

The Guardian Foundation—written evidence (FOJ0073)

Submission to the House of Lords inquiry into the future of journalism

This submission is in response to the request by the Clerk to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee, which has a remit to consider public policy on the media, creative, and digital industries. The Committee launched an inquiry into the future of journalism. The inquiry is focussing on support for journalists, trust in journalism, and changes in journalism.

As part of this, the Committee stated they were interested in news literacy, and particularly how this varies depending on socioeconomic background. The following questions received are used as guidelines for the submission:

- How have digital technologies changed the consumption of journalism?
- How can innovation and collaboration help news organisations to maintain sustainable business models?
- Do journalists have access to the training opportunities necessary to adapt to the digital world? How could public policy better support the training of journalists?
- Why has trust in journalists declined? How could it be improved?
- Why is the journalism profession not more representative of the population?
- How can journalists better understand and convey the concerns and priorities of people who do not live in London or other metropolitan hubs?

Response from The Guardian Foundation

The Guardian Foundation is an independent charity which supports media under threat, promotes diversity in the media and empowers children and young people to engage with the news. We run the following programmes in order to fulfil that mission across all age groups:

- [NewsWise](#) teaching primary school children (aged 9-11) how news is made, how to critically navigate news, how to create their own news reports and to have a voice in their own communities;
- [The Guardian Education Centre](#) which runs inspirational news media workshops at the Guardian office for primary and secondary schools, universities, teachers and families;
- the [Hugo Young Award](#), a celebration of young, diverse journalism;
- [The Scott Trust Bursary Scheme](#) enabling talented young students from under-represented backgrounds to study for a postgraduate qualification in journalism and gain valuable work experience at the Guardian;
- [The Guardian Archive](#) which preserves the history of the Guardian and Observer and is open to public enquiries and visits on request;

We are also a founding partner for the [European Press Prize](#) and we run an [international capacity building programme](#) for independent media under threat. Therefore we have experience of the media landscape in Turkey in particular. However for the purposes of this submission we have focused on the UK perspective and our experiences here, particularly in News Literacy.

How have digital technologies changed the consumption of journalism?

Digital technology has given citizens in the UK greater access to information, debate, opinions and free news content than ever before. Technology has empowered news consumers to become 'citizen journalists', and has given platforms to those voices who often go unheard.

However, the move of news consumption away from communal platforms such as television, to solitary platforms such as those online¹, means that children are not as often given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about news stories at home. This is supported by research from the National Literacy Trust, recently commissioned by NewsWise, which showed that 2 in 5 parents (39%) said they never watch, listen to or read news with their child at home and 1 in 5 (21%) never talk to their child about news².

This challenge is even more acute for children from disadvantaged communities, whose parents are less likely to watch, listen to or read news with their children (45% vs 37%) and who don't believe they themselves have the skills to spot fake news (52% vs 39%), than parents from more advantaged backgrounds³.

¹ Ofcom, News Consumption in the UK, 2019:
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/tv-radio-and-on-demand/news-media/news-consumption>

² National Literacy Trust (2019):
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/family-news-literacy-report/>

³ National Literacy Trust (2019):
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/family-news-literacy-report/>

By encouraging a solitary consumption of journalism, digital technology has denied young people the opportunity to engage with and discuss news with their families. Moreover, by empowering society to become 'citizen journalists', the processes that sit behind the professions of high quality journalism: fact checking, source validation etc, have become less apparent to the public. In a world where everyone has a voice, in which everyone is connected, speed has overtaken the need for accuracy.

How can innovation and collaboration help news organisations to maintain sustainable business models?

Creating innovative programmes and outreach activities to open up the world of journalism to young people is essential to its overall future sustainability. It is important to ensure that young people value high quality journalism in the digital age. The Guardian Foundation achieves this in the following ways:

- The Hugo Young Award, a competition for journalism students from all over the UK to submit an opinion article on an under-represented topic with the winner being published in The Guardian and gaining work experience with the politics desk.
- The Scott Trust Bursary which is open for anyone to apply and funds 3 people each year to complete a Masters degree in journalism at either City, Goldsmiths or Sheffield Universities. We particularly encourage people from a range of diverse backgrounds.
- The Guardian Education Centre and NewsWise, both programmes opening up the world of journalism to young people all over the UK and attracting overseas visitors too. All news organisations should prioritise engaging the next generation who will replenish their audiences.

By ensuring that the media is representative of the audience it serves, it makes it more relevant and therefore more likely to be supported and trusted by the public. With many organisations shifting the business models away from advertising (due to the domination of Google and Facebook capturing the vast majority of advertising spend), financial support from the public is essential in their survival.

Collaboration is key when it comes to journalism education. In July 2018, The Guardian Foundation convened the News Literacy Network, an innovative working group bringing together news organisations, NGOs and academics to establish best practice in how we engage young people in high quality journalism through education. The network consists of approximately 25 member organisations such as News UK, Economist Educational Foundation, BBC News, First News and Thomson Reuters. We share best practice, help promote each other's work and learn from each other. We believe that as a result we can strengthen our offers, and provide clarity and consistency for educators, by working together.

Do journalists have access to the training opportunities necessary to adapt to the digital world? How could public policy better support the training of journalists?

We believe the barriers to necessary training vary depending on the country, but the consistent themes we see are:

1. Locality - often much of the training and courses are based in the major cities and therefore are immediately inaccessible to a large portion of people. Online offerings are not always up to the standard of the face to face interactions. Therefore a

number of areas could be addressed:

- a. the development of high quality, immersive online courses, promoted locally
 - b. more courses being offered in smaller towns and across a wider geographical area
 - c. enabling trainees from outside of the cities to travel to where the courses are
2. Funding - public funding and policy commitment to freedom of the media, made apparent [with this conference in 2019](#) are good starting points, but making in-country, local funding more accessible rather than large general pots reserved for a few invited orgs to apply for. The Swedish model which gives consulates both the resources and the authority to make larger, multi-year grants based on their knowledge of the local context, could be a way forward.
 3. Resources - we see in some areas that the teaching of journalism can be too much from an academic point of view rather than from people who are currently working in the industry. Enabling experienced journalists to pass on their skills and knowledge to new, up and coming journalists is such a valuable resource. However, an organisation like the Guardian that has managed to remain relevant, free and sustainable can't spare journalists to go out and teach. A public policy urging organisations to share their skills and importantly backed with the needed backfill funding would be incredibly impactful.
 4. Skills gaps - taking the above into account, often the experienced journalists who have been in the industry for the longest periods of time are the ones who require digital training the most. Enabling ways for younger and/or more digitally savvy journalists to share skills with perhaps more experienced journalists but those who are still adapting to a 'digital-first' world is also advised. Doing more to promote and encourage people into some of the lesser known or less popular roles in the newsroom would also have a big impact. We see skills gaps in Production, Sub-editing, Editorial Tools, Visuals/interactives/data journalism. This means there is actually less competition for roles in these areas and that someone with good skills and talent in those areas would be more likely to find jobs.

Why has trust in journalists declined? How could it be improved?

We believe that trust in journalism has declined for a number of reasons, but we would like to focus on these two:

1. Digital technology

The next generation of newsmakers and consumers are students who have grown up in an evolving digital landscape and increasingly get their news from websites (43.8%) and social media (49.5% from Snapchat), according to The Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills, 2018. Recent research from Ofcom Making Sense of the Media report highlighted that 26% of 12-15 yr olds never think about the truth and accuracy of news sites or apps. Indeed, the same report showed that, were they interested in truth and accuracy, only 2% of young people have the critical literacy skills to identify fake news.

2. Transparency

For a number of years, journalism has been seen as an elite profession, and newsrooms have not been transparent in how they work. In the digital age, we believe it is impossible to build trust without transparency.

The Guardian Foundation's [Education Centre](#) opened 18 years ago, and aims to improve trust in journalism through opening up the world of the newsroom by working with young people at its London offices. The Centre provides a range of free full day programmes which enable [primary](#) and [secondary](#) students aged 9-18 to understand how news is produced and disseminated. Students are tasked with writing and editing news stories, using industry standard software, in real time, while critically analysing a range of news sources: questioning reliability, accuracy, style and tone, thereby increasing students' engagement with news and current affairs. 5,696 young people from across the UK took part in our workshops during the 2018-19 academic year. The workshops are [highly valued](#) by teachers in enabling children to gain a greater understanding of how the world in which they are living is reported. We also provide a range of news literacy teaching [resources and materials](#) for visiting teachers and students, which are freely available on our website. In addition we offer [training opportunities](#) for teachers enabling them to have the skills and confidence to teach news literacy and critical analysis with their classes. In 2018-19 968 teachers took part in schools workshops, open evenings, [seminars and conferences](#).

Our NewsWise programme extends this offer to primary schools across the UK, by creating authentic journalistic experiences in classrooms with 7-11 year olds. We assign newsroom roles to young people, such as 'team editor, sub editor', 'reporter', and we provide a [glossary of news terms](#), all designed to make the process of journalism as transparent as possible.

Why is the journalism profession not more representative of the population?

Journalism has not been presented as a profession for everyone. It has been elitist, and routes into journalism have not been made easy for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who have no contacts in or understanding of how the industry works.

One of the key roles of The Guardian Foundation is to provide access into the profession of journalism for those from socially deprived or geographically remote communities.

The Guardian Education Centre provides access to a real newsroom setting for young people from across the UK. [Primary](#) and [secondary](#) school students take on the role of reporters, editors, video producers and programmers and encounter the experience producing news.

The Centre's wide reaching programmes raise aspirations about journalism to those who would not have otherwise [considered it as a career](#).

NewsWise works with primary schoolchildren and teachers in areas of socio-economic deprivation or geographical diversity across the UK. We use Indices of Social Deprivation, government opportunity areas data and free school meal data to ensure we are reaching those communities most in need. We map our work across the UK according to the distribution of primary schools in all four nations, in order not to prioritise major cities such as London or Manchester. Every school we visit has above average free school meal recipients.

In every school that NewsWise reaches, we are raising the possibility of journalism as a career for children who had hitherto not considered it. Raising the aspirations of children in deprived communities is key to building a more diverse workforce of journalists in the future.

Traditionally, opportunities for work experience, internships and training were unpaid. This naturally favoured those who could be supported whilst training. The Guardian Foundation's Scott Trust Bursary scheme and Hugo Young Awards exist to promote aspiring journalists from under-represented backgrounds, in particular those from a lower socioeconomic group, BAME, LGBTQ+ or those with a disability.

The Guardian Archive's aim is to preserve the history of the Guardian and Observer and are currently working on a new project, in collaboration with the Education Centre to develop workshops for children to help them understand how news was created before digital technologies were introduced. This will help engage children who would never normally access a news organisation to come into the Guardian building and learn about why quality news is so important.

Through this pipeline of programmes and opportunities, we will bring a more diverse workforce to the profession. And by creating more diverse role models, more young people from all backgrounds will be encouraged into journalism, and consequently journalists from communities beyond metropolitan hubs will be able to share authentic stories from their communities.

How can journalists better understand and convey the concerns and priorities of people who do not live in London or other metropolitan hubs?

Young people lack the skills to critically engage with the news, especially in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage⁴. The Guardian Education Centre aims to reach young people through a trusted news organisation and to widen access and participation in journalism. The Centre's free journalism workshops are heavily oversubscribed (we currently have 300 schools on our waiting list). We open bookings once a year and consider free school meals and where appropriate English as an additional language criteria when assigning workshops. Whilst we work with many schools from London and the South East, we prioritise disadvantaged schools and those from outside the capital.

We have worked with groups [across the UK](#) including the Midlands, Yorkshire, North West and the West Country. Our furthest visiting school last year came from Cumbria. We also delivered workshops to over 1,000 students from Wales, Hereford and Shropshire at the Hay Schools festival in May 2019. Journalists regularly talk to visiting students and are keen to hear young people's opinions on the news agenda. Groups that would not necessarily have their voices heard have featured in projects with the Guardian Weekend Magazine; asking questions selected by Michelle Obama, raising issues with climate experts and reviewing outdated technological devices.

Please also see our recent contribution to the [House of Lords Select Committee on Democracy and Digital Technologies submission](#).

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⁴ [Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy in Schools \(2018\)](#)