

Best Proofreading & Copy Editing Service 2022 &
Excellence Award in Language Services 2022

Helen Birkbeck Language & Editorial Services

When Helen Birkbeck began her proofreading and copy editing business, she mostly wanted to earn a bit of money by making the most out of a skill she was born with – an ability to spell and use language well – and to have a more flexible working life that suited a mother of three school-age children.

As Helen's work developed from simple proofreading to more detailed copy editing (and some translation), she honed her skills and found an increasing satisfaction in helping people make the best of their written work so as to reach their goal, whether that is to publish a magazine or book, or to gain an academic qualification and build a career.

Helen strives to tackle most subjects, but she specialises in academic and general business texts, languages, and theology. She has a degree in German and Norwegian and can offer translation from these languages and proofreading of translations. She can check texts on screen or on paper using BS 5261 symbols, according to the client's requirements.

The types of client who come to Helen for proofreading and copy editing services include publishers, academic organisations, charities, businesses, journals, individuals – and anyone who needs to produce clear and accurate documents that are well written and presented.

Helen tells us, "There are a lot of freelance proofreaders and editors out there, so it is definitely a challenge to distinguish oneself! I like to think I offer a very personalised and friendly service that seeks to find out what each client really needs, and to apply my skills and experience accordingly. Having studied languages at university, I feel a particular affinity with people writing in a language that is not their native one, and use this in my work with overseas students and with authors having their translated works published in English."

She has also noticed how self-publishing has become a growth area, though not all independent writers have the resources to employ a proofreader. Helen says, "The much-



needed Northern Powerhouse ought to provide opportunities for businesses of all sizes, including those in publishing, as everyone produces written or online content of some sort."

However, Helen observes that there is an energy and a determination in the north to make the best of the area and its assets, which she didn't see as much in her previous home in a southern city. She states, "Yorkshire is incredibly rich and diverse in its landscapes, history, industries, and people, so it provides a stimulating environment for businesses of all sizes and kinds."

Now, as Helen continues her business into the future, she chooses to remain a sole trader, so she doesn't do any recruiting. The company

culture, as far as there is one, reflects her wish to provide a valuable service and her enduring pleasure at using her innate skills, backed up by training and CPD, to help her clients make their writing better.

She shares, "I am happy to keep going as I am, but of course I am always eager to find more clients and work on texts on new subjects that stretch me and help me to learn, which I hope will benefit my clients as well as myself."

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