

## Literary Agent

A literary agent promotes an author's work to publishers and media producers as well as handling their business dealings, allowing the author to concentrate on their work. Often agents will specialise in a particular non-fiction subject, such as history, or in a type of fiction, such as crime.

### The Work

You could be:

- reading a range of manuscripts and deciding which authors you want to represent
- deciding which manuscripts would be suitable for particular publishers
- suggesting changes to the author to make the manuscript more attractive to a publisher
- approaching publishers on the author's behalf, perhaps repeatedly
- through contacts with publishers, getting commissions for the author to produce more work
- negotiating terms with the publisher, including the author's advance, future royalties, film and foreign rights
- attending launches and book fairs at home and abroad, and building up contacts with publishers
- working with overseas publishers who are producing foreign language editions
- negotiating your own terms with the author, which would normally be a share of the author's advances and royalties.

### Pay

The income of a literary agent varies widely depending on location and also on whether you are working freelance. The figures below are only a guide.

For literary agents who are employees, starting salary is usually from around £20,000 a year upwards. With experience, this can rise to between £25,000 and £36,000 a year or more.

Commission is usually between 10% - 15% of the book sales in the UK and 20% of overseas sales and for sales of film and TV rights.

The income of freelance literary agents varies from month to month.

### Conditions

- You will be office based or work from home.
- You will work office hours, but in reality you may have to work out with these hours on a regular basis.
- You will read a lot of manuscripts, sometimes in the evenings or at weekends.
- You might have to travel locally or even abroad and spend nights away from home.

### Getting In

- There are no set entry requirements.

- Most literary agents have a background in publishing, and many have a degree (SCQF Level 9).
- Entry to a degree course usually requires 4-5 Highers and subjects at National 5, normally including English. However, competition for entry can lead to the entry requirements for popular courses being higher than the minimum.
- Getting experience is important. This can include securing an internship with a publisher or agency.
- You might find a job in an existing agency, most of which are in the south east of England. The [Scottish Book Trust's website](#) lists contact details of literary agencies in Scotland.
- Alternatively, you might be self-employed, work freelance and set up your own agency.
- If you are working with foreign publishers, it helps to know one or more foreign languages.
- Reading and keeping up to date with current bestsellers is recommended, and may give you an advantage.
- You need to be able to demonstrate a genuine interest in books and the publishing industry.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- excellent communication and negotiation skills
- confidence and assertiveness
- an instinct for spotting new talent
- up to date knowledge of the market
- good organisational and business skills
- persistence and determination.

You need to be able to:

- read quickly with an analytical approach
- work under pressure
- network effectively and make contacts
- make decisions.

## Training

- Training is on the job, working alongside experienced staff.
- Most important is to gain experience in publishing and to make useful contacts.

## Getting On

- Your success depends on building up personal contacts.
- There is a lot of competition, and if you don't find enough work you will need a second job.
- Progress will involve taking on more authors, or more successful authors who will pay you a higher commission.

## Contacts

**Publishing Scotland**  
Tel: 0131 228 6866

Email: [enquiries@publishingscotland.org](mailto:enquiries@publishingscotland.org)

Website: [www.publishingscotland.org](http://www.publishingscotland.org)

X: @PublishScotland

**Publishing Training Centre**

Tel: 020 8874 2718

Email: [courses@publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk)

Website: [www.publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk](http://www.publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk)

X: @PTCBookHouse

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

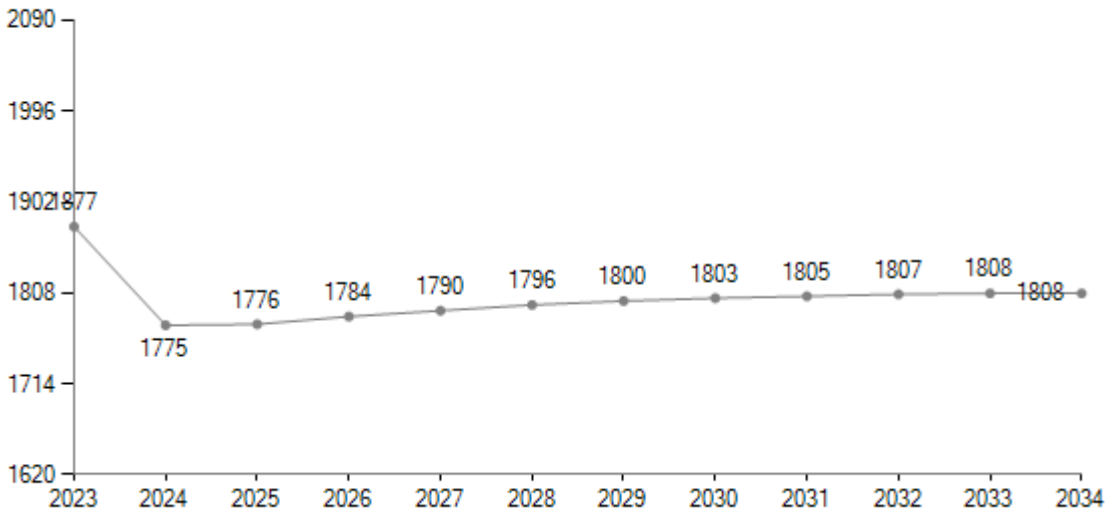


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)