

A SUBMISSION TO THE CAIRNCROSS REVIEW BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS

We agree the press plays a critical role in the provision of high quality journalism in the UK, ensuring the public has access to a diverse range of views and opinions and supporting our democratic society. We also appreciate the recognition that the regional and local press has an especially important role to play in supporting communities and providing valuable public interest journalism.

High quality journalism depends on the availability of high quality journalists. This has been secured by the existence in the regional and local press of a comprehensive training programme linked to a nationally-recognised qualification scheme. Maintaining and developing this is vital in sustaining the future of high quality journalism.

The National Council for the Training of Journalists has been responsible for running the regional and local newspaper industry's training scheme for journalists since 1951. Achieving high quality journalism begins with the recruitment of people from all walks of life who have the potential to be journalists. It continues with their training, development and qualification as professional journalists to rigorous standards set and assessed by the industry through the NCTJ.

Whilst the NCTJ's focus has previously been in the regional and local newspaper sector, the traditional training ground for journalists, we now play an increasingly important role in the wider media. The number of journalists working in the regional and local media may have declined in recent years, but recent government data suggests that there are now more people working as journalists in the wider economy than ever before. This reflects the value that businesses put on journalism skills. Other media sectors cannot continue to rely on publishers to train and provide them with a constant supply of high quality senior journalists for their newsrooms. Publishers, who are under huge financial pressures, cannot continue to bear the responsibility and cost of training and qualifying the majority of the UK's professional journalists.

In considering the economic sustainability of the media and possible funding solutions, we would urge those involved in the Cairncross review to also consider the importance of sustaining and supporting the industry's training scheme for journalists. Boosting the vital work of the news industry also requires significant investment in producing quality trained and qualified journalists from diverse and inclusive backgrounds.

Our training scheme has stood the test of time as well as adapting to digital developments and changes in working practices. We have kept pace with the effects on training needs of an industry in relentless upheaval at the same time as leading the way in anticipating and meeting the skillset demands of tomorrow's journalists.

The NCTJ currently accredits more than 70 pre-entry journalism courses at 38 centres. All of them have to deliver the NCTJ's syllabus and assessments and open themselves and their students to public and independent scrutiny – this requires time, commitment,

dedication and resources. There are further education courses, undergraduate and postgraduate higher education courses, and independent courses. Some bursaries are available from our industry's Journalism Diversity Fund for those who cannot afford their training.

It is mandatory for all students on NCTJ-accredited courses, and the growing number of junior journalist apprentices, to sit the Diploma in Journalism. There are no exemptions or exceptions; it is an exacting national industry standard. Centres delivering NCTJ-accredited courses must meet the industry's demanding performance standards.

All trainees and apprentices entering the industry via regional publishers must achieve the diploma at the industry 'gold standard' (including 100wpm shorthand). They must complete at least 18 months of training before sitting the National Qualification in Journalism or an in-company qualification. Progression to senior status depends on success in these assessments to a high and consistent standard.

Although this training scheme is working very well at pre-entry level, to some extent, there has been a decline in the number of journalists in the regional and local press and therefore a decline in the number of journalists training and qualifying at a senior level. It is here that action is needed and there is a growing concern. Fewer journalists being trained and qualified in the regional and local press as senior journalists will have an impact on standards and quality journalism.

NCTJ qualifications remain one of this country's toughest tests of professional skills. They require huge amounts of skill, ability, persistence and determination – the very qualities all editors want in their newsroom journalists.

Market intervention may be required to sustain the press and its professional training scheme for senior journalists. The threats to the economic model that are undermining quality local journalism are undermining the quality of all journalism. It is important for the future of our democracy that funding is managed independently and is free from state control, political agendas, interference and influence.

The NCTJ's training scheme is successful, robust and reputable; upholding standards in training and qualifications remains at the heart of the NCTJ's mission and values. We are keen to be involved in shaping proposals about the future sustainability of quality journalism and, in particular, the important role of training and qualifications.

Further information and contact details:

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Please see our website for a range of labour market and skills information about journalism. *Journalists at Work 2018*, which provides the most up-to-date research, will be published in October 2018 and will be submitted for consideration in the Cairncross review www.nctj.com

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