



Select Committee on Communications and Digital

Corrected oral evidence: The Future of Journalism

Tuesday 10 March 2020

3.35 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Gilbert of Panteg (The Chair); Lord Allen of Kensington; Baroness Bull; Viscount Colville of Culross; Baroness Grender; Lord McInnes of Kilwinning; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Meyer; Baroness Quin; Lord Storey; The Lord Bishop of Worcester.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 25 - 33

Witness

I: Will Gore, Head of Partnerships and Projects, National Council for the Training of Journalists.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witness

Will Gore.

Q25 **The Chair:** We welcome Will Gore, who is head of partnerships and projects at the National Council for the Training of Journalists. Thank you for coming along and giving evidence to this session of our inquiry into the future of journalism. It is kind of you to spare your time to be available to us today. One of the important areas we are studying is the skills required by journalists in the digital media age. We will go around the table and take questions from members of the Committee.

Could you start by briefly introducing yourself, and giving us a brief overview of the changes in the skills required in journalism and the technological developments that are impacting the most on the skill set required for a modern journalist?

Will Gore: Certainly. Thank you for having me. I am the head of partnerships and projects at the National Council for the Training of Journalists. My background is that I spent just under a decade working for the *Independent* and the *Evening Standard*. Prior to that I spent just over a decade working for the Press Complaints Commission, so I have seen the industry from various angles.

The NCTJ has a lengthy history. It will be 70 years-old next year. It was set up in 1951, primarily to oversee a training scheme for the regional newspaper sector, which of course at the time was very strong. That very much provided the feeding ground for the rest of the news media industry. That has obviously changed significantly, albeit that there are still plenty of people going into that local sector, so it is important not to write it off.

The NCTJ has evolved in line with that, so we now work as much with broadcasters and digital outlets as we do with newspapers. Our core role is to develop practical journalism qualifications in conjunction with industry and then to accredit courses on which those qualifications are taught at universities, in the FE sector and via private training providers. Every year, around 1,500 people sit the NCTJ diploma, which is the key pre-entry qualification. The vast bulk of those go into jobs. We also have a role in broader continuing professional development and project management of various things, including the community news project that we are running for Facebook and various publishers.

Very plainly, skills have changed significantly, particularly in the last 15 years, driven primarily by the advances in digital technology that we have seen, which had an impact both on what journalists are able to do in their days and on the broader economic challenges which large bits of the industry face. The consequence of that is that many newsrooms are producing vastly more content now than they were 20 years ago with significantly less resource than they had then.

The broad answer to the question about skills development is that journalists today are likely to need a far wider variety of skills, because there are fewer individuals in newsrooms who specialise absolutely in

sub-editing, for example—everybody knows that there are far fewer sub-editors around today. Likewise, all journalists would now go into a newsroom expecting to need to have digital skills, as well as the core storytelling skills that they have always needed.

Many of the skills that they need now are precisely the same as those that they needed 20 years ago, such as how to construct a story, how to follow the relevant legal and ethical requirements and so on, but they have had to take on huge numbers of digital skills for tech. Our qualifications have evolved to make sure that we are still equipping the hundreds of students who take the qualification every year with the skills they need, and that likewise the trainee journalists who are in work and sit our senior-level qualification are tested on the relevant skills for the newsroom.

Q26 The Lord Bishop of Worcester: I will ask a general question about the way university journalism courses prepare students for a career in the industry. In doing that, I will focus on one particular area. You talked about the core skill of storytelling and how that has changed with digital. Then you referred to ethical and legal frameworks.

You might expect me to ask this question. To what extent are trainee journalists encouraged to reflect on the assumptions they have and the values they hold, which might not even be conscious, about the way the world is and ought to be, which, unless they reflect consciously upon them, will perhaps get them into difficulties? I am not thinking about promulgating any particular approach, but there are all sorts of mores in our society that are taken for granted, and sometimes values clash—equality versus religious freedom, and all that sort of thing.

To what extent is it possible and necessary to prepare people to be journalists in that respect, and do you do so?

Will Gore: On the first part of your question about how well universities prepare students, it is a mixed picture. There are significant numbers of journalism degree courses out there. Some of them have nothing to do with the NCTJ and do not teach the diploma as part of that qualification. Some of them I do not believe are particularly helpful in preparing a journalist practically for a newsroom. Obviously, the diploma that is taught in degree courses that teach our course is more vocationally based.

It is not clear cut. Certainly, if we look at the higher education stats, we see that about a quarter of those who study for a journalism degree become journalists, so there is a significant drop-off. The overall figure for NCTJ graduates is around 65%—it is much higher than that when you look at the top end and the high marks.

On the ethical aspect, just as the Leveson inquiry forced the entire industry to reconsider a considerable number of matters—it was effectively that inquiry which brought me from the regulatory side into industry—the NCTJ significantly reviewed its course at that time to place much greater emphasis on ethics. The diploma is the qualification that individuals sit most frequently for. It is a modular, flexible course that

can be taught in a variety of ways, but the key elements that must be taught to all students are ethics, law, regulation and the essentials of journalism—how you put a story together.

While each centre teaches the qualification slightly differently, there is a significant focus on teaching students to consider those questions precisely as you suggest: that is, from the point of view not only of the expectations of the regulatory structures and media law but of the broader social questions about how journalism should be done. There is a very strong current running through journalism teaching that asks students to consider those very questions.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Might a subset of that issue be how you build in trainee journalists not only resilience to the kind of issues the Bishop has raised but some capacity to recognise and deal with different sorts of editorial bias or the ethos of a particular news producer, whose owner might have a strong political agenda or whatever? I know that lots of journalists do not have to deal with that because they are not working within those kinds of organisations, but quite a lot of them do.

What do you say to students about the influence they are likely to encounter being brought to bear on them or about how to understand the political climate of a particular news organisation?

Will Gore: It is important for us as the national organisation arranging and awarding these qualifications not to become too politicised around those questions. Students can read too much into things if we start to present a particular viewpoint.

However, journalism teachers are certainly increasingly focusing not only on resilience within newsrooms and on the pressures that can be brought to bear in the form of the particular political outlook of a publication or editorial view but on the impact on individual journalists of external pressures and challenges from political organisations, corporate organisations and individuals who, in this age of social media, are not shy about attacking individual journalists.

That is becoming a commonplace part of doing journalism. It is not taught as part of our qualification, but I would be amazed if there were any journalism courses that did not get into that territory. In my view, the whole purpose of a journalism course should be to prepare somebody for a newsroom. If it is not talking about questions of resilience, it is probably not doing that.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Can you give a short example of what kind of conversation might help give them that sort of resilience?

Will Gore: The types of conversation that go on are about the extent to which an individual journalist is personally liable for the viewpoint of a newspaper, magazine or whatever it might be, and the extent to which they should seek to influence that and deal with what are called trolls in the online space. The conversations tend towards the practical, because that is what journalists want to hear. Hearing the theory goes only so far.

Q27 Lord Allen of Kensington: I am required to declare some of my interests. I am chair of Global Media & Entertainment, LBC and LBC News. I have a declared shareholding in ITV and am advisory chair to Moelis & Company, which advises a number of media companies.

My question is about degrees and journalism. We are told that 86% of journalists have a degree. Therefore, a small proportion of journalists do not. What could we do to enhance that?

Will Gore: I suspect that, among new entrants, the number of those who have a degree is even higher than that 86% figure, which partly reflects the general shift towards the primacy of degrees as a marker of talent, which may have gone a little too far.

Certainly, the NCTJ diploma can be taught outside a degree setting. It can be taught as a stand-alone qualification that can in theory be done as a postgraduate qualification, but it can just as easily be done without a degree, either via one of the colleges or providers or within the context of an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships have provided a very good route for individuals who have not done degrees but who want to get into the journalism sector. Certainly, when I was at the *Evening Standard* and the *Independent*, we took on apprentices precisely to encourage a different point of view to enter the newsroom. We did that very successfully.

The other advantage of taking that approach, where you widen the field, is that it potentially enables a much more diverse cohort of entrants into the sector. That is another key element of our work and key issue for the industry as a whole.

Lord Allen of Kensington: Could you give us a sense of numbers? How many people would come through that route annually?

The second part of my question was how you enhance it. If you think that diversity is important, how do you move it away from 14% to 20%, 30% or whatever the appropriate figure might be?

Will Gore: In 2019, 170 people did apprenticeships. That is a good number.

Lord Allen of Kensington: Without a degree?

Will Gore: Yes. It is possible that some of them would have done a degree in an unconnected realm, but the vast majority would not have done degrees. Some individuals who did not have a degree first would have studied for the diploma either via distance learning with us or at one of our providers, but we do not track that.

The difficulty that employers have had with apprenticeships is funding. At the moment, they can use their apprenticeship levy to pay for the training element, but they cannot use it to pay for salaries. In fact, there is a significant cost to employers to take on apprentices if they are paying their apprentices as they should be. That has been off-putting for some.

There is a degree to which some are also a little put off by the bureaucracy, but, in terms of public policy interventions, greater support

for apprenticeships would certainly be hugely welcomed by the industry, particularly as we move into a phase where there will, we hope, be a senior-level apprenticeship, as well as the existing pre-entry, junior-level apprenticeship which is done by people getting into the sector.

The senior-level one will be built around our senior-level qualification, the NQJ. Again, if there is additional support for that route it will enhance employers' ability to take people from non-grad backgrounds and to train individuals at the higher level once they have actually got in the door and been there for two years or so.

Q28 **Baroness Grender:** I was very struck by the work that you did at the *Evening Standard* in taking on apprenticeships to try to get a different perspective.

My question is about pulling in people later in life who may be having a career change. The example that we as a Committee rather like is Katherine Forster, who had been a full-time mother for 15 years and who then, in a CV-blind application process, became an intern at the *Spectator* and went to work for the *Sunday Times*.

Given what we know about the gender challenge and the BAME challenge in the sector, your search for a different perspective may also include people later in life. It would be good to know what thought has been given to how you ensure that people later in life come into the industry.

Will Gore: My last editor at the *Evening Standard* also came into journalism as a second career, but he might be an outlier.

Baroness Grender: But he did not meet the other challenges that I mentioned.

Will Gore: Indeed. We absolutely welcome entrants into the sector coming at it at a later point in their life. Certainly for the community news project that we are managing—a partnership between us, Facebook and nine regional publishers—where we sought to encourage diversity of entrants, one of the diversity criteria was people coming at the industry later in life, rather than looking at the very youthful end. That has been fairly encouraging.

Likewise, the journalism diversity fund that we manage, which helps to support individuals through diploma training, has often helped people who have sought to enter journalism as a second career but who are anxious about the potential cost of doing so. Plainly, the majority of individuals getting into the industry will require some retraining, and if they are not fortunate enough to get a place on an in-house training scheme, of which there are no longer huge numbers, they will inevitably have to pay the cost of doing a diploma course. We have supported quite a number of people through the JDF in that regard. We would absolutely welcome additional support for that type of cohort. It is true that the industry would also welcome that.

What you have at the moment is a shift in demographic in newsrooms, where, broadly speaking, experienced journalists are being lost and younger journalists are entering at the other end of the spectrum. That is

due primarily to the economic challenges the industry faces, particularly in the legacy print arena. The notion of having individuals in the newsroom who, even if they do not have experience of journalism, have experience of life and another career brings a different kind of perspective, but also a level of calm that newsrooms welcome.

Q29 Lord McInnes of Kilwinning: I will look again at diversity and the representativeness of the industry, specifically at the barriers that stand in people's way.

Could you talk a bit more about the ability of people who do not have the financial means to do internships? It seems that one of the big issues is that there is a very small proportion—11%—of working-class journalists, not just at the top of the profession but across it. Also, looking at BAME journalists and the resilience of people remaining in the industry, I find the drop-off rate in the stats that we have today to be quite high. What are the barriers to BAME people staying in the profession? Also, how can we encourage more working-class people to have a sustainable internship or traineeship in the profession?

Will Gore: That is a critical issue for the industry and has been for some time. The positive thing is that there is a far greater recognition of the problem than there was, say, a decade ago.

The NCTJ set up the Journalism Diversity Fund 15 years ago. As you might have heard, we are on a fundraising drive, because we want to help to support more people through diploma courses, essentially so they can do them at any cost and get into work. The truth, if you look at the stats, is that doing a diploma is the best way to get into the sector. There are certainly some parts of the industry that still will not take anyone who does not have an NCTJ diploma. There is that initial cost of training, but there is also the potential cost of work experience and internships.

The picture is not quite as clear-cut as it is sometimes presented. It is true to say that a lot of people undertake unpaid work experience, certainly more than should do. Equally, however, there are plenty of companies that now will not offer work experience placements beyond a couple of weeks, although if they do they are paid. There are also companies that will not offer any work experience that is unpaid, and many of those that offer unpaid placements will pay expenses. I am not underplaying that problem, but it is being addressed up to a point. We are looking at the moment at producing some best practice on work experience and internships to try to hammer home the key messages, because it plainly has been a barrier for some people until now, and indeed at the moment probably still is.

There is, however, that secondary point that you alluded to. Yes, you might be able to get people into the industry, and obviously the JDF has been a tried and tested route for that happening. Nevertheless, we still see that drop-off rate. We do not necessarily see people going into more senior positions.

Against that, generally speaking, the drop-off rate for journalists is now quite significant. That is partly to do with the recognition that they might be able to earn more money elsewhere. Salaries in some parts of the industry are not particularly high, so that is fair enough. However, for some people there is also a feeling that while the industry has certainly moved forward in recognising the diversity question, there is more to do to address what might be called inclusion in newsrooms. That is certainly something that the NCTJ has become very conscious of in the last year or two, which is why our work in that arena is not just about diversity but about diversity and inclusion. Plenty of companies have followed suit.

One interesting thing to note is that the drop-off rate for people who have gone through the Journalism Diversity Fund route is actually very low. Looking at the number of people who have gained a diploma through the JDF, the number who remain in journalism is astonishingly high compared with the general NCTJ cohort, which is pretty high, and certainly the cohort of general entrants to the industry.

There are positive signs, but I absolutely agree that there is more to do about inclusion and progression. The progression question applies across the board, which is one reason why we are looking to formalise what we do in continuous professional development.

Lord McInnes of Kilwinning: What is the level of competition for the diversity fund? If you were to reach £500,000 of your fund-raising target, what proportion of the market of those applying would you be able to cover?

Will Gore: We have seen a steady increase in the numbers of people applying to that fund and successfully being awarded bursaries. It is a relatively challenging process; I think it has to be, because we are awarding potentially quite large amounts of money. So far, we have always been able to award a bursary to every candidate whom the interview panel has felt deserved it.

The issue that we have come up against in the last two years is that it has been a record period for awarding bursaries; we have given bursaries to 90 students. The average cost of those bursaries is around £8,000, and if we do not succeed in raising additional revenue to that fund we think that demand will probably outstrip supply next year. So we are hammering on lots of doors at the moment.

Q30 **Lord Storey:** My question is also about diversity but diversity in terms of region, socioeconomic background and city. I was listening to the editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, who came from a mining family. His dad went down the mines. He was lucky enough to go to university—he did a journalism course at Lincoln, I think—and said that he was very lucky to get a job. He got it only because the editor of the *Yorkshire Post* at the time came from his village.

I looked at your background, in what few notes we have about you, and saw that you manage the Facebook-funded community news reporting project with, I think, about 80 new journalists. If you put that alongside the BBC-funded—£150 million, I think—local news democracy reporters,

is this not the means by which we change the system?

Look at Parliament, for example: the only way we got more women into Parliament was through positive discrimination. It is the same in many other sectors. You can talk to us about the numbers and tell us that we need to do this or that, but is it not about positive discrimination and saying, "Okay, we as an industry are going to use those 80 or 150 posts and make sure that people from ethnic minority backgrounds, for example, get a percentage of those"?

Will Gore: Up to a point. We would take the view that setting quotas is a potentially challenging issue. Certainly with the community news project—I cannot speak to the BBC's scheme, although I do not think that the cohorts that have been taken have been quite as diverse as they might have liked—there was a stated ambition between the partners to seek as diverse a cohort as possible without creating quotas that would have been almost impossible, with nine different employers and so on.

A range of diversity criteria were set out relating to socioeconomic background, ethnicity, sexuality, age and so on, but not gender. As it happens, two-thirds of the reporters who have been employed are women, but that was not one of the diversity criteria. I think 68% of those community reporters hit one or more of the diversity criteria that we set out. That is a remarkable success story.

One reason why that was possible was because we were looking specifically for people who were going to focus on community stories, and a significant number of those reporters came from the areas they were going to report on, which encouraged a different kind of applicant from the ones that might normally appear.

Secondly, some of the publishers made changes to their recruitment strategies, both to where the jobs were advertised but also to how interviews were conducted. It seems to me that that is a key area where there can be significant improvement, and where you will encourage people from what are euphemistically called non-traditional backgrounds into newsrooms and potentially get back to the scenario that probably existed 50 years ago where, certainly in terms of socioeconomic background, newsrooms were much more diverse than they are now. In terms of ethnicity, they were not diverse 50 years ago. That has improved, although there is no doubt still work to be done in that arena, too.

Lord Storey: I am very pleased to hear that. In a sense, we think about these funded schemes in terms of saving the regional press, which is correct, but actually we should also be singing your praises in terms of how that funding can be used to tackle diversity.

Will Gore: Yes, absolutely.

Baroness Grender: To go back to the diversity issue, if we take the two statistics that 94% of journalists are white, which is the information that we currently have, and that, say, 80% of editors are privately educated, we need to ask ourselves: quotas or no quotas, are things moving as quickly as they ought to in that kind of context? The *Daily Mail*, over

90% of whose editorial staff are white, launched a scheme in 2015, the Stephen Lawrence scholarship, which so far has taken on seven scholars since then. Do you feel that that kind of thing is fast enough? I understand what you are saying about quotas, but do you not feel from looking at the stats at the moment that things are moving at quite a leisurely pace, to put it mildly?

Will Gore: My sense is that the momentum around this question has shifted in the last couple of years, for a variety of reasons. In part it is because various political events created shocks in newsrooms and an awareness that one of the reasons why those shocks were not seen coming was because newsrooms were not diverse. There was a lost connection with what was going on, particularly outside the London bubble.

I think there is greater momentum to these issues now. The NCTJ has gained a high profile because of the community news project that we have done, backed by Facebook, and in the last year it has been able to be a corralling organisation to bring the industry together to discuss these issues much more sensibly. When we look at the way we are seeking to raise funds around the Journalism Diversity Fund, it seems to us that there is a huge amount of talent out there. The question is how you bring it into the newsroom and do so relatively quickly.

I would not dispute at all the idea that more could be done. There is also a challenge in doing more to get into schools and talk to people at school age about what journalism actually is, what it does and why it is important. One of the issues that we have identified, which is why we are doing more work ourselves in this arena, is that there are vast numbers of people who never even think about a career in journalism, and if they vaguely wonder about it when they are 15, they probably look at the news on the TV—actually, they probably do not when they are 15 nowadays—imagine what journalism looks like and think, “It doesn’t look like me” or “It doesn’t fit someone from my background”.

That is a missing bit of the puzzle. There are organisations doing very good work in this area—the Student View is one among many—and the careers bit of our work is now much more focused on a much younger age. If you focus on people when they are 17 or 18 and thinking about what degree or apprenticeship to do, that is too late. You need to get the talent tapped up at a much earlier stage.

The Chair: You are coming back to this Committee’s theme of careers in schools—in relation to the wider creative industries, frankly, not just journalism—and the funding of the careers services, along with the responsibility of the creative sectors to step up between them and put effort and resource into schools’ careers services. That is an important theme, but sadly we need to move on. We may write to you and ask you to come back a bit about that careers point.

Will Gore: Sure.

Q31 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** I declare an interest as a series producer for Raw TV, making content for CNN. I am also a proud holder of an

NCTJ diploma.

Will Gore: Wonderful.

Viscount Colville of Culross: I want to talk about the huge increase in the number of freelancers. There has been a huge increase in the number of freelancers as the legacy print industries in particular have shed their staff. I understand from your research that, rather shockingly, the average income for those freelancers is less than £23,000 a year, and that they are concerned that there are not nearly enough opportunities for training. Your research tells me that 87% feel that there are barriers to training, either financially or because there are not suitable courses. How do you provide those courses? How do you fund them, bearing in mind that the employers of freelancers are particularly loath to pay for that sort of thing?

Will Gore: That is a crucial question for us and the industry. There is this odd scenario at the moment where the general narrative is about decline in the sector, yet the number of people who are journalists is steadily going up. Many of them, as you identify, are freelancers who are working for a whole range of publications, potentially part-time or on an ad hoc basis. They obviously all have training needs, to a greater or lesser extent. That is a huge challenge for the industry and for the NCTJ.

The truth of the matter is that one of the first things to fall by the wayside tends to be when companies are looking to tighten their belts is training budgets. The reality is that the question of how the NCTJ can help with training, not only of freelancers but also continuous professional development for journalists who are working as staff within media outlets, is a tricky one. As things stand, we run upskilling—to use that dreadful word—courses for a whole range of individuals, journalists and non-journalists, freelancers and staff, on a request basis or an ad hoc basis, and we schedule various courses and events. Most of those have to be run on a commercial basis, because we do not have the money to operate them as a charitable endeavour.

We will run free events when we can and when we are able to find an organisation to sponsor them, and certainly the likes of Facebook and Google have been helpful in that regard. We would like to create a much more formal, and indeed free or heavily subsidised, model of continuous professional development for the sector, because we recognise, as do many in the industry, that training at the moment, once you have got into a job, is on a relatively ad hoc basis.

Plainly, that will require us to seek funding from somewhere. We are in discussions with various potential funders in that respect. It seems to us that this is potentially an arena where, again, a public policy intervention would be hugely helpful. Certainly in other parts of the creative industries, particularly the film industry, you see huge amounts of public support for screen skills in order to offer that kind of development. That is an area on which we are very focused and we know what we would like to do, but there is a funding question for us that we have to overcome.

Viscount Colville of Culross: Can you give us a bit more detail about how you expect that funding question to be answered?

Will Gore: We do not anticipate that it will be easily answered from within the industry itself. It is more likely that it would come from a potential range of external funding partners, either via grants or through existing partnerships being expanded. There are lots of things that we are already doing, such as moving towards much more online learning, which we would like to be able to offer, as I say, on a charitable rather than a commercial basis, but we will have to keep those conversations going until we find a way to do it.

Clearly, one option is via public funds, but who knows what appetite there might be for that? It seems to me personally, and this is probably the view of the NCTJ as well, that the Government have always, rightly, been extremely cautious about funding journalists. There are obvious pitfalls with that. I am not at all convinced that there are the same pitfalls in the ancillary areas, such as training, provided it is done at arm's length. I leave that thought with you.

Q32 **Baroness Meyer:** This is a follow-up to that question. If it is becoming more and more difficult to get access to training in a changing world, will that mean in the end that for freelance journalists and indeed for the older generation of journalists, who may have experience of life and write in a different fashion from young journalists who have more digital skills, we will move more and more towards digital and written journalism will slowly disappear unless we do something to support them?

Will Gore: I do not know. There are still a significant number of people undertaking good-quality training and getting the core skills that they need to do journalism. The rates of people who do an NCTJ diploma and go into their first job are very high, and they are capable of hitting the ground running; there is no doubt about that at all. However, you are right that there is a question mark for people who have been in jobs for maybe 20 or 30 years, do not have digital skills and do not really know how to access training in them. Some of those people are perhaps not that interested in that, but others are and would like their skills developed, so there is a question on that.

Likewise, there is a question for freelancers. Freelance journalists often end up being quite specialised, because they do not have a skill that would enable them to do a shift on, let us say, a social media desk at an online news outlet, but they can pitch stories, interviews and op-eds. There are vast numbers of people doing that kind of work as well as doing other things at the same time that are not journalistic.

It is sort of self-evident that the more you equip journalists with a wider skill set, the more able they are to bring effective journalism to the table. That helps not only newsrooms but audiences.

Q33 **Baroness Quin:** You have already mentioned a number of areas where public policy could perhaps do more. You have mentioned

apprenticeships. You have mentioned the education system in making pupils at school more aware of journalism. Just now you mentioned the possibility of state funding, particularly if it was related to training.

This is the final question, so it is a bit of a wrap-up question. Are there any other areas of public policy that you would like to see employed to help the future of journalism? Again, given that this is the last question, do you have any particular hopes for the outcome of our inquiry?

Will Gore: That is a lovely blank slate. I have probably mentioned the key issues that I would have hoped to have mentioned by this stage. Other parts of the creative industries have benefited from public funding and public support in a way that journalism has not. That is partly because journalism has never needed that support; until very recently, it was a thriving sector where private companies were able to make good margins and all the rest of it.

I do not want to overplay it, but we are now at a stage where there are significant economic challenges facing some parts of the industry, and it would be much more appropriate to consider that kind of public policy intervention than it would have been 15 or 20 years ago. It is striking that, if you think back 10 years, give or take, to the Leveson inquiry, where heinous behaviour that had clearly gone on at some of these papers came out, there was a real sense of urgency about how to tackle it.

Whether or not you agree that it has been suitably dealt with is a matter of opinion, but I do not get the same sense of urgency about what are arguably more fundamental questions about the health of the industry. No doubt if you spoke to the publishing companies themselves, particularly those that are in the newspaper-legacy arena, they would argue that they need boots on the ground in the here and now. Yes, innovation will pay off eventually, maybe in 10 years' time, but they wonder whether they will even get there. I do not know.

From the NCTJ point of view, there is certainly a question about training and ensuring that enough people are getting the right kind of training to go into a newsroom, know what they are doing and do what they do properly in a way that will inform audiences and that will enable them to progress into senior roles. The diploma we have developed prepares people for those roles, but there are lots of people who are not able to access it, sometimes because they cannot afford to. We can help a certain number of people through our diversity fund, but plainly there are some people who cannot access it. There remains a question about the degree to which some people who undertake journalism courses are properly prepared for newsrooms. That is why large numbers of people who do journalism degrees do not then go into journalism.

The only additional point I might make, to add to those I have already made about our role in continuous professional development, apprenticeships and support for advocating careers in journalism in schools, is probably about encouraging and incentivising universities and colleges that offer journalism courses to make sure that they are courses which the industry believes are relevant. The NCTJ is the only

organisation that develops journalism qualifications as a standard across the UK in conjunction with industry.

Our board comprises the BBC, Sky, Newsquest, JPI, Reach, Reuters, the *FT*, you name it. They are the people who are ensuring that the qualification is fit for purpose. Incentivising universities to teach that qualification would be hugely helpful, not least because we entirely recognise that there is a burden in doing that. There is an additional cost to essentially offer a degree course plus the diploma within that course, and the truth is that some people fail it. I am afraid students do not like paying a lot of money for a course and then failing. There needs to be a degree of incentivisation for colleges and universities that are prepared to take a bit of a gamble and run these courses.

Baroness Quin: What are the best ways of incentivising universities to do that?

Will Gore: Some of it might simply be recognising that the diploma qualification is an industry standard, has long been recognised by the sector and remains a prerequisite for employment within some parts of the sector. Some of it might be subsidising exam costs or something like that, but part of it is about understanding what the industry requires.

This is desperately sad to see, but every year we are contacted by students who have undertaken a course that is not NCTJ-accredited and is perhaps not particularly good. They go to their local paper and say, "I've got my journalism degree. Can I get a job?" and the editor says, "No, because it's not an NCTJ diploma". They then come to us and say, "I now need to do a diploma".

So there is a huge challenge in trying to do more. We do all that we can, but we need to do more to underscore which courses set people on the right track for newsrooms. I am not suggesting that the only route into the industry is via an NCTJ diploma, because there are plenty of others, but I think that is the best way to give yourself the best chance of getting a job. I ended up working at a newspaper for a long time and did not train as a journalist, so there are other ways in, but if you want to become a reporter, the diploma is the best way to do it.

The Chair: That is certainly an interesting area that we have been exploring with Baroness Quin, which I think we will consider. I think we need to leave it there. Thank you very much for your evidence. We cut you short on a couple of points, not least when you were talking careers in response to Baroness Grender's question. You might want to write us with a few more of your thoughts on the importance of upping the game in schools in relation to careers in the industry and the wider sector. Thank you very much indeed for giving us your time. I hope you follow the inquiry, and if you have any further contributions that you wish to make, they will be very welcome.