



# High-end television in the UK 2019 workforce research

Spring 2020



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## Summary of findings

From a contextual point of view, a number of factors are shaping the experiences and perceptions of those working in HETV production in addition to the issue of skills gaps and skills shortages. These include:

- A general lack of resources - including studio space through to catering services
- The UK Government's historic inflexible approach regarding how the funds gathered via their Apprenticeship Levy can be used to support real TV production crew growth.
- New changes to the IR35 legislation which may impact the way freelancers in HETV can operate in the future
- A lack of downtime due to the level of demand for crew which has a knock-on effect on the time crew have available for rest but also for training.
- An increasing need for improved HR-related skills and resources
- The support landscape is becoming more confusing as more and more skills programmes are delivered by different organisations of differing quality, which is diluting impact. There is a need for support organisations to be more communicative and collaborative to allow easier access to their funding and resources by those in the time-pressured environment of HETV production.

The skills shortage and skills gap issues appear to be a serious issue within HETV, with 81% of survey participants describing the shortages issue as 'very serious' or 'serious' and 73% as the corresponding score when asked about the skills gap issue.

These issues also appear to be worsening over time, with 53% claiming the skills-related issues had worsened over the last 12 months compared to 18% who claimed the situation had improved. From qualitative interviews, the rate of growth of the number of productions appears to be outstripping the rate of growth of the volume of crew available for HETV work.

The lack of available crew and the skills gaps within the available crew appear to be driving, and compounding, the overall impact on the industry. The effects of the skills issues are clear and are primarily seen as crew being promoted too early, without the requisite amount of experience, rates of pay increasing at alarming rates and crew 'show-jumping' by leaving productions before they have completed their role.

Sixty-two specific grade shortages were mentioned by research participants, suggesting that skills shortages were widespread. The most frequently mentioned tended to be those in production management such as production accountant, location manager, production coordinator and line producer. These have been persistently-occurring shortages. However, growing shortages and emerging shortages across both craft and technical departments are now also apparent.

Softer, business skills are also an issue, particularly those around financial and budget management, interpersonal skills and communication as well as leadership and management skills. Recent ScreenSkills HETV initiatives have begun to address these problems.

In terms of prioritisation, feedback from industry was clear in their recommendation for the ScreenSkills HETV Fund to focus on grade-specific shortages as well as increasing diversity and inclusion. There was a more divided response around whether to prioritise new entrants or help develop existing below-the-line crew. This debate played out very much in the qualitative interviews with strong and compelling arguments for both. Key takeout here was that more people are required across the board in order to keep up with the volume of demand for HETV production.

As for solutions to the shortages and gaps within HETV, interviewees were optimistic and positive about programmes to help crew step up, step across from other forms of production and step into

HETV from other industries. Other ideas included new training formats that could fit around the way in which crew now operate.

### **Background and objectives**

ScreenSkills is the strategic skills body which, among many other things, administers the High-end TV (HETV) Skills Fund. This fund is used to positively impact the HETV industry to ensure its long-term prosperity from a training and workforce perspective.

The organisation has identified the need to consult with the wider HETV workforce and industry support organisations to deliver feedback that will ensure the fund is spent in the areas of HETV where it is most needed and where it will have the most positive impact. Research findings from 2019 will inform spending in 2020/21.

Key objectives for the research were:

- To identify the key skills shortages and associated issues from the HETV industry
- To enable the ScreenSkills HETV department to be more strategic in its investment plans for 2021 and beyond

This is the third wave of the HETV Skills Fund research, having first been carried out in September 2017 and again at the same time in 2018. The scope of the research has remained consistent over this time.

### **Research method**

As with previous years, a mixed method of research was adopted. Qualitative, in-depth interviews were carried out among a sample of those working in the HETV industry. Quantitative data was collected from a short, pre-interview survey which included some key metrics, sample profile and open-ended, opinion-based responses.

A large sample of qualitative interviews aimed to provide a high level of detail for the research and also ensure a large number of individuals were given the opportunity to have their say on current issues. The sample was drawn from the ScreenSkills HETV department's contacts.

- Qualitative: 45 telephone depth (semi-structured) interviews approximately 30 minutes in length
- Quantitative: 57 pre-interview surveys completed online
- Fieldwork took place in September/ October 2019
- The sample consisted largely of those who were directly involved in crewing up productions, eg line producers, heads of production, with additional interviews with other senior crew members and those in broadcasting and support agency roles
- 51% of interviews were among those based in London, 18% in the nations and 30% in the English regions

The interviews followed the same topic guide consisting of: top-of-mind issues, focus on skills gaps and shortages, drivers of skills gaps and shortages, dealing with issues and support received, perception of future skills issues.

### **Interpretation of findings**

The findings within this report are drawn from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews.

### **Contextual findings**

A number of issues and concerns were aired by participants which were outside or part-related to the issue of skills shortages and gaps. For example:

### **A lack of studio space and resources**

A common issue highlighted was the difficulty in finding studio space. In the past, this problem has largely been highlighted as a London-based issue whilst in the 2019 research the lack of studio space appears more evident across the nations and regions of the UK as well as in London.

Securing the services of essential facilities such as caterers was also felt to be difficult, as were unit bases. Elsewhere, locations are reportedly becoming more and more expensive and bookings for locations and unit bases are being cancelled at short notice due to a new type of 'gazumping'.

### **A lack of apprenticeships**

Acknowledgement of the pilot scheme for production aside, there was continued frustration that the investment made into the Government's Apprenticeship Levy had still not been released to the industry. As in previous years, concern was raised by a small minority over whether production companies who need to pay the Apprenticeship Levy would also be willing to pay into the HETV Skills Fund.

A question was also raised for the ScreenSkills HETV department specifically around which apprenticeship standards the organisation is planning to create for the HETV industry.

Another concern raised in relation to apprenticeships was the need for higher education institutions to help create Level 6 (degree) apprenticeships, which was felt to be lacking at present.

### **Uncertainty over Brexit**

Perhaps surprisingly, Brexit and its associated uncertainty was not frequently mentioned within the interviews, but it did come up. Concerns included the potential fluctuation in exchange rates which could lead to the UK becoming less attractive as a place to shoot HETV. It appears that Brexit might have a bigger impact on the VFX side of the HETV industry, where there is a higher proportion of European citizens within the workforce.

### **New IR35 legislation**

Concerns here centre on the forthcoming changes to IR35 legislation under which all businesses using freelancers and contractors will be responsible for determining whether IR35 rules apply. It is feared these changes will force more people from freelance status onto company payrolls which threatens the way the industry is currently structured. It is felt that freelancers, in particular, are less aware of the implications of this new ruling on the way that they engage in work.

### **A lack of time for training**

The very nature of the industry, where productions can be delayed or greenlit on a moment's notice, flies in the face of the ability for productions and crew to plan in time for things such as training. With crew often working on productions without a break or downtime in-between, allowing time for training becomes much harder. Training can also be prohibitive for those in the nations and regions who have to travel - often to London - to take part. For those in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the cost of travel and the additional time required to attend training, often in the south of England, can be a real barrier to them taking up these training opportunities. (Author note: where training is delivered in the nations and regions, some trainers have struggled to fill places, so this is a complex challenge.)

On the other hand, compared to research from 2017 and 2018, there does appear to be a greater understanding within productions of the legitimate need for crew to take time off a production for training, holidays or for family commitments. The sense from the 2019 study is that, in at least some cases, crew are being allowed such dispensations more frequently.

### **A need for dedicated HR resources on a production?**

*"No one comes into TV to get into HR."*

- *Head of production*

The stress, anxiety and mental health issues which appear fairly commonplace within the production environment, are receiving higher levels of attention, highlighting a need for good quality HR skills and resources.

According to interviewees, the HR function currently tends to fall upon the line producer, head of production or producer and is clearly not their principal role nor remit. Where dedicated HR resources have been available on a production - for example, on *Game of Thrones* - the production office is relieved of the pressure to handle such work and can rely on the processes, policies and advice set out by an HR professional.

*“I’m just not sure we’re set up to deal with those [HR-related] situations particularly well.”*

- *Line producer*

Clearly the HR role encompasses a wide variety of people management skills: identifying talent, recruitment, contracting, onboarding, training and dealing with legal compliance such as IR35 in addition to the wellbeing and health of the workforce. More of the US studio productions appear to be providing additional support to help their productions with HR-related issues which is a trend that seems likely to continue.

It would seem that industry has, in part at least, awoken to the fact that a happier and more contented workforce breeds more positivity and a more loyal workforce; loyalty from crew being much needed in times of such high demand.

*“A year-and-a-half is a long time to be working with the same people and if you’re in an unhappy office with people who don’t feel like they’re learning and [saying] ‘I’m bored,’ it just breeds lots of other things.”*

- *Production manager*

### **More support organisations and initiatives launching**

Reportedly more organisations are coming online to act as a supporting role for the HETV industry. Examples include Creative Access, Equal Access Network (Film London), Screen Alliance (Wales), Talking Point UK and the London Screen Academy, which opened its doors in September and was founded by Working Title films among others. These organisations are clearly providing a range of different and complementary opportunities and resources to the HETV industry but, from conversations with those in HETV, there is potential here for confusion across the ‘support’ landscape. Given their time-pressured environment, navigating their way through this landscape with the certainty that all opportunities for funding and resource have been considered is a real challenge for line producers, heads of production and producers. As a result, close communication and collaboration between support organisations is something being asked for by industry in order to avoid confusion and ensure the support and funding available really gets to the places where it is most needed.

### **A more professional UK workforce?**

As HETV production in the UK develops further, aided by a large number of US studio productions and the influence of US media corporate structures and practices, there is a sense from the qualitative interviews that the industry is becoming more conscious of its workforce; in effect, there is a *professionalising* of the UK HETV industry which has previously been described throughout this research programme as more of a ‘cottage industry’. One example of this is the way in which Netflix onboards crew, which includes setting an expectation of how crew should behave.

New working time directives agreed between PACT and BECTU are further impacting the industry, providing the workforce with a more confident voice around aspects of the job such as contracted hours and overtime<sup>1</sup>.

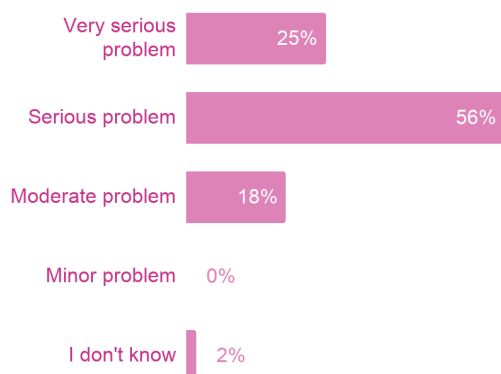
On the other hand, there are complaints that large-scale productions - and particularly those from SVoD platforms - are driving up crew rates and sucking up high-quality crew and studio space. SVoDs, in particular, are generally perceived to be a possible cause of some of the issues related to a high demand for crew - such as offering higher rates of pay. US studios are said to be more aggressive in the deals that they do and having undue influence over the creative direction that HETV takes in the UK, both in terms of its crew and its audiences. It is feared that UK broadcasters are far less able to compete with the US studio/SVoD budgets and there is also a concern over them securing some of the best UK crew as permanent employees. Without including full right of reply from US studios and SVoDs, it is difficult to be sure whether this is more of a perception or a reality. However, the fact that this perception persists is perhaps a concern for the industry, especially as its recent success has been driven by US inward investment.

### Skills shortages and gaps

There remains a serious skills issue within HETV.

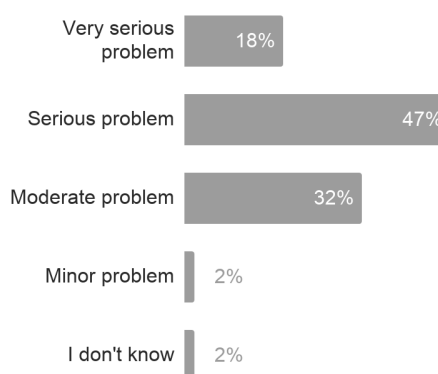
How would you assess the issue of a skills shortage within the UK HETV industry?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



How would you assess the issue of a skills gap within the UK HETV industry?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



The survey data highlights very clearly how seriously both the skills *shortage* and the skills *gap* issues are perceived by those working within HETV and support organisations:

- 81% of those surveyed considered the shortage of crew as a ‘very serious’ or ‘serious’ issue
- 73% cited the skills gap issue as either ‘very serious’ or ‘serious’.

This very much chimes with findings from the qualitative interviews where the two issues could be conflated, participants often citing a lack of *experienced crew* as the main issue they face in relation to the HETV workforce.

In 2019, the skills shortage and skills gap issues were separated out as individual questions within the survey. In 2018, a combined question asking about the severity of the “shortage and gaps issue” saw 68% describing it as a ‘severe’ or ‘considerable’, with 22% as a ‘moderate’ problem. While direct comparison is difficult to make year-on-year due to changes in the wording of the

<sup>1</sup><https://members.bectu.org.uk/advice-resources/library/2264>



questions to bring them into alignment with the Annual ScreenSkills Assessment, the data does not suggest that these issues are abating. If anything, the data suggests the situation is worsening.

A common finding from the qualitative interviews was that the rate of growth in the number of productions was seen to be far outstripping the rate of growth of crew entering the industry and those moving up the ladder and gaining more experience. The workforce appears to be continually playing catch-up to the growth of the industry and whilst progress is acknowledged, it is clear from comments and interview feedback that the crew shortage issue is an uphill struggle. Anecdotally, there were examples including a producer having to fill in for five weeks as a line producer could not be found and a production having to wait six to seven weeks for a production accountant to be found.

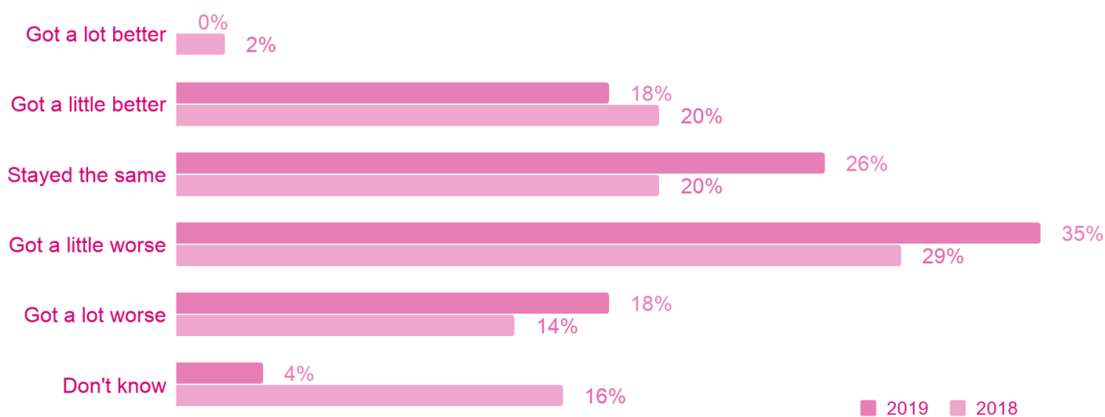
The skills shortage and skills gap issues combine to create further problems and issues. The most frequently cited subsequent issues are the in crew rates and crew being seen to step up too soon, but there are a number of other related problems such as the lack of choice and how forced compromise can upset the balance of personalities within a crew and limit the potential of finding a more diverse and inclusive crew base.

### Changes in the last 12 months

Perceived changes in the last 12 months suggests no improvement to skills challenges.

Over the last 12 months, do you think these issues have generally?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



In the 2019 survey, 53% of participants claimed that the skills-related issues within HETV had worsened within the last 12 months, which was three-times higher than the 18% who suggested the situation had improved. Compared to 2018, the survey data suggests a slightly bleaker outlook, which chimes with the proportion of those who see the skills-related issues as ‘very serious’ or ‘serious’. As mentioned, the rate of change within the HETV industry in terms of volume of productions being made appears to be outpacing the rate of change to the volume of and experience level of the available crew.

Of course, in reality, there is a genuine positive aspect to this situation. Throughout the qualitative conversations, participants remarked that the success of HETV in the UK and the volume of work and therefore opportunities available is a “nice problem to have,” particularly when compared to times past where production work was very much harder to come by. The difficulty in finding the right crew in the time available for a production to start shooting has seemingly become an accepted part of the production process. As in the 2018 research, there is definitely less of a sense of alarm and anxiety than was apparent when research was carried out in 2017.

Most participants who took part in the qualitative interviews were not able to cite tangible and fundamental changes in the last 12 months, more that the demand had continued to grow at a

pace. This is a key theme reported in this research over the last three years and is corroborated by the industry growth statistics published by the BFI.<sup>2</sup>

Where specific changes were given, they tended to be developments made in response to this increasing level of demand, for example a number of new studio spaces opening up, or SVoDs taking long-term contracts for key studio space, such as Disney in Pinewood or Netflix in Shepperton.

## The impact of shortages and gaps

Lack of crew and of skills/experience are both driving undesirable outcomes and behaviours.

Which of the following best describe any skills-related issue(s) currently being faced within HETV?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



Described by the majority of survey participants as either ‘very serious’ or ‘serious’ problems, the lack of available crew and the lack of experience and skills among those who are available are equal drivers of the overarching skills issue within HETV in the UK. This is supported very much by the findings from the qualitative interviews, where participants were probed as to which element - a shortage or gap - was driving the problem; the common response here being “both”.

Beyond this near-unanimous agreement, the effects of the skills issues are felt by the vast majority - principally that crew are being promoted too quickly; crew ‘show-jump’ by leaving a production early to go onto the next one (often this is perceived to be driven by rates of pay); and that rates of pay are high and rising too quickly. This can produce what has been described as an ‘emergency situation’ on the production while a replacement is being found. Details of these effects were unpicked throughout the qualitative conversations.

### Crew members are being promoted too quickly

According to participants, there has always been an acceptance of risk in how crew are managed on a given production. Previously, promotion of a crew member has been managed by employing more experienced crew members around that person to compensate for any lack of experience.

*“I’m always taking a risk with crew or you just never know.”*

- *Line producer*

Now, however, with such a lack of experienced crew available at many different levels and within all departments, the management of this risk becomes significantly more difficult.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-uk-film-economy-2019-01-30.pdf>

Stepping up too early has been a feature of the UK HETV industry for long enough now for the inexperience to have risen to the level of head of department and line producer level.

One example given came from a qualitative participant who described the inability of being able to replace an inexperienced 1st AD. Whereas in the past, someone lacking in the required experience for their role might be swiftly replaced, in this case a replacement could not be found. Consequently, a lot of pressure was created around this crew member with other crew being leaned upon unnecessarily. In other cases, 3rd ADs are bypassing becoming a 2nd to move straight into the 1st AD role.

Stepping up crew too early is also seen as leaving an individual too exposed and in a vulnerable position. This might be that their inexperience leads them to more easily making mistakes, which can be costly for the production as they may require additional shooting time, additional post-production to fix a problem or even result in aspects of the script being cut. In more serious cases, inexperienced crew can be exposed to adversarial behaviour from other crew members or might put themselves and others in a potentially dangerous situation if health and safety regulations are not correctly adhered to or understood.

The level of experience an individual gains is driven by the number of productions they have worked on - the more productions worked on, the more likely someone will face and learn to deal with problems and situations or with things going wrong. Nowadays, with longer and more complicated shoots, crew are experiencing a smaller number of productions within their career. As described by qualitative interviewees, this means their experience of production as a whole is not what it used to be, eg someone with 10 years of experience may have gained that experience on five jobs whereas in times past their experience would more likely have come from seven or eight jobs. In the case of long-running returning series such as *Game of Thrones*, someone's entire experience in the industry could be based on working on just one show.

Understandably, inexperience can also lead to defensive behaviour, seen by interviewees as a way for an individual crew member to try to protect themselves and mask their lack of experience when coming in for criticism.

### **Rates of pay are still increasing and are doing so at a pace**

A consequence of the ever-increasing level of demand for crew is that productions are now seeing rates of pay increase. Often, productions feel they are having to pay higher rates for crew who do not have the required amount of experience, but crew shortages often mean they have little choice but to hire them.

To pay a higher rate for a highly experienced crew member is not necessarily seen to be a problem. An example given was that an experienced 1st AD might very well be able to save a production money due to their level of experience, skills and abilities. However, paying high rates for less experienced people does nothing to aid the production. Less experienced crew generally take longer to carry out their tasks and are more likely to make a mistake or be less effective. All these things add up to them costing the production more money.

Rates of pay were said to be increasing so quickly that they were noticeably different at the beginning of a shoot from the end. The real concern for spiralling rates was their long-term negative impact on the industry as a whole. It was recognised that industry tends to focus more on the short-term, manifested here as an individual crew member being more likely to focus on squeezing a higher rate whilst not considering the long-term health of the industry.

*"It's almost like they're interviewing you as opposed to the other way around."*

- *Production manager*

## The UK potentially missing out on HETV work

With such a high level of demand for the UK workforce, it was felt that work was potentially moving elsewhere and therefore the UK industry was missing out on potential projects. This was most clearly felt in post-production, where a lack of post-production supervisors who could manage US work (which has a set of subtle differences from UK work) meant that UK post houses were missing out on some of the opportunities they would otherwise have taken up.

## Specific grade shortages

62 individual grades were cited as being in short supply

Managing the shortage of crew at grade-specific levels is made more difficult by the very nature of production work due to its fluidity and time-related activity.

A shortage of a particular grade may be more a result of a high concentration of productions in a given location within a specific time. Within the nations and regions, this presents a real challenge to the targeting of resource and investment at specific grades.

That said, there are clearly certain key roles which are so frequently mentioned they are far more likely to be a more permanent problem, eg production accountant, location manager, production coordinator, line producer, 1st AD, grip, editor, producer, assistant production accountant and production manager.

The range of individual grades also suggests there are problems in finding more or less all grades, affecting all departments, at some point or other.

Looking back at previous rounds of research, grades can be grouped together in terms of:

- Persistent, frequently-occurring shortages (frequently mentioned in 2017, 2018, 2019)
- Growing shortages (trend of increased frequency in since 2017)
- Emerging shortages (more frequently mentioned in 2019)

Grouping them in this way may make it easier to develop new strategies to combat them. The growing shortages include roles in craft, technical and post-production departments such as art director, grip and editor which further suggests how widespread the issue of skills shortages has become.

Which HETV roles/grades do you find particularly difficult to recruit/crew-up at the moment, or in the recent past?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



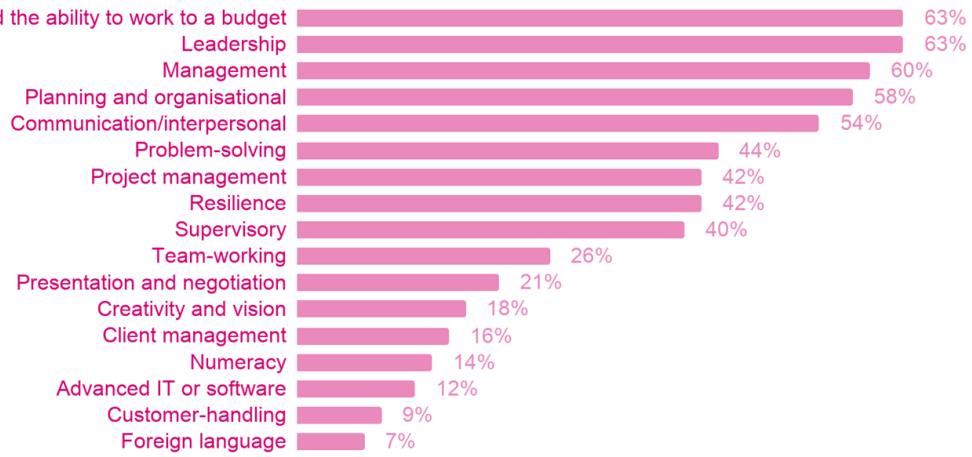
Persistent, high-occurring shortages	Growing shortages	Emerging shortages
Production accountant	1st AD	Assistant accountant
Location manager	Grip	2nd/3rd AD
Production coordinator	Editor	Location assistant
Line producer	Art director	Unit manager

## Business skill shortages

Leadership skills are those felt to be most missing from the UK HETV workforce

Which of the following skills do you find are lacking in particular among crew you are hiring at the moment or in the recent past?

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



A key question in the survey aimed to understand from participants which specific business skills were lacking from crew who were being hired now or in the recent past. Many of the skills seen to be most lacking might be categorised under the banner of ‘leadership’ including leadership and management, planning and communication. This is a strong endorsement of the recent initiative from ScreenSkills HETV Fund in offering free leadership and management training to HETV productions. From the qualitative interviews, this training appears to have been very well-received, one participant suggesting that every department should go through the course.

Feedback from the qualitative interviews supports a lack of good leadership skills in the industry, often a critique of existing leaders, such as HoDs. A number of concerning stories emerge from the qualitative interviews about existing poor management practice within HETV. However, due to these claims not being substantiated, it seems inappropriate to provide full details within this report.

With the increasing perception of an ‘Americanisation’ of the UK HETV industry, it was felt that good management and leadership skills would only be more of a necessity in the future.

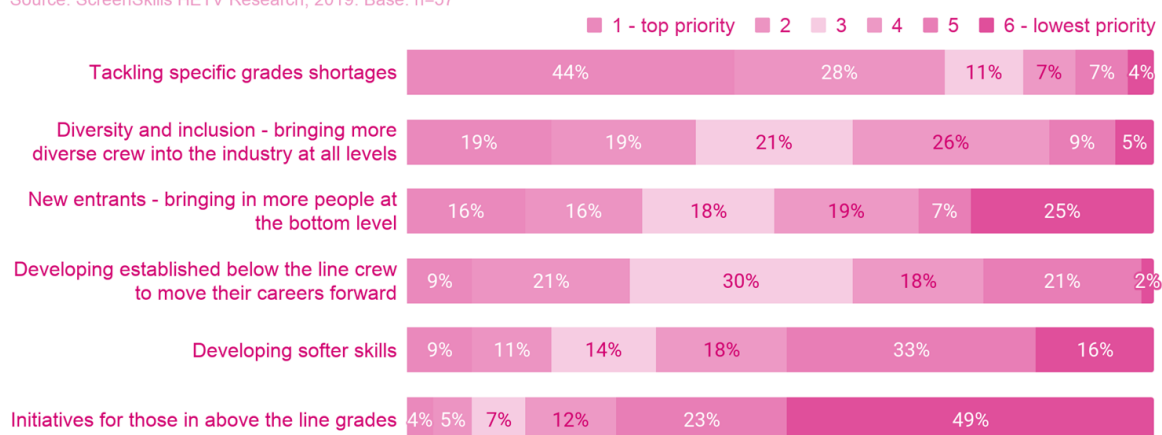
Further initiatives from the ScreenSkills HETV Fund might consider improving the financial and budget-setting skills in industry as well as developing further effective communication skills.

## Prioritisation of skills-related issues in HETV

Tackling specific grade shortages is an open goal for ScreenSkills HETV Fund

Please rank the following areas from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) in terms of where you would like to see investment being made in skills and training

Source: ScreenSkills HETV Research, 2019. Base: n=57



The chart above visualises data collected from the survey relating to where participants would like to see ScreenSkills HETV Fund invest in the UK HETV industry. It is important to note that this data does not suggest any of the initiatives are unimportant, but that some are seen to be a higher priority than others.

The clear and highest priority was for ScreenSkills HETV Fund to tackle specific grade shortages, with 72% of participants placing this as their number one or two priority. This was close to being twice as high a score for the next most pressing priority, which was to bring more diverse crew into the industry at all levels.

Some of the ideas mooted created more division among survey participants, such as the provision of more people at new entrant level - cited by 32% as priority one or two but by another 32% as priority five or six. There was some division over bespoke diversity initiatives as well as the idea of helping established below-the-line crew to move their career forward. There was far more agreement among survey participants that initiatives for those in above the line grades were of the lowest priority and developing softer skills was generally seen to be lower in priority (note: the wording here of 'softer skills' might be more appropriately worded as 'business and leadership skills' in future research).

The data suggests a lack of consensus from industry over which direction ScreenSkills HETV Fund should take. This is fully reflected by an open-ended question in the survey which asked for the three things ScreenSkills HETV Fund should ensure it prioritises going forward (see over). This resulted in a wide range of ideas reflecting the many areas of need within industry but also a lack of accord over where the Skills Fund should be invested.

Ideas ranged from improved access to training to mentoring schemes to providing subsidies and expenses payments.

Increased access to training for those in N&R	Training subsidies for all grades	Diversity and inclusion initiatives	Training for non-priority areas	Soft skills training: leadership, management etc
Simplify funding process	Information and technical support	Work experience and mentor schemes	Make paying into the Skills Fund compulsory	New entrants/ Trainee Finder
Make a Move, assisting people to move up	Provision of online training courses	Less replication of work other organisations do	Trainees; provide quality over quantity	HR systems for indie production companies
Incentivise productions to take risks on new talent	Specific grade training for those in shortest supply	Onsite training for roles in short supply	Expenses funding for new entrants	Providing longer period of funding for Trainee Finder trainees

For ScreenSkills HETV Fund to attempt to meet all these requests within the available investment from the Skills Fund seems highly implausible. Spreading the fund across too many areas is likely to reduce the overall impact - both real and perceived - of the investment.

The qualitative interviews provide more detail on the nuances between some of the proposed initiatives.

### **Supporting new entrants vs more experienced crew**

For some, there is a clear argument that during a time of such high demand for crew - and with a high proportion claiming that crew are being promoted too quickly - there is less of a requirement for ScreenSkills HETV Fund to invest money in helping crew to make the next move up the ladder; market forces will allow this to happen. Therefore, more focus could be placed on bringing new entrants and trainees into the industry.

Of course, in practical terms, the argument is not so straightforward; as was suggested by other interviewees. For example, some moves between grades have far bigger gaps than others and moves across departments will require some assistance.

Further countering this argument is that a focus on new entrants will mean the industry has to wait between five and 10 years before the impact is felt at a higher, more experienced level.

A balance of investment between schemes such as Trainee Finder and Make a Move appears the right approach here.

### **Above-the-line crew**

*“If you want to be a director, go and direct.”*

- *Line producer*

It should be noted that very few of the participants in the research were working in above-the-line roles. That said, the feedback in both the survey and in the qualitative interviews went against additional resources from ScreenSkills HETV Fund being directed at those in, or trying to move into, an above-the-line role. These roles, whilst noted as being very important, were felt to already have enough support in the form of writer- and director-specific schemes being delivered by broadcasters and other organisations.

### **Improving diversity and inclusion**

The majority of those interviewed spoke passionately about their desire for the industry they are working in to become more open to opportunities for those people who are far less represented in the industry.

More diversity in all forms is called for and conversations with qualitative interviewees sometimes led into areas such as flexible working and job-shares and how under-utilised they are within HETV production. Others highlight the problem as being one of social class, that TV production in general is too ‘posh’ and that providing access to those from a wider social background is the key to tackling the diversity issue.

*“True diversity is not always something you can see.”*

- *Financial controller*

There was a general feeling that things are gradually improving from a diversity and inclusion point of view, but not at a rate which is satisfactory. The desire for a fully diverse crew appears to be coming more often from within the base of crew itself as opposed to being directed from above, eg from broadcaster targets and quotas.

A common issue appears to be in helping productions to know where to go to find diverse crew members, rather than relying on the lists they have of relatively few names. There is an opportunity for ScreenSkills HETV Fund to link to diversity- focused recruitment agencies as well as provide more recruitment tools and techniques to help productions reach more of the crew they are looking to employ.

### Potential solutions to the skills-related issues

Feedback from qualitative participants provides strong endorsement for schemes to step up, step across and step into HETV.

#### Stepping up *does* work

Done in the right way, with the support of investment and initiatives from schemes such as the Make a Move programme, stepping up is seen to be a very effective solution to the problems associated with a lack of crew and a lack of skilled and experienced crew.

It is when stepping up occurs too quickly, or without the right support, where things can go wrong.

#### Stepping across presents a genuine opportunity

In participants' own words, 'snobbery' and a lack of HETV credits were seen to be a barrier to allowing the movement of crew into HETV roles from other forms of TV production, rather than a lack of genuine skills and experience. When prompted with the idea, many saw schemes to encourage crew from other forms of TV production - factual, children's, comedy, soaps and lower-budget drama - as a highly sensible approach to boost HETV crew numbers. For example, in post-production there was a difference acknowledged between factual TV and drama, but it was felt that this gap could be filled quickly by an intensive training course potentially funded by the Skills Fund.

#### Stepping *into* industry is also seen to be a feasible solution

Harnessing potential new workforce with transferable skills who might be retrained from their current or previous career path into TV and film is seen by some to be a missed opportunity. It is suggested that there are numerous transferable skills needed for the TV and film industry that exist outside it. Examples given were accounting, costume, construction, truck-driving, technology, food and catering. Reference was made to the US community college system, which is geared around redirecting and retraining workforce into new industries. It was even suggested as a solution for VFX and post-production, whilst specialist areas, where people who are good at managing, dealing with budgets and communication were very much required and who may well come from other industries.

Another suggestion was that a person with strong management and leadership skills may well offer the credentials required to be a producer. Another example given was for location managers to be recruited from those leaving the military and armed forces.

Stepping into TV and film was not seen to be a particularly new idea as it has been used by the Production Guild to bring in accountants from outside into the industry. As with all other schemes, there was a call for this to be a more structured initiative.

#### Training in a format and context that fits with how crew are now operating

*"You can read about war and battle, but until you experience it it's all theoretical."*

- *Producer*

Although more formal training with its structure and setting has its place, most of those interviewed agreed that the best way to learn is through gaining on-the-job experience. However, this does appear to rely on having experienced crew on hand to provide support. With the risks described



earlier in this report of having too many inexperienced crew on a production, the quality of this on-the-job learning is threatened. Learning from less experienced crew means that poor practices are potentially passed on, time and again.

Also, a common problem suggested by interviewees with regards to taking up training is that it is difficult to find the time to complete a course. Crew are less likely to be taking downtime between jobs due to the amount of work available to them and downtime would traditionally be a time to rest and train. ScreenSkills HETV Fund and its training providers might consider this by further evolving the way training is delivered and creating training programmes that are delivered in a format which allows for this distinct lack of time. This might be shorter courses or perhaps online training formats which can be completed as distance learning.

Crew also expect and need to be taught by those who are at the top of their game and have the most recent and relevant experience on productions. As these very people are those who are most likely to be busy working, a scheme of shorter training courses might also encourage their participation as trainers.

Other suggested solutions which came from conversations with qualitative participants included:

- Create and maintain a set of industry standards for grades in order to protect and maintain the standard of work and expectations at each level. An example suggested was for production coordinators, where prospective recruiters would be able to check that candidates had completed an industry standardised course.
- Encourage more joined-up databases of crew. Currently platforms such as Facebook are being used by crew and productions to find each other as a proxy for this.

### Aspirations

Where time allowed, those who took part in the qualitative interviews were asked how they perceived their future and what they aspired to be doing over the course of the next five years.

Interestingly, few of the participants asked this question came up with an immediate response which probably reflects the fact that most people working in production are focused on the here and now as opposed to looking ahead too far into the future. For those who originated from a regional background, their desire tended to be to return to working in that region yet maintain a high standard of TV work.

Many saw themselves enjoying their continued career in HETV, moving up the career ladder at a steadier pace and focused on a specific level of achievement, for instance to move from line producing into producing. Generally, participants imagine a buoyant UK HETV industry, but one with a much slower pace of growth.

Perhaps worryingly, others felt that the pace of work, the long hours and the lack of positive work-life balance were not sustainable and so they saw themselves leaving the industry to seek a better balance elsewhere.

*“What we do is all-consuming so when you start a job you’re kind of handing over your life. You get phone calls late at night because something happened. When I finish [a] job, it’s like, ‘That’s it, that’s the last time I’m doing this, I’m going to find a regular job and get my life back’”*

- *Line producer*

The hope for a slower rate of HETV growth in the future and a chance for the industry to catch its breath was commonplace.

