluebird	1529035001	£5.80	3,497
16	↑ <b>Lily's Promise</b>	Lily Ebert & Dov Forman	Macmillan	1529073409	£13.34	3,406
17	+ <b>Odd Boy Out</b>	Gyles Brandreth	Michael Joseph	0241483718	£14.84	3,242
18	↓ <b>Comfort MOB</b>	-	Hodder	1529369816	£13.09	3,085
19	↓ <b>Too Many Reasons to Live</b>	Rob Burrow	Macmillan	1529073249	£11.60	2,936
20	+ <b>Watching Neighbours Twice...</b>	Josh Widdicombe	Blink	1788704359	£13.67	2,877

## Paperback Non-fiction

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	+ <b>An Innocent Baby</b>	Cathy Glass	HarperCollins	0008466480	£5.10	11,730
2	↓ <b>The Official Highway Code</b>	-	TSO	0115533426	£2.28	4,028
3	↑ <b>River Kings</b>	Cat Jarman	William Collins	0008353117	£8.98	3,007
4	↑ <b>Good Vibes, Good Life</b>	Vex King	Hay House	1788171823	£6.91	2,944
5	↑ <b>Entangled Life</b>	Merlin Sheldrake	Vintage	1784708276	£10.13	2,812
6	+ <b>A Del of a Life</b>	David Jason	Arrow	1787465367	£5.43	2,382
7	↑ <b>The Official DVSA Theory Test...</b>	-	TSO	0115536588	£12.32	2,198
8	↑ <b>A Streetcar Named Desire</b>	Tennessee Williams	Penguin Classics	0141190273	£8.29	2,102
9	↓ <b>Edexcel... Mathematics Year 1/A</b>	Greg Attwood et al	Pearson...	1292183398	£21.39	2,091
10	→ <b>English Pastoral: An Inheritance</b>	James Rebanks	Penguin	0141982571	£9.20	1,849
11	↑ <b>The Wild Silence</b>	Raynor Winn	Penguin	0241401477	£8.43	1,842
12	+ <b>Teach Like a Champion 3.0</b>	Doug Lemov	Jossey-Bass	1119712619	£18.85	1,808
13	↑ <b>AQA Psychology for A Level...</b>	Cara Flanagan et al	Illuminate	1912820429	£25.43	1,787
14	↑ <b>NOSH for Students</b>	Joy May	inTRADE	0993260988	£9.03	1,642
15	↓ <b>Preparing for the... Menopause</b>	Dr Louise Newson	Penguin Life	0241504642	£9.30	1,610
16	↑ <b>The Salt Path</b>	Raynor Winn	Penguin	1405937184	£9.04	1,578
17	↓ <b>Edexcel... Statistics &amp; Mechanics</b>	Greg Attwood et al	Pearson	1292232539	£11.25	1,574
18	+ <b>AQA A Level Sociology Book One</b>	Rob Webb et al	Napier	0954007911	£24.57	1,429
19	↓ <b>Women Don't Owe You Pretty</b>	Florence Given	Brazen	1914240348	£6.14	1,425
20	↓ <b>The Book You Wish Your...</b>	Philippa Perry	Penguin Life	0241251027	£8.44	1,420

## Small Publishers



The Small Publishers chart is compiled using only titles issued by publishers that had sales of less than £5m in the previous calendar year through Nielsen's TCM. Unlike the Heatseekers chart, which is divided each week by genre (into Fiction, Non-Fiction and Children's), the Small Publishers chart encompasses all titles.

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	+ <b>Guinness World Records 2022</b>	-	Guinness World...	1913484118	£10.01	5,613
2	↓ <b>The Wolf Den</b>	Elodie Harper	Apollo	1838933555	£7.09	4,696
3	↑ <b>An Inspector Calls</b>	J B Priestley	Heinemann	0435232825	£9.96	4,529
4	↓ <b>Good Vibes, Good Life</b>	Vex King	Hay House	1788171823	£6.91	2,944
5	↓ <b>AQA Psychology for A Level...</b>	Cara Flanagan et al	Illuminate	1912820429	£25.43	1,787
6	↓ <b>A Christmas Carol</b>	Charles Dickens	Wordsworth...	1840227567	£2.26	1,728
7	↓ <b>NOSH for Students</b>	Joy May	inTRADE	0993260988	£9.03	1,642
8	+ <b>A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide...</b>	Heather Heying et al	Swift	1800750746	£14.71	1,454
9	↓ <b>AQA A Level Sociology Book One</b>	Rob Webb et al	Napier	0954007911	£24.57	1,429
10	↓ <b>Healing Is the New High</b>	Vex King	Hay House	1788174770	£7.81	1,367

J B Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* claimed the Children's number one for a second week running. The back-to-school response seems to be especially intense this year, perhaps as the newest GCSE students have missed most of Year 8 and 9.

Adam Silvera's YA blockbuster *They Both Die at the End* claimed the Children's & YA Fiction top spot for the first time since June, as Jacqueline Wilson's *The*

## Publisher revenues

Penguin	£3.31m
HarperCollins	£1.28m
Pan Macmillan	£1.11m
S&S	£1.00m
Hodder	£752k
Bloomsbury	£466k
Ebury	£465k
Faber	£462k
Cornerstone	£451k
Transworld	£373k

*Primrose Railway Children*, Greg James and Chris Smith's *The Great Dream Robbery*, Nibbie winners M G Leonard and Sam Sedgman's *Danger at Dead Man's Pass* and Malorie Blackman's *Endgame* rolled into the top 10. ✕

**Clarification** Clare Povey's *The Unexpected Tale of Bastien Bonlivre* (Usborne) was missed out of the Children's & YA Fiction top 20 in last week's issue, due to being erroneously coded as a non-fiction title.

## Children's: Pre-school

	Title	Author; Illustrator	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	↑ <b>Cat's Cookbook</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Macmillan...	1529034363	£3.57	3,954
2	↑ <b>There's a Unicorn in Your Book</b>	Tom Fletcher; Greg Abbott	Puffin	0241466605	£4.33	3,020
3	↓ <b>The Gruffalo and Friends Advent...</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Macmillan...	1529052879	£10.08	2,703
4	→ <b>The Hugasaurus</b>	Rachel Bright; Chris Chatterton	Orchard	1408356159	£4.80	2,164
5	↑ <b>Bluey: The Beach</b>	-	Ladybird	0241486948	£4.88	2,159
6	↓ <b>Superworm</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Alison Green	1407170725	£4.46	2,112
7	↑ <b>The Whale Who Wanted More</b>	Rachel Bright; Jim Field	Orchard	1408349229	£5.17	1,899
8	↑ <b>Ten Minutes to Bed: Little Dragon</b>	R Fielding; C Chatterton	Ladybird	0241464373	£4.49	1,887
9	↑ <b>The Hospital Dog</b>	Julia Donaldson; Sara Ogilvie	Macmillan...	1509868322	£4.50	1,838
10	→ <b>The Smeds and the Smoos</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Alison Green	1407196657	£4.06	1,755
11	↓ <b>What the Ladybird... Seaside</b>	Julia Donaldson; Lydia Monks	Macmillan...	1529023152	£4.52	1,752
12	↑ <b>Dear Zoo</b>	Rod Campbell	Macmillan...	0230747722	£5.13	1,589
13	→ <b>Where's Spot?</b>	Eric Hill	Warne	0723263661	£4.32	1,510
13	↑ <b>Hide-and-Seek Pig</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Macmillan...	1529023541	£3.49	1,510
15	↑ <b>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</b>	Eric Carle	Puffin	0241003008	£5.60	1,476
16	↑ <b>Zog</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Alison Green	1407170763	£4.31	1,464
17	+ <b>Super Extra Deluxe Essential...</b>	-	Scholastic	1338714128	£6.97	1,456
18	↓ <b>Disney: Storybook Collection...</b>	-	Autumn	1801080460	£11.92	1,430
19	↑ <b>Stick Man</b>	Julia Donaldson; Axel Scheffler	Alison Green	1407170718	£4.55	1,427
20	+ <b>Peppa Pig: 2021 Advent Book...</b>	-	Ladybird	0241533963	£13.25	1,422

## Children's & YA Fiction

	Title	Author; Illustrator	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	ASP	Volume
1	↑ <b>They Both Die at the End</b>	Adam Silvera	S&S Children's	1471166204	£5.17	4,368
2	↓ <b>Megamonster</b>	David Walliams; Tony Ross	HarperCollins	0008487591	£7.67	3,960
3	→ <b>Midnight Sun</b>	Stephenie Meyer	ATOM	0349003641	£5.23	2,804
4	+ <b>The Primrose Railway Children</b>	Jacqueline Wilson	Puffin	0241517765	£7.74	2,687
5	↓ <b>The Danger Gang</b>	Tom Fletcher; Shane Devries	Puffin	0241407462	£4.63	2,526
6	+ <b>The Great Dream Robbery</b>	G James & C Smith; A Nguyen	Puffin	0241470510	£9.01	2,270
7	+ <b>Danger at Dead Man's Pass</b>	Leonard & Sedgman; Paganelli	Macmillan...	1529013122	£6.43	2,254
8	↓ <b>One of Us is Lying</b>	Karen M McManus	Penguin	0141375632	£6.09	2,202
9	↓ <b>Harry... Philosopher's Stone</b>	J K Rowling	Bloomsbury	1408855652	£4.98	2,160
10	↓ <b>As Good as Dead</b>	Holly Jackson	Farshore	1405298605	£6.48	1,930
11	+ <b>Endgame</b>	Malorie Blackman	Penguin	0241443996	£6.77	1,785
12	↓ <b>A Christmas Carol</b>	Charles Dickens	Wordsworth...	1840227567	£2.24	1,728
13	↓ <b>Gangsta Granny</b>	David Walliams; Tony Ross	HC Children's	0007371464	£4.14	1,640
14	+ <b>Eddie Albert and the Amazing...</b>	Paul O'Grady	HarperCollins	0008446802	£6.66	1,553
15	↓ <b>The Boy At the Back of the Class</b>	Onjali Q Rauf	Orion Children's	1510105010	£4.77	1,547
16	↓ <b>Fing</b>	David Walliams; Tony Ross	HarperCollins	0008349110	£4.49	1,508
17	↓ <b>Paw Patrol... Dinosaur Rescue</b>	-	Farshore	0755502660	£4.16	1,466
18	+ <b>The Unexpected Tale... Bonlivre</b>	Clare Povey	Usborne	1474986489	£6.55	1,405
19	↓ <b>Dog Man 9: Grime... Punishment</b>	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	0702310676	£5.80	1,360
20	↓ <b>The Beast of Buckingham Palace</b>	David Walliams; Tony Ross	HarperCollins	0008438708	£4.58	1,315

Naoise Dolan's first novel *Exciting Times* tops the Heatseekers chart, despite its two editions being published in national lockdowns

Kiera O'Brien @kieraobrien

**A** dult Fiction, following the 2020 lockdown boom, is still soaring. Between mid-March and mid-September, the category is up 16% in volume and 17% in value on 2019. The book-buying public began snatching fiction titles from the shelves ahead of the very first week of lockdown, when growing speculation that we might be quarantined for an entire three weeks saw the category boosted 32% week on week.

During the first lockdown, Nielsen data showed 40% of people claimed to be reading more in isolation. However, unlike toilet-roll hoarding, the fiction boost continued across 2020 and into 2021. For the year to date, since sales figures returned to Nielsen BookScan in mid-March, seven of the 10 top-selling titles of the year are Adult Fiction, with Richard Osman's *The Thursday Murder Club* already knocking at the door of half a million copies sold in paperback (after publisher Penguin Random House reported a million units sold in hardback).

Fiction Heatseekers, *The Bookseller's* weekly chart that tracks titles by authors who have yet to chart in the Top 50, shows it isn't just quiz show hosts benefitting from the fiction frenzy.

Naoise Dolan's debut *Exciting Times* tops the chart, with 30,174 copies sold in paperback. Though *Exciting Times'* sales through BookScan are remarkably strong for a debut, it's likely sold many more units, given the title's





# Year-to-date Heatseekers Top 20

## Exciting Times at the summit for Dolan

unlucky timing. The hardback was published right in the midst of the first lockdown, and the paperback's first two weeks were on sale at the very end of the third one.

Frank Herbert's *Dune* scored second in the Heatseekers chart, ahead of its film adaptation dropping in the UK next month. Sales of the classic sci-fi title have rocketed (sorry) since the trailer was first released in 2020. The hype may be enough to nudge *Dune* into the Top 50 for the first time since BookScan records began in 1998.

Though Exciting Times' sales through BookScan are remarkably strong for a debut, it's likely sold many more units



LAURA IMAI MESSINA AND LEFT 'DEATH IN PARADISE' CREATOR ROBERT THOROGOOD HAVE SOLD STRONGLY

Emma Stonex's first novel *The Lamplighters* is the highest-charting hardback in the Fiction Heatseekers chart. It's common that a debut author stops by the chart in hardback before its paperback zooms straight into the Top 50—the Heatseeker chart has previously been graced by Sarah Perry's *The Essex Serpent* and Gail Honeyman's *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* on their way to superstardom.

However, 2021's chart is notably low on hardback titles. Either



the reopening of high street bookshops, the slowly closing gap between hardback and paperback r.r.p.s and the much slimmer chance of having to lug a hardback on to the Tube five days a week is perhaps persuading more people to buy fiction titles in hardback, therefore bypassing the Heatseekers chart altogether. Or, debut hardbacks released early in the year, riding the New Year "books of 2021" wave, have been denied their first flush of sales by the lockdown gaps. x

**Date Range** 14th March to 11th September 2021  
**Source** Nielsen

### In the spotlight



**The Phone Box at the Edge of the World**  
Laura Imai Messina, Lucy Rand (trans)

Manilla  
Translated fiction is Heatseekers catnip, especially Japanese fiction. *The Phone Box at the Edge of the World* joins Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* and Genki Kawamura's *If Cats Disappeared from the World* as a Heatseeker hit.



**A Gentleman in Moscow**  
Amor Towles

Windmill  
Good luck finding a Heatseekers story that doesn't mention *A Gentleman in Moscow*. The title is the ultimate Heatseeker, once again charting in the year-to-date chart. In fact, it's barely left the weekly top 20 since publication in 2017.

	Title	Author	Imprint	ISBN (+978)	Volume
1	<b>Exciting Times</b>	Naosie Dolan	W&N	1474613460	30,174
2	<b>Dune</b>	Frank Herbert	Hodder	0340960196	24,942
3	<b>The Marlow Murder Club</b>	Robert Thorogood	HQ	0008435912	23,200
4	<b>The Lamplighters</b>	Emma Stonex	Picador	1529047318	20,923
5	<b>Mayflies</b>	Andrew O'Hagan	Faber & Faber	0571273713	20,516
6	<b>The Priory of the Orange Tree</b>	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	1408883358	20,088
7	<b>The Phone Box at the Edge...</b>	Laura Imai Messina	Manilla	1786580412	19,969
8	<b>Meet Me in Hawaii</b>	Georgia Toffolo	Mills & Boon	0008375881	19,621
9	<b>The River Between Us</b>	Liz Fenwick	HQ	0008290573	19,150
10	<b>A Sister's War</b>	Molly Green	Avon	0008332501	18,765
11	<b>If I Can't Have You</b>	Charlotte Levin	Pan	1529032420	18,665
12	<b>Meet Me in London</b>	Georgia Toffolo	Mills & Boon	0008375850	18,265
13	<b>A Gentleman in Moscow</b>	Amor Towles	Windmill	0099558781	18,158
14	<b>The Rock</b>	L J Ross	Dark Skies	1912310180	17,168
15	<b>A Theatre for Dreamers</b>	Polly Samson	Bloomsbury	1526600592	17,016
16	<b>Sorrow and Bliss</b>	Meg Mason	W&N	1474622974	16,874
17	<b>Red, White &amp; Royal Blue</b>	Casey McQuiston	Saint Martin's...	1250316776	16,846
18	<b>Love After Love</b>	Ingrid Persuad	Faber & Faber	0571356225	16,729
19	<b>Nineteen Eighty-Four</b>	George Orwell	William Collins	0008322069	16,193
20	<b>The Passenger</b>	Ulrich A Boschwitz	Pushkin	1782275381	16,132

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## Job of the Week



### Marketing Director Prestel

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We are looking for an experienced professional with excellent knowledge of illustrated book publishing and a proven track record of devising and implementing successful marketing campaigns.

The right candidate will have:

- Managerial experience
- Experience of running successful book marketing campaigns
- Results-driven outlook, commercial and strategic acumen
- Ability to manage multiple tasks and problem solving
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Knowledge and experience in social media, SEO and online marketing

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Featured job

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Featured job

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Featured job

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#### Sales and Marketing Manager Artech House



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### Senior Metadata & Discovery Manager Bloomsbury Digital, Bloomsbury



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### Editorial Assistant Faber and Faber



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### Editor/Junior Editor–5+ Little Tiger Press



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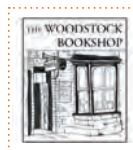
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