



# Placements in UK film and children's TV

May 2023

## **Acknowledgements**

This report has been compiled by an SQW, on behalf of ScreenSkills, with a team led by Dr Jo Hutchinson, managed by Carolyn Hindle, and supported by Luke Bailey-Withers.

The research was delivered using National Lottery funds awarded by the British Film Institute (BFI) as part of the Future Film Skills programme.

Our thanks go out to all those who supported the research, particularly the consultees who offered their valuable time.

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Placements in UK Film and Children’s TV .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Research findings .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4. Conclusions and recommendations .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Annex A: Background documents and data.....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Annex B: Research evidence.....</b>	<b>B-1</b>

---

**Contact:**

**Carolyn Hindle**

**Tel: 020 7391 4107**

**email: CHindle@sqw.co.uk**

**Approved by:**

**Jo Hutchinson**

**Associate Director**

**email: JHutchinson@sqw.co.uk**

---

**Disclaimer**

This document takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of ScreenSkills. It is not intended for, and should not be relied upon by, any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

Whilst SQW has used reasonable care and skill throughout, it is unable to warrant either the accuracy or completeness of information supplied by the client or third parties, and it does not accept responsibility for any legal, commercial, or other consequences that arise from its use.

---

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

1. Employers and production teams in the screen sector need many different skilled people, who span all stages of the production process including production management, craft, and technical departments. Those skills can be formed in educational settings but are often developed further through on-the-job training and work experience. The learning opportunities within live productions can be rich and rewarding. People who want to learn new skills or extend and enhance their existing skills can benefit from a structured training opportunity within those production environments. This is what placements offer. They can give people access to real-world experience and insights, generate useful contacts or expand professional networks. They can help individuals develop new skills and confidence to progress their careers. Alternatively, they can enable participants to explore roles helping to inform future career plans.
2. ScreenSkills commissioned this research about placements in the UK Film and Children's (live-action) TV sectors. ScreenSkills is the UK-wide, industry-led strategic skills body. It works to ensure that the UK's screen industries have access now, and in the future, to the skills and talent they need. It works with employers, individuals, trade associations, unions, learning and training providers, government and its public agencies, and other key organisations.
3. ScreenSkills supports different placement initiatives including Trainee Finder, Film Forward, Make a Move for Children's TV, and Centres of Excellence. These provide a range of structured opportunities for trainees at different career stages in their career (entry, early, experienced, expert). Other providers also offer placement schemes with different ambitions and this report is relevant to those providers alongside any employer who works in Film and Children's TV in the UK.

## The research

4. The research explored employers' attitudes towards placements, how many and what type of placements were offered by employers, the benefits to placements (for employers, trainees, and trainee progression into other work), and the factors which effect the scale and effectiveness of placements. It was conducted between July 2022 and March 2023 by SQW, a research consultancy.
5. The research used in-depth 50-minute interviews with 20 employers, half from Film and half from Children's TV. Seventeen had offered placements either currently or in the past and could reflect on their experiences. Three employers had not previously offered placements and explained the challenges they faced in offering placement opportunities. The scope and scale of placements varied substantially between different organisations. The range of roles they had used placements for included production, post-production, creative, financial, and technical areas. Most offered more entry-level placements and, as such, this report reflects the experiences of entry and early career placements more

than those for experienced and expert roles. Eight had some, albeit more limited, experience of placements that provided a step up into a more senior role.

6. The film sector in the UK ranges from major big-budget productions to small independent film – both of these in turn are different to the way Children’s TV operates. Yet productions across these sub-sectors of the screen industry have faced considerable challenges in recruiting people with the level of skills they need, at the time and place they need them. These have been intensified in the post-Covid-19 boom in production activity, which has revealed the extent of skills gaps and shortages in the sector. Equally, there is a continued need to ensure that opportunities are open to everyone. Placements are not seen as the only way to resolve these issues. But they help provide industry with a pipeline of employable talent, and a means to upskill people into senior roles in a structured and supported way.

### The benefits of offering placements

7. The **definition of a placement** used in the research was as follows:

*“Placements are all paid. Trainees all have a supervisor with whom they develop a training plan, which can include a range of experiences including work shadowing and task delivery. A placement is a planned and conscious decision to develop professional skills. All placements aim to provide trainees at different levels (entry, early, experienced, expert) with a rich experience to help them build skills, networks and added confidence that helps them to work effectively in the industry.”*

8. Research consultees recognised this definition and said the placements they were involved in used this model. They said that their involvement in **placements was associated with benefits** including:

- access to new and more diverse talent, who bring enthusiasm and cultural experiences;
- management of recruitment shortages and improved crew retention;
- contribution to a positive production environment with knock-on effects for the quality of productions.

9. The research did not consult trainees, partly because their voice had been captured in other ScreenSkills research. But employers reported **benefits for their trainees** that included enhanced career prospects derived from networks with industry contacts, improved skills, and confidence (including both soft and technical skills), as well as gaining insights into different parts of the industry.

### Factors that shape the placement experience

10. When they were asked about the factors that made it possible to offer a placement, or those that made it challenging, research participants mentioned five key factors. These

were **financial support, capacity, guidance for placement provision, candidates, and aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion.** In summary:

- 11. Financial support:** Placements are paid training opportunities which are often partially funded by the placement provider. This is a factor in employers' decision-making as to whether to offer placements and how many. Productions with larger budgets may not use the placement model to build team skills, whereas others build placements into their budgets or, for those with limited budgets, they may expand their team using the subsidised placement model. All consultees said that the opportunity to receive financial support towards taking trainees on placement is a positive contributing factor. The level and value of financial support was a more significant factor for productions with smaller budgets (independent film and Children's TV) that encouraged them to offer placements. A future option for placement providers would be to support any placement with a minimum level of financial contribution with an option for some employers/productions to apply for additional support depending on certain criteria (e.g., size of company, budget of production).
- 12. Capacity:** Placement trainees should have a placement supervisor. This person should work with them to develop a training plan and provide regular support to ensure it is implemented. A trainee also needs people around them to explain things, show them what to do, answer questions and provide feedback. This requires both management and practitioner time and, within the context of busy production schedules, limited capacity was a key challenge in offering or scaling up placements. To offer an effective placement experience, employers should be realistic and prepared to commit to the amount of time required for supervision. Information and support from placement providers should make expectations clear to both employers and placement trainees, and the commitment should be included in any placement funding package agreement. Further, trainees need support from a range of people on the crew and may also benefit from external mentorship during the placement. The latter option would provide the trainee with a point of contact to discuss progress, share learning and resolve issues beyond any local or line management context.
- 13. Guidance for placement provision:** Just as trainees need support and mentorship, so too do people designing, recruiting and supervising them. Different supervisors have different training and support requirements dependent on their previous placement provision experience, and experience of supporting entry-level versus step-up placements. Reflecting this, consultees suggested they or others in the sector might benefit from one or both of the following: guidance about how to host a placement (e.g., arranging insurance, interview questions, pre-arrival information, induction) which could be in the form of a framework or structure; and/or individual employer-mentoring for employers who might require personalised support to set up, improve or expand their placement offering. An alternative model would be through peer-to-peer support with employers linked through a buddying network.

- 14. Candidates:** Identifying and recruiting trainees who match the skills requirements of a given production was cited as a very important component, but one which can be particularly challenging within the context of constrained production timescales. Consequently, consultees felt the most effective schemes were those which make finding the right trainee as simple as possible. Employers wanted a larger pool of talent, particularly entry-level talent, from which they could select trainees. Working with partners to identify ways in which the flow of candidates could be increased will be important here, as is the need to ensure information about placement opportunities can be found by anyone and is presented in a way that is accessible to all individuals. Another option would be the implementation of a business development approach to actively manage relationship building in a sector or across sectors in a geographic area. This could be, for example, through a relationship manager working with employers to forecast likely roles, focusing on those where the skills needs are most acute and identifying key areas for targeted trainee recruitment ahead of the productions.
- 15.** Across all of these factors, the importance of ensuring that **actions positively promote opportunities** in ways that encourage people from the full range of backgrounds and cultural experiences to apply for opportunities, and to create conditions that make people with the full range of protected characteristics stay in the sector was emphasised.
- 16. Finally, an overarching consideration for the sector is that investment in the future skills of trainees does not happen without positive interventions from well networked agencies such as ScreenSkills and other placement providers.** The requirements to market, manage, build and quality assure this activity should not be underestimated and needs more investment than is currently the case. The recommendations that follow all need additional activity from a co-ordinating body in the form of marketing, case management, mentoring and project management. It is beyond our remit to scope these activities as single or multiple roles, freelance commissions or management responsibilities but many of the recommendations rest on having additional oversight and management capacity.

### Recommendations

- 17.** This report makes a set of recommendations for consideration to guide future ScreenSkills industry activity based on learning derived from the research study. These are as follows:

#### The role of placements in the sector

**Recommendation 1:** ScreenSkills should continue to promote the value of placements by focusing on benefits to employers, the productions they work on and the benefits to trainees, and other providers and employers are recommended to do the same.

#### Placements supported

**Recommendation 2:** ScreenSkills to continue to raise awareness of the opportunities for placements at all levels (entry, early, experienced, expert) and using different models

(multi-production and single production), and other providers are recommended to do the same.

### **Barriers and enablers shaping the scale and effectiveness of placements**

**Recommendation 3:** ScreenSkills to continue to utilise the Skills Fund model to support placements in Film and Children’s TV on behalf of the sector.

**Recommendation 4:** Placement providers to consider maintaining a minimum level of financial support for all productions with additional ‘top ups’ for employers/productions that meet eligibility criteria.

**Recommendation 5:** Employers to ensure each trainee has a training plan that clearly set out mutual obligations and responsibilities.

**Recommendation 6:** All placement schemes with employers encouraged to explore the potential of using independent external mentors to support trainees on placements.

**Recommendation 7:** Placement providers to actively explore options for providing personalised mentoring support for employers offering placements.

**Recommendation 8:** Placement providers to create and promote a good placement toolkit for employers and trainees.

**Recommendation 9:** Placement providers to work more effectively with partners to explore ways to increase the flow of candidates onto placement schemes, and resource application screening and assessment.

**Recommendation 10:** ScreenSkills to continue to raise awareness of placement opportunities via existing routes and networks and work with industry and other providers to identify ways to promote opportunities to everyone, and other placement providers are recommended to do the same.

**Recommendation 11:** Placement providers encouraged to explore the potential of using a proactive relationship management approach to connecting employers with forthcoming placement opportunities with trainees looking for skills development.



# 1. Introduction

- 1.1** ScreenSkills is the UK-wide, industry-led strategic skills body that works with employers, individuals, trade associations, unions, learning and training providers, government and its public agencies and other key organisations. Its work aims to ensure that the UK's screen industries have continued access now, and in the future, to the skills and talent they require. This is important given the scale of the screen sector and its importance to the UK, and it is timely, because the sector is currently facing a shortage of people with the right skills to ensure continued high quality UK productions and the growth of the sector.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2** Learning and training in the screen sector is intrinsically centred on work-based opportunities for the development of skills and talent, with a key mechanism being the provision of work-based placements. Placements within work environments provide people with access to real-world experience and insights, opportunities to generate useful contacts and networks, and can help them to develop new skills and confidence. Research from across sectors show that placements within work environments can enable participants to trial and explore future roles and help to inform future career plans, whilst for those with more experience they can provide an opportunity to continue their professional development, for example by stepping-up into a new role.<sup>2</sup> ScreenSkills manages a range of different initiatives including Trainee Finder, Film Forward, Make a Move for Children's TV, and Centres of Excellence.<sup>3</sup> These provide a range of structured opportunities for trainees at different career stages (entry, early, experienced, expert<sup>4</sup>).

## Characteristics of ScreenSkills' placements

Placements are all paid. Trainees all have a supervisor with whom they develop a training plan, which can include a range of experiences including work shadowing and task delivery. A placement is planned and conscious decision to develop professional skills. All placements aim to provide trainees at different levels (entry, early, experienced, expert) with a rich experience to help them build skills, networks and added confidence that helps them to work effectively in the industry.

*Source: SQW Research Workplan*

- 1.3** Ensuring an adequate supply of appropriate placements to help people progress in careers in Film and Children's (live-action) TV is a challenge. As such, ScreenSkills

---

<sup>1</sup> See Section 2 for further information.

<sup>2</sup> University of Brighton (2022) [Higher Education work placements in the creative industries: good placements for all students?](#)

<sup>3</sup> For more information: [Careers, jobs and skills training in film, TV, VFX, animation and games - ScreenSkills](#)

<sup>4</sup> Definitions: 'entry' refers to those entering the screen industries, 'early' refers to those establishing their career, 'experienced' refers to those progressing their career, and 'expert' refers to those beyond the previous stages and who are acknowledged as an expert. For more information: [Understanding your career stage - ScreenSkills](#)

commissioned SQW to conduct a research study which, via qualitative interviews, captured employer perspectives regarding the use of placements within both Film and Children’s TV in the UK<sup>5</sup>. The research study was delivered from July 2022 to March 2023 and sought to explore a set of core research questions, presented in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1: Study research questions**

Research question
<p><b>Rationale and wider sector attitudes to placements</b></p> <p>What are the Film and Children’s TV sectors’ attitude towards placements? Are placements considered a useful training route?</p>
<p><b>Experience of placements within Film and Children’s TV</b></p> <p>For which levels are placements usually offered? (e.g., entry, early, experienced, expert)</p>
<p><b>Barriers to the industry offering placements, and how/where these can be overcome</b></p> <p>What are the barriers to placements within the Film and Children’s TV sectors? What reasons are there for not taking on trainees? How can they be overcome?</p>
<p><b>Enablers and elements that can make placements particularly effective</b></p> <p>What components make for an effective placement? Are there specific elements that help an individual?</p>
<p><b>Benefits of placements</b></p> <p>Do placements help people to be employed?</p>

Source: SQW Research Workplan

- 1.4** The research specifically focused on Film and Children’s TV to reflect the disproportionate impact of skills gaps and workforce development issues identified for lower-budget areas such as Children’s TV and independent films<sup>6</sup>. In addition, at present there is a limited amount of research focused on Children’s TV, and as such this study was commissioned to contribute to understanding of challenges and opportunities with regards to placements in the sector. In the case of Film, we wished to better understand why take-up of trainees was lower than in associated sub-sectors such as High-end TV (HETV).
- 1.5** Data to address these research questions have been collected from several different sources as shown in Table 1-2, with further details provided in Annex C. They include scoping interviews, interviews with employers in Film and Children’s TV, and a review of secondary evidence provided by ScreenSkills. Most employer consultees worked in production, either as an executive or senior producer, while the remainder worked within HR & Talent departments.

<sup>5</sup> Note: For the purposes of this study, this covers live-action only and does not include animated content for children.

<sup>6</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Scripted production workforce in the UK’s nations and regions](#)

**Table 1-2: Evidence used in the research (July 2022 to March 2023)**

Data collection activity	Detail
Scoping interviews with key stakeholders at ScreenSkills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 semi-structured interviews, with the Head of Film and Animation, Head of Unscripted and Children’s TV and the Implementation Lead for the Centres of Screen Excellence Project</li></ul>
Background documentation/data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documents included information on ScreenSkills’ placements activity as well as wider evidence relating to placements and skills in the screen industries. Annex B lists documentary evidence reviewed</li></ul>
Telephone/MS Teams interviews with employers who currently do or do not support placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children’s TV (10 interviews total):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Currently support placements (or have done in last 12 months): 7</li><li>➢ Currently do not support placements: 3</li></ul></li><li>• Film (10 interviews total):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Currently support placements (or have done in last 12 months): 10</li></ul></li></ul>

Source: SQW

## Report structure

**1.6** This report presents research findings, followed by reflections on implications and actionable recommendations to overcome barriers and challenges to offering placements. It is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Placements in UK Film and Children’s TV to provide context for the need for placements and the range of programmes currently offered by ScreenSkills.
- Section 3: Research findings relating to the types of placements consultees supported, the benefits for them and for the trainees, an assessment of factors that shape the scale and quality of placements, and recommendations from consultees for the provision of placements.
- Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations.

**1.7** This report is supported by two Annexes. The first lists resources and background documents and data used to inform the research, and the second provides more detail on the research methodology utilised.

## Acknowledgements

**1.8** This report has been compiled by an SQW team led by Dr Jo Hutchinson, managed by Carolyn Hindle, supported by Luke Bailey-Withers.

**1.9** Our thanks go to the ScreenSkills team, Jack Cortvriend, Gareth Ellis-Unwin and Sarah Joyce, for providing ongoing support and helpful comments and feedback. Special thanks are also extended to those employers who volunteered their time, critical insights

and reflections as part of the research fieldwork. This report would not have been possible without their contribution.

## 2. Placements in UK Film and Children's TV

### Context and rationale for supporting placements

#### Industry skills needs and shortages

##### 2.1 The UK screen industries have been experiencing skills shortages and gaps.<sup>7</sup>

ScreenSkills research from November 2019 found that almost two thirds of industry experts sampled were aware of recruitment difficulties in the previous four months (July – October 2019).<sup>8</sup> They cited two main causes for these challenges: competition from within the sector, and low numbers of applicants with the required skills to do the job. These recruitment difficulties were reportedly driving wage inflation within the sector.

##### 2.2 Disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic affected different parts of the industry in different ways. Recruitment declined, with the ScreenSkills Assessment 2021 finding that, compared to the 2019 Assessment, twice as many employers had not recruited over the previous 12-month period (Jan 2020 – Jan 2021), largely due to a production hiatus and the need to change working practices.<sup>9</sup>

##### 2.3 The production hiatus saw almost all UK film and high-end television (HETV) productions suspended or postponed by the end of Q1 2020<sup>10</sup>, causing production spend to fall by 57% compared with the previous year.<sup>11</sup> This was followed by a **production boom**, particularly in Film and HETV. UK production spend increased from £4.4bn in 2019 to over £6.27bn in 2022.<sup>12</sup> Increasing investment in single productions from Subscription Video-on-Demand (SVoD) services, such as Netflix and Amazon, has contributed significantly towards this boom, whereby long-form single HETV productions (which could be described as 'films') accounted for £939m in UK production spend in 2022, compared to just £281m in 2019.<sup>13</sup> This said, it is expected the production boom will ease, with recent forecasts suggesting global content expenditure growth will slow to 2% in 2023 – and this is likely to correspond with growth rates in the UK.<sup>14</sup>

##### 2.4 Strong growth in Film and HETV has increased demand for labour, exacerbating skills shortages in other sectors. ScreenSkills research finds that SVoD-commissioned high-end dramas typically hire large crew for a longer period of time and offering higher pay rates compared to productions within other screen subsectors.<sup>15</sup> As a

---

<sup>7</sup> Skills shortages are where there is a genuine lack of adequately skilled individuals accessible to employers in the labour market. Skill gaps reference the difference between the skills available in the employers' workforce and those needed for production or service delivery.

<sup>8</sup> ScreenSkills (2019) [Quarterly ScreenSkills Barometer November 2019](#)

<sup>9</sup> ScreenSkills (2021) [ScreenSkills Assessment 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> Where information for children's TV is not available, we use data for HETV which includes children's TV alongside other scripted sectors.

<sup>11</sup> BFI (2020) [Film and high-end television production in the UK, January – June \(H1\) 2020](#)

<sup>12</sup> BFI (2023) [Film and high-end television programme production in the UK: full-year 2022](#)

<sup>13</sup> BFI (2023) [Film and high-end television programme production in the UK: full-year 2022](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ampere Analysis (2023) [Growth in content investment will slump in 2023](#)

<sup>15</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Scripted production workforce in the UK's nations and regions](#)

result, typically small-scale production subsectors such as Children’s TV and Independent Film are experiencing crew shortages and rising productions costs to an even greater extent, particularly as revenue growth within these sub-sectors has been unable to match HETV.<sup>16</sup>

**2.5 The pressures brought about by the pandemic and the rapid bounce-back have therefore resulted in acute skills shortages for employers**, which need to be addressed through recruitment and training efforts. In its 2021 Assessment, ScreenSkills identified key skills gaps for the sector, representing mismatches between the skills of the current sector workforce and those needed by employers.<sup>17</sup> Some of the key skills gaps are detailed in the box below.

### Skills gaps identified in the ScreenSkills Assessment 2021

- Over half of the employers sampled wanted better organisational (53%) and team working (50%) skills among junior level staff, as well as resilience (47%), and interpersonal skills (53%).
- In the mid- and senior-level workforce, employers saw interpersonal skills as the main priority (49%), followed by the ability to manage and support teams/crew remotely or in person (43%), and mentoring skills (41%).
- Almost half of employers interviewed reported having an increased awareness of the importance of valuing, trusting and looking after people since the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In contrast, workforce respondents reported a wider range of skills training needs. Financial and budgetary skills, and public speaking, ranked joint highest (35% each), followed by the ability to organise work (31%), resilience (28%) and effective presentations and pitches (28%).

Source: [ScreenSkills Assessment 2021](#)

### Diversity and inclusion across the sector

**2.6 In addition to skills shortages, ensuring diversity and inclusion in Film and TV is another challenge for the industry.** Recent research finds that there is perceived to be under-representation of certain groups within the scripted production workforce, notably of people who are disabled, from an ethnic minority, or from a low socio-economic background.<sup>18</sup> The ScreenSkills 2021 Assessment emphasises how workforce diversity continues to be a critical issue for the sector to address, particularly as the Covid-19 pandemic may have exacerbated inequalities which existed prior to the pandemic.<sup>19 20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [BFI \(2022\) An Economic Review of UK Independent Film](#)

<sup>17</sup> ScreenSkills (2021) [ScreenSkills Assessment 2021](#)

<sup>18</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Scripted production workforce in the UK's nations and regions](#)

<sup>19</sup> ScreenSkills (2021) [ScreenSkills Assessment 2021](#)

<sup>20</sup> Banks, M. (2020). [The work of culture and C-19](#). European Journal of Cultural Studies, 23(4), 648-654.

**2.7 Subsectors within the screen industries face their own challenges relating to diversity and inclusion.**<sup>21</sup> The fifth annual Diamond report says Children’s TV programmes are more representative of disabled people compared to other subsectors, but that even so there remains a significant underrepresentation compared to the UK population and that improving representation of disabled people is a clear priority for UK broadcasters.

**2.8** A separate study focusing on the film industry identified underrepresentation of black and ethnic minority population as a key issue, finding that only 40% of British films between 2016-2019 referenced Race/Ethnicity in evidence for Industry Access and Opportunities, as part of requirements for BFI Film Fund investment.<sup>22</sup>

**2.9 Action is being taken to address these challenges.** There are a number of industry bodies and charities committed to building a more representative sector, including ScreenSkills, the Film and TV Charity, and Pact.<sup>23</sup> The BFI Skills Review listed inclusion as the sector’s “greatest untapped opportunity”.<sup>24</sup> In 2021, the BFI revised its Diversity Standards and Inclusion targets, seeking to make its standards the industry-norm and promote adoption of best practice.<sup>25</sup>

### **The role of placements in addressing these challenges**

**2.10** Properly structured and funded placements<sup>26</sup> provide one way to bring more individuals, from a wide range of different backgrounds and experience levels (entry, early, experienced, expert), into the sector and progress within it, by supporting people to develop a range of relevant skills.

**2.11** To that end, **placement opportunities act as a pathway into the Film and Children’s TV industries**, allowing new entrants to gain some relevant skills and improve their employability. Although they can vary in length, placements typically offer new entrants the chance to explore roles they may not have experienced to understand whether it is something they wish to pursue.

**2.12** Placements for new entrants focus on providing a broad experience in entry-level roles, to develop foundational industry skills. In contrast, **stepping-up placements** provide the opportunity for individuals already with industry experience to develop the specific skills and competences required to progress into a given role.

---

<sup>21</sup> Creative Diversity Network (2022) [The Fifth Cut: Diamond at 5](#). Developed by the Creative Diversity Network (CDN), Diamond is an industry-wide data collection system for reporting diversity in broadcasting, collecting data on UK original productions commissioned by major UK broadcasters including BBC, ITV, Channel 4, and Sky.

<sup>22</sup> Nwonka, C.J. (2020) [Race and Ethnicity in the UK Film Industry: an analysis of the BFI Diversity Standards](#)

<sup>23</sup> See diversity and inclusion activities here: [ScreenSkills](#), [Film and TV Charity](#), and [Pact](#)

<sup>24</sup> BFI (2022) [BFI Skills Review 2022](#)

<sup>25</sup> BFI (2021) [Review of the BFI Diversity Standards](#)

<sup>26</sup> Funding that covers bursaries or salaries are highlighted in the 2019 Quarterly ScreenSkills Barometer (74% of respondents highlighting the importance of bursaries): ScreenSkills (2019) [Quarterly ScreenSkills Barometer: July 2019 – October 2019](#)

**2.13** For host organisations, placements provide the opportunity to be exposed to talent that they maybe have not met previously, identify individuals who they may employ again in future and assess whether they would support the individual to develop their skills further. Placement providers such as ScreenSkills play an important role in the selection process by gathering and presenting the most suitable placement candidates, and therefore enable access to talent the employer may not have otherwise been able to reach.

### **Structural challenges to providing placements**

**2.14 The sector faces several structural challenges regarding placements.** These are issues that make it difficult for teams working in film and children’s TV production teams to plan for and manage placement opportunities on live projects. The sector is dominated by freelance workers and small- and medium-sized companies, in 2020: nearly half (48%) of people working in film and video production were self-employed compared with 14% of the total UK workforce and 97% of Film industry workplaces employ 10 people or fewer.<sup>27</sup> This creates challenges for small companies to release people to train, or find opportunities in-house for structured training. In addition, the use of Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) to manage the finance and production of films mean that each production has its own infrastructure and will hire its own team. This creates discontinuity for placement providers in terms of building and maintaining relationships with hiring authority’s and planning future workforce requirements.

**2.15 Short timescales for production create conditions where placements can, understandably, be deprioritised<sup>28</sup> or opportunities for diversification missed,<sup>29</sup> as they:**

- inhibit teams’ capacity to plan ahead for the mix of skills that they might need;
- create a need to have someone who can do the job straightaway to a high standard and with minimal supervision;
- encourage hiring by activating networks to fill skills needs quickly which may inadvertently deny new entrants or people less well networked those roles; and
- create geographical barriers which make it difficult for people to plan to relocate at short notice.

### **ScreenSkills support for placements**

**2.16 In partnership with others, ScreenSkills’ research has identified skills gaps and skills shortages, and built capacity, knowledge and practice in offering placements.** Growing demand for SVoD content, increasing UK production spend, as well as government priorities in providing lifelong learning opportunities, have all

---

<sup>27</sup> BFI (2021) [Film, Education and Industry Employment](#)

<sup>28</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Scripted production workforce in the UK’s nations and regions](#)

<sup>29</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Unscripted TV production in the UK: 2021 skills review](#)



impacted the skills needs of the screen industries' workforce.<sup>30</sup> ScreenSkills' annual delivery plan for 2022/23 reflected these in its four delivery priorities, outlined in the box below.

### ScreenSkills' delivery priorities for 2022/23

- Tackling immediate skills gaps and shortages, particularly at mid/senior level
- Developing blended learning (online and face-to-face) which supports sector growth and change
- Delivering around nations and regions – working with UK-wide trainers and partners
- Building a more inclusive UK-wide talent pipeline, reflecting new skills needs

Source: ScreenSkills (2022) *Delivery plan and budget 2022/23*

### ScreenSkills' activities in 2021-22

**2.17** ScreenSkills' activities span a range of subsectors within the screen industry: children's TV, film, animation, HETV, unscripted TV, post-production, visual effects (VFX) and games, with the focus of this study on the first two. Activities in each of these industries are funded through their respective Skills Fund Managed **by ScreenSkills, the Skills Funds finance skills and training programmes in areas of skills shortages on behalf of the sector**. All Skills Funds aim to improve diversity and inclusion within the industry, and all support training and skills development programmes to benefit UK crew and entrants. Only productions which contribute can access skills funding to support training on their current production. Further details on the Film Skills Fund and Children's TV Skills Fund are outlined in the box below.

---

<sup>30</sup> Department for Education (2021) [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#)

## Film Skills Fund

Established in 1999, the Film Skills Fund has invested more than £15 million in skills and training for UK film production, with record contributions in 2021-22 of £1.4 million from 66 productions. The Fund is dedicated to supporting new entrants as well as experienced professionals and has helped the UK film industry to address ongoing skills challenges<sup>31</sup>. Studios and production companies producing films in the UK are encouraged to contribute 0.5% of their core UK expenditure up to a cap of £66.3k per production (this will rise to £73.3k per production in April 2023).

## Children's TV Skills Fund

The Children's TV Skills Fund was created in 2015 following the introduction of UK tax relief for Children's live-action TV<sup>32</sup>. The key purpose of the fund is to fund skills activity to develop freelancers and talent working at all levels in Children's TV, both to advance their careers, as well as bring new entrants into the industry. Productions pay 0.5% of the production budget spent in the UK, and the contribution is capped at £47k per production (this will rise to £53k per production in April 2023). Since 2015, ScreenSkills has collected and invested over £1.9m in skills activity for the Children's TV industry.

## Skills Funds Programmes

**2.18** Skills Funds have been used to create a range of different placement programmes, as detailed in the following sections. As part of any ScreenSkills placement, whether new entrant or CPD, trainees are required to complete a training plan with their production supervisor to help maximise learning during the placement. **The training plan is divided into three main sections: goals, networks and achievements.** In each of these sections, the trainee records where they are at the start of a placement and what their goal is for the end of that placement. The trainee sets their aims and objectives for the placement and rates their capability in key skills. The training plan is then revisited at the end of the placement to reflect on the experience, receive feedback from their supervisor and identify future goals.

## Trainee Finder

**2.19 Trainee Finder is an entry-level placement scheme** which places trainees on film, Children's live-action TV, HETV and animation productions to ensure a continued supply of a new generation of talent, capable of world-class creative content. Productions that contribute to the appropriate industry skills fund have access to ScreenSkills' pool of UK-

---

<sup>31</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Contribute to the Film Skills Fund](#)

<sup>32</sup> ScreenSkills (2020) [Children's TV Skills Fund](#)

wide trainees interested in working in one of a range of different departments from camera to costume. To be eligible for the scheme, trainees must have less than 12 months' paid experience in the Film and TV industry.<sup>33</sup> Once a trainee has been accepted onto Trainee Finder, they will be informed of any relevant placement opportunities that become available. Details of those who are interested will be submitted to the production and the production will then invite candidates for an interview.

**2.20** Productions are able to claim funding from ScreenSkills for part of the duration of the trainees' time on the production. The nature of placements and the amount productions receive vary dependent on the type of production (see Table 2-1). For all programmes, trainees are employed on a fixed-term contract for the placement duration. Productions are expected to pay trainees a minimum of the National Living Wage (including Employers NI, tax, holiday pay and pension contribution) and abide by all relevant legislation.

#### **Make A Move<sup>34</sup>**

**2.21 Make A Move is a stepping-up programme** enabling productions to upskill individuals on-the-job. Children's live-action producers can apply for up to £10,000 for activity including but not limited to shadowing, mentoring, and attending external training programmes. Training can be offered to more than one person if required and there is no limit to the length of time a person can be on the production. Make a Move placements are designed for those who are looking to move up from middle or senior roles, providing beneficiaries the opportunity to fund personal development according to their own needs. ScreenSkills works with different production companies who have identified an employee who would benefit from a training programme, to accelerate progress in their career.

#### **Film Forward (Film industry only)**

**2.22 Film Forward is designed to create change in the UK film industry by supporting experienced Black, Asian or minority ethnic professionals to advance** into more senior roles.<sup>35</sup> The programme matches film professionals who have at least five years' experience in a variety of below-the-line roles with paid placement opportunities.<sup>36</sup> Additional support for Film Forward candidates includes professional development coaching and access to a bursary of up to £3,000 to help with expenses needed to enable career progress.

---

<sup>33</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Become a trainee](#)

<sup>34</sup> Make A Move exists in both Children's TV and High-End TV, although for the purposes of this research only Make a Move in Children's TV is in scope.

<sup>35</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Film programmes for crew and talent](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Below-the-line](#) roles refer to those responsible for the day-to-day filmmaking involved in pre-production, production, and post-production.

## Job-specific training programmes

**2.23** ScreenSkills also offers several job-specific and short course training programmes, which are designed each year in response to evolving industry skills needs. In 2022, **four Children’s TV training programmes provided the opportunity for trainees to undertake placements**. One was for production accountant transfer training, but as it did not start until the beginning of 2023 it is therefore out of scope for this report. The remaining three are:<sup>37</sup>

- **Step up training with placements for line producers.** The programme provided classroom-based learning before placing some (but not all) participants in a relevant placement, supported by a training plan and mentoring. Productions were offered a £10,000 grant to cover the cost of hosting a placement.
- **Step-up training with placements for script supervisors.** As above, this programme provided classroom-based learning before placing some (but not all) participants in a relevant placement, supported by a training plan and mentoring. Productions were offered a £10,000 grant to cover the cost of hosting a placement.
- **Dream Big! – a new entrant diversity-focused training programme including a 3-month placement** (not funded, instead paid for by the host company). Placements offered as trainee researcher, edit assistant, or production coordinators, and the placement is either hosted by an organisation or an active production. Classroom training for the trainee is delivered pre and post placement. Following a successful first year, the programme is due to run for a second time in the first half of 2023.<sup>38</sup>

## Centres of Screen Excellence

**2.24** In addition to programmes funded by the Skills Funds, ScreenSkills received funding from the BFI’s Future Film Skills (2017-2023) programme to run two Centres of Screen Excellence – one in Leeds and one in Elstree.<sup>39</sup> These **centres offer a range of courses designed to provide a pathway into industry** including costume, grip, lighting, make-up and hair, production assistant (scripted), art direction and lighting. Each course has differing entry requirements dependent on the skills they require. Courses at the Centre of Screen Excellence: Elstree (CoSE:E) only accept students aged 18 whilst the Centre of Screen Excellence: Yorkshire (CoSE:Y) courses are open to all adults aged 18+ (although fees are charged for anyone aged 19 or older).<sup>40</sup> Whilst BFI Future Film Skills funding will cease in 2023, both centres have become self-sustainable and will continue to operate.

---

<sup>37</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) Children’s TV Fund summary 2022 [not publicly available]

<sup>38</sup> [Children's TV - Dream Big - Training Course - ScreenSkills](#)

<sup>39</sup> ScreenSkills (2022) [Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements: For the year ending 31 March 2022](#)

<sup>40</sup> Screen Yorkshire (2022) [Centre of Screen Excellence: Yorkshire](#)

## Scale of ScreenSkills' placement activity

**2.25** Between 2020 – 2022, 176 trainees took part in 235 trainee finder placements across Film and Children's TV (see Table 2-2). The number of individual placements is greater than the number of trainees as many trainees took part in more than one placement. This scale of engagement is evidence that placements are effective and popular, but the number of placements needs to be scaled up to meet the scale of skills shortages and gaps outlined in the above sections, noting that this will also depend on the number of productions.<sup>41</sup> ScreenSkills commissioned this research as a means of better understanding the challenges that prevent industry from offering placements, actions that could make a difference to the scale and range of opportunities available.

**Table 2-1: Number of trainee finder placements between 2020 -2022**

	Number of trainees	Average placement weeks per trainee	Productions taking on trainees	Individual trainee placements
<b>Film</b>	136	5.3	51	187
<b>Children's TV</b>	40	9.3	24	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>235</b>

Source: ScreenSkills (2022) Number of placements 2020 – 2022

---

<sup>41</sup> BFI (2022) [Skills Review](#); [ScreenSkills \(2022\) Forecast of labour market shortages and training investment needs in film and high-end TV production](#)

## 3. Research findings

- 3.1** This section of the report presents the research findings. Notes from interviews with ten Film and ten Children's TV stakeholders (of whom 17 currently support placements and three do not) were checked by participants and analysed thematically (further detail about the research method is in Annex B). Findings are presented in this section which summarises what participants said about the value of placements, barriers that exist to offering more, and potentially actions that could enable more placement experiences. Throughout, the number of consultees which volunteered the particular finding is given, noting that the actual number agreeing with the finding may actually be greater.

### Experience of placements within film and children's TV

#### Understanding what placements are

- 3.2** This section explores industry's attitude towards placement, covering overall understanding of placements and their role in the Film and Children's TV sectors, and perceptions of the usefulness of placements by exploring the benefits to the employer and the trainee.
- 3.3** All consultees recognised the definition of placements as being temporary, structured learning opportunities for trainees at different stages in their career (entry, early, experienced, expert) and in different roles within screen sectors. They agreed that all placements should be paid, that trainees should have a training plan and that a mentor or supervisor should be provided, either through the placement host or placement provider. Most consultees primarily viewed placements as entry-level opportunities for people seeking to gain experience in the industry, although some did believe that placements can also be a useful mechanism for individuals seeking to 'step up' into a more senior role.

*Having the first-hand knowledge of the job and the production is unbeatable. There's nothing else that we offer that would be the same. There are training courses, and people can come and do things like work experience, but I don't feel like you get the same out of that.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.4** On placements, consultees recognised variety in the opportunities that exist. They mentioned how placements may vary in different ways such as the length of time, the number of productions an individual is placed on, the level of responsibility and the intended learning objectives for the placement (i.e., experience, confidence, specific skills development, back to work etc.). In having a range of different opportunities, employers are able to design a placement opportunity which best suits their needs.

### Placement activity among consultees

**3.5** Seventeen of the consultees worked for organisations that were currently using, or had recently used placements, in their productions. Their responses to interview questions were shaped by this experience as they drew on specific examples in their answers. This section details the scale, level and types of placements offered.

**3.6 Placements can take many different forms, although broadly fit into one of two categories: single production or multi-production.** In a single production placement, a trainee will be undertaking an assigned role and work within a given team for a set period. In multi-production placements, a trainee will stay with an organisation for a set amount of time, moving between ongoing productions where a trainee is required.

*Sometimes we will [look] for a [placement on a] specific production – say we want a production management assistant for a production for 6 months. [Whereas] it might be that we have a 12-month placement [and] we will say that within the 12 months, they will work on three different productions and development, where they get a wide range of experience.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

**3.7 The number of placements hosted differed between employer organisations.** Whilst it might be expected that the number would vary by size of employer, in fact, the number of placements hosted was relatively mixed across different business sizes. Nevertheless, within this mix, the three employers which hosted the most placements in the previous 12 months were in fact, large organisations, while the three companies which did not offer placements were either small or medium-sized.

**3.8** Placements provide opportunities for individuals across all experience levels (entry, early, experienced and expert) to be supported into the sector and progress within it. However, **the majority of consultees (13 of 17 who support placements) primarily used placements for individuals at entry level.** An explanation given by consultees for this is the perceived lower risk with regards to the overall successful delivery of a production associated with supporting entry level individuals, who have limited responsibility on a production, compared to more experienced individuals who would be expected to take on more responsibility within their placement.

*It is easier at entry level to place people; it is harder as you get up the ladder as you are asking that Head of Department to take a chance on somebody who is in quite a senior position and has a lot of delivery [experience]. It is much safer for them to invest in somebody who does not have a lot of delivery [experience] and that is new, and they can train in the way they want them to work.*

*Senior production exec, US studio*

**3.9** Despite this, some organisations (eight, covering small and large organisations) had some experience hosting more experienced level placements including ‘stepping up’ placements whereby an individual is placed into a role which they’re seeking to progress into. Typically, these organisations hosted placements across all levels of experience, and one consultee specifically noted that the purpose for placements remained consistent across experience levels, with any variation based on the individual’s needs.

*They all require as much input. You might get someone who is quite high level, but actually needs a huge amount of kind of mentoring and support. (..) The thing I like about placements is that you treat every single person as an individual and everyone is different from one another.*

*Senior production exec, production company (small)*

**3.10** However, skills gaps persist in more senior positions. While there are placement programmes that support mid or senior placements they are not frequently taken up by the sector. A range of reasons were offered by consultees. As mentioned before, there is perceived to be a higher risk of taking on a placement at a more senior level because their role is more critical in the production. In addition, the training plan for a more senior role has to be very tailored and specific compared to a new entrant for whom everything is a learning experience. Another consultee said that the issue of trust was critical. They needed to trust that the trainee and the placement provider were right for the placement opportunity.

*We have a lot of entry level people like assistants and runners. They learn a lot, you help people on set, lots of [...] observing and learning what people do. The middle management level is a lot of observing and shadowing and listening to what happens on a day-to-day basis. At the top level it is difficult, that is the problem level, that next step into a Head of Department. It can be done but [...] for that to work, you need to find the right people.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

**3.11 Trainees on placements undertake a wide range of roles** spanning production, post-production, creative, financial and technical areas. Indeed, consultees were positive about the range of opportunities in different roles which could be provided via placements. That said, whilst some consultees recognised there are skills shortages across most roles, some roles were identified by some consultees as being particularly difficult to recruit to, including production and production coordinators, certain creative roles such as costume designers and crafting, lighting and location managers/assistants, support roles such as accounts (e.g., due to potential requirements for existing qualifications), and managerial or supervisory roles. Construction roles were said to be unsuitable for placements:



*The only thing we don't tend to do is construction, just because more often our construction [work is done by] third parties, and they do things like carpentry apprenticeships .... under their own company.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

- 3.12** One consultee also mentioned the challenges specifically associated with placements for young people who are not yet 18 years old. They mentioned issues with insurance and also the potential for challenge associated with new T Levels which include a 45-day placement. The consultee noted that any support from placement providers in raising awareness of this issue and providing training or other practical support would be helpful.

In summary, the majority of consultees worked for organisations that were currently, or had recently, used placements in their productions. The scale of placements hosted varied between employer organisations and spanned a wide range of roles including production, post-production, creative, financial and technical areas. Reflecting on the level of placements offered, most consultees primarily used placements for individuals at entry level, and therefore this report reflects the experiences of entry and early career placements more than those for experienced and expert roles.

Despite this, some consultees recognised that placements can also be a useful mechanism for individuals seeking to 'step up' into a more senior role and eight consultees had some experience of this. These placements required more preparation and consideration because of the perceived risk to production delivery associated with the higher level of responsibility given to experienced or expert level trainee compared to those at entry or early level.

## The role and benefits of placements in the sector

### Benefits for the employer

- 3.13** All employers reported benefits from offering placements that include access to a wider crew base, building a talent pipeline, encourage more diversity in the workforce, enhancing or safeguarding quality, and bringing new knowledge and energy. This section explores these reported benefits in further detail.
- 3.14** More than half (11 of 17) of employers who used placements reported a key benefit being **access to crew members they had not previously worked with**. Some organisations have used placements to resolve immediate recruitment needs, particularly when the trainee's skills matched the needs of the production. For a few productions with smaller budgets, placements have provided partial funding for an additional placement role, meaning they can have more people on a production or improve a production's viability. Three of the consultees referred to how "an extra pair of hands" are often beneficial to a production, whilst one mentioned how the growing production budgets have facilitated their ability to host placements as an additional role.

*Whereas five years ago, the sound trainee may have been a placement, now productions can afford a sound trainee and a placement.*

*Producer, UK independent*

*The benefit for the employer is that we have someone else who could work in the department. We are able to crew up with more people because it costs less, so we can offer more support to the productions while also giving back to the new up and coming people in the industry.*

*Producer, UK independent*

- 3.15** A couple of consultees mentioned how recruitment of crew can be more difficult for small production companies or independent film makers, as these organisations typically have fewer resources dedicated to attracting talent, such as HR or talent and recruitment capacity. Furthermore, one producer suggested that recruitment challenges are becoming ever greater due to increased demand for talent, and so they have used placements as one method to find trainees as it gives them **access to a different source of talent**.

*We aren't able to offer the kinds of fees and salaries that productions in our peer group are able to. That means we have to have our ears to the ground as much as possible for new talent coming through.*

*Producer, UK independent*

- 3.16** In the longer term, placements have been used by some organisations **to improve their talent pipeline**. Some (six) consultees reported how hosting entry-level placements has introduced them to new talent which they may not have been able to recruit otherwise, and that continued employment or relationships with these trainees provides an opportunity to retain high-quality staff. For one consultee, this was found to be particularly important for resolving skills shortages, whereby the production company is able to shape an individual's personal development at an early stage in line with the needs of their productions.

*Within our industry, we do have certain job roles that are difficult to fill because there aren't the people within those positions. For those positions, the best way to fill them is to grow your own talent, to focus on the placements you want to train them in, in the positions you want and to keep them within the company.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

**3.17** In addition to using placements for finding new crew, one production company reported how they had used stepping up placements **to both improve staff retention and fill existing skills shortages** in their workforce.

*There is such a skills shortage in the industry, so you want to keep hold of your staff if possible or they will go elsewhere to progress. (...) We are in need of production managers, and we have got production co-ordinators, so we need to aid them to make that next step. Putting them in a placement aids their training and confidence.*

*Senior operations exec, production company (large)*

**3.18** The ability to **build a more diverse workforce** was cited as another benefit of using placement schemes which provide access to a wide talent pool. Over time, trainees may then go on to progress their career within the industry, helping to build greater diversity at a more senior level, noting that this must be supported by an effort from the employer to progress and retain trainees. A couple of consultees highlighted placement schemes which target trainees from underrepresented groups, and how those schemes are central to addressing barriers to employment which these groups face.

*I think there is a big importance to diversify the teams that we have got. I think placements make a huge impact on that because you are getting people from communities you may not otherwise.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

*The way we're trying to do it is by giving people the opportunities for the entry level jobs with the hope that they can progress, and they can take up more senior level jobs.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

**3.19** In addition to making employment opportunities more accessible, two consultees spoke of how a more diverse workforce enabled by placement schemes will **improve the quality of content** produced by the industry, to the benefit of Children's TV and Film audiences.

*We want children to watch TV and see people like themselves not only on screen but also behind screen. We want the shows that we are making to be new and resonate, so [its important] to bring in new people rather than having (...) people that all come from the same sort of backgrounds as that will not make great TV.*

*Production exec, production company (large)*

*Definitely it is that diversity piece, we are an inclusive employer, and we are committed to supporting diversity, inclusivity and accessibility on set and in broadcasting and commissioning as well. That piece is really important, we need to hear more diverse voices in writing, behind the camera and in front of the camera to properly represent the nation.*

*Talent manager, UK broadcaster*

**3.20** Whilst placements focus on a trainee's skills development, the external knowledge and perspectives held by the trainee can benefit the employer. One employer referenced how placements bring **new knowledge and enthusiasm**, to the benefit of departments within the organisation.

*There is a level of reverse mentorship that comes from these placements, particularly through Heads of Departments who will come and say they have been shown things by their trainees on YouTube. Trainees will then teach them, so process efficiencies have been introduced from having a different viewpoint. I think that part is great and often trainees add a new level of energy to teams as they are excited to be there and bring back everyone's reminder that this is a pretty awesome job to be doing.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

**3.21** Another consultee said that **their knowledge of how different departments work and the roles within them has been enhanced** due to their involvement in placements.

*We probably learn a little bit about each of the departments: what their requirements are, and the kinds of characters that might do well in those types of environments.*

*Producer, UK independent*

### **Benefits for the trainee**

**3.22** Employers reported a number of benefits for trainees they had hosted. These related to enhanced career prospects for the trainee through different means such as networking, skills development, confidence building, and industry insight. ScreenSkills has published case studies of industry professionals it has supported, to illustrate the benefits of its placement programmes from a trainee perspective.<sup>42</sup>

**3.23** All consultees, including those who don't currently host placements, believed that **placements are beneficial to a trainee's career prospects**. The majority of consultees who delivered placements were able to provide examples of their trainees who have

---

<sup>42</sup> For more detail see: [Case Studies - ScreenSkills](#)

subsequently progressed in their careers, either within their organisation, another organisation, or, as a freelance professional.

*About 6/7 years ago, I worked on a drama as production coordinator, and I brought and looked after ScreenSkills trainees. I made good friends with them as well and they have all progressed really far in their careers. The sound trainee is now a boom operator who is never out of work, the makeup trainee is now makeup supervisor and just worked on [a major production], and the camera trainee is now a camera operator and never out of work.*

*Production exec, production company (large)*

*The last big feature we did, we had 30 trainees and it ended up that 70-80% went straight onto another job, not all with us. (...) Our accounts trainee on [a major production], by the time they had finished working with us they had job offers from four different studios.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

**3.24** More experienced placements were reported to be beneficial for career progression. One consultee noted that two of their crew members had enrolled onto the ScreenSkills 'Make a Move' programme, which provides funding for short courses, mentoring and shadowing opportunities. Following the programme, both individuals were able to secure new roles, in areas of skill shortage for the production company.

**3.25** The opportunity for a trainee to **extend their networks and build relationships with industry contacts** was cited as an important reason why placements help improve career prospects. Nine consultees spoke of how departments will often seek to recruit staff who they know are reliable. They felt placements provide an opportunity to build relationships with their team and demonstrate their capabilities, particularly for entry-level trainees who may have had limited contacts beforehand.

*For trainees it is about making contacts because as people say, you are only as good on your last day of the job. I think that in a freelance world, people are very quick to recognise talent when they see it. (...) If there was a very good trainee who worked in a given department and had found their niche, I am sure that their Heads of Department would think about them for their next job.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

**3.26** Some consultees (seven) mentioned how placements are an effective mechanism for skills development, where on-the-job training allows trainees to put knowledge into practice and in turn **develop skills more quickly**. Several consultees mentioned how the bespoke nature of placement training allows trainees to **focus on skills which are**

**most valuable** to themselves and to industry, therefore enhancing their employability. One consultee felt that specific skills development is central to more experienced placements, as these placements are often more focused on the individual needs of the trainee to enable them to progress into a new role.

*For the individual, it is specific training to them for that specific role, so it is quite concentrated. Any learnt knowledge is put into practice quite quickly, which aids the training process, because if you've put something into practice straight away, you remember it and it is different to hearing something in a seminar six months ago. By implementing what you've learnt, you can have an impact straight away – if you know how to make a schedule, you can do it again and again.*

*Senior operations exec, production company (large)*

**3.27** For entry level placements, the ability for trainees to **build confidence** working within a production environment was seen as beneficial by some (seven) consultees. They spoke of how the screen industries can be relatively intense compared to other industries, as trainees are often working within a busy environment for long and unsociable hours. Having placement opportunities which focus on personal development provide an opportunity for trainees to learn within a supportive environment and gives them time to adjust to the working environment. Confidence gained through placements will enable trainees to transition more easily into future employed roles.

*Confidence is a big one and really important. The confidence comes from being around people and learning what people are talking about. You forget that the lingo you are talking in is not standard because it's just so commonplace, so for people to come in and hear it, to feel free, to answer, ask questions and just absorb the atmosphere. I hope we'll give them confidence that when they go to the next job they go okay, now I know what I'm talking about a bit more and I understand what's going on around me and why this is important.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

*It allows them the opportunity to not know it all at this stage and to fail and to know that the people in your department are looking out for you because they understand that you might not know it all at once. That is all really useful.*

*Producer, UK independent*

**3.28** Similarly, one consultee identified how more experienced placements within the Children's TV sector can be beneficial to a trainees' confidence. Here, an individual is able to step into a new role, **experience wide-ranging responsibilities** and begin to

feel more confident within a supportive learning environment. Likewise, a Film consultee noted that more experienced-level placements provide a valuable opportunity to experience different areas and gain that breadth of knowledge needed to step up in your career.

*I think what Children' TV offers, certainly for stepping up placements, is that you're working in a smaller, lower budget production. A lot of people say it is great stepping up on smaller shows because you get to do a lot more. (...) Smaller shows give you chance to do everything, and you can test the waters without the pressure of tens of millions of pounds in budget.*

*Senior production exec, production company (large)*

**3.29** In addition to improving a trainee's skills and confidence within a given role, some (seven) consultees felt that placements provide **good insight into industry as a whole**. Entry-level placements were said to help trainees gain an understanding as to what is required within a production, including key behaviours and skills, and whether it is an industry or role they wish to work in. In a couple of cases, trainees have been able to learn about other departments outside of their placement role, providing insight into roles they were less familiar with, which they have subsequently pursued.

*We let one of the placement trainees who was interested in editing do some experimenting on editing at lunch time. It is now great to see that three or four years later they are an assistant editor in their own right and have moved into that world rather than just being the runner in the art department. They have completely moved into another area by chance of just being able to use some of our equipment at lunch time.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

Overall, evidence from consultees shows that placements are viewed positively because of their benefits to employers and trainees. Benefits for employers included access to new and more diverse talent, ameliorating skills gaps, enhanced staff retention, with wider benefits including improvements in the quality of productions and to the culture within the production team.

As for benefits to trainees, all consultees believed that placements are beneficial to a trainee's career prospects, as a result of networks formed with industry contacts, improved skills and confidence and the wider insight into the industry gained. Indeed, most consultees who delivered placements provided anecdotal evidence of trainees who have subsequently progressed in their careers, for example within their organisation, another organisation, or, as a freelance professional.

## Barriers and enablers shaping the scale and effectiveness of placements

- 3.30** This section presents findings relating to the research question as to the barriers to placements within the Film and Children’s TV sector and how these can be overcome. In doing so, it also covers the research question focused on the components required for an effective placement to take place.
- 3.31** Consultees noted that despite the benefits of offering placements for them, and the trainee, there are some factors that affect their current involvement, including employer size and the types of roles that might be needed for a production. More broadly, consultees identified a range of generic factors that affect the scale and quality of placements that can be offered within the sector. These are summarised in this section as: financial support, capacity, guidance for placement provision, candidates, and equality, diversity and inclusion, reflecting on the challenges and potential solutions or enablers.

### Financial support

- 3.32** Placements are paid training opportunities and the availability of resource to cover this cost affects employers’ decision making. The Skills Fund (see section 2.16), is used to help fund ScreenSkills’ activity.<sup>43</sup> Productions which contribute are immediately able to access funding specifically to support training on their current production, including access to ScreenSkills’ placement programmes. The Skills Fund model is therefore designed to provide and facilitate training, with productions able to access financial support as required.
- 3.33** Over half of consultees across Film and Children’s TV (11 of 17) who currently support placements indicated that partial or full funding was an important factor in their decision-making regarding offering placement opportunities. All three employers which do not currently offer placements said that increased funding support might encourage them to provide placement opportunities alongside other internal factors (such as capacity to do so, which may reflect the size of the employer).

*If someone said to me: “You’ve got a fully funded person coming to join you for 6 weeks,” the attraction is much greater.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.34** Some consultees who do currently offer placements said that a greater level of funding would support a greater number of placements, and differing levels of financial support for placements can make the schemes more or less attractive to employers. This was particularly noted within Children’s TV, where all but one consultee referenced funding as a barrier to some extent. This can be attributed to Children’s TV productions being typically lower budget whilst competing for labour with bigger budget subsectors (e.g.,

---

<sup>43</sup> For more detail on the Skills Fund, see: [Contribute to the Children's TV Skills Fund](#) and [Contribute to the Film Skills Fund](#)



HETV). Budget pressures within Children's TV are much greater as a result, and funding for placements is therefore more important.

*Having ScreenSkills funding does help but it does not cover the full cost and so it does come out of our budget which is hard, but we do tend to make it work.*

*Production exec, production company (large)*

**3.35** In contrast, only one film consultee mentioned how funding acted as a barrier to offering more placements. Instead, the majority of film consultees focused on other barriers to hosting placements such as candidate availability.

*We are in the middle of making a multi-million-pound series, so our motivation is more to get the right people and if we get a little money back it helps but is not so much the means and motivation for us.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

**3.36** Finally, another financial barrier highlighted which was specific to experienced level placements related to challenges associated with wages for more experienced trainees. A consultee noted that more experienced trainees may have a higher wage expectation based on existing roles so may be less inclined to “*take that step back to go forward*”. Trainees either need to view the placement as an investment in themselves (personal finances allowing), or a way needs to be found to bridge that gap.

### **Capacity**

**3.37** As outlined in Section 1, placement trainees are expected to have a placement supervisor with whom they develop a training plan. Eight consultees emphasised the importance of having a named placement supervisor with dedicated time for the delivery of effective placements within an experienced and supportive team.

*The best kind of employers are those that have got active time for trainees and to give them a bit of direction.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

*For us, what makes the best placement is that we have a great trainee coming in, but we also have a really open-minded supervisor who wants to take someone different than them and wants to learn from somebody else [...] They should want to invest in the person.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

**3.38** This requires time and support to be budgeted or planned for by production staff, and as a result in the context of busy production schedules, limited placement supervisor

capacity was identified as a key challenge in offering placements or additional placements. Smaller production companies said they had fewer potential supervisors available to take on a trainee. For example, (five) Children’s TV consultees referenced a lack of time and resource as a barrier preventing them from hosting placements.

*These schemes do offer some financial help, to help with the budget but it is the time element that is more crucial than anything else.*

*Senior operations exec, production company (large)*

**3.39** Consultees suggested a range of different ways that placement providers could help overcome this challenge:

- Suitable matching between candidate skills and role

*Art department is easy to get [placements] in, but camera and sound it is more difficult as they don’t have time to train people up, they need to take people on who are going to be good.*

*Production exec, production company (large)*

- Managing expectations of both employers and trainees, including providing support to employers to ensure they undertake sufficient preparation and make an appropriate time commitment, whilst ensuring trainees fully understand the job description of the role, they will be completing a placement in.
- Sharing placement supervision responsibility between crew members

*If you have a placement coming in alongside someone else, who is doing the same job just more experienced, that makes it a lot easier because they can shadow, learn over the first few months, then start to branch out on their own. The management time aspect is a difficulty.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium)*

- External trainee mentorship, providing additional mentoring support.

*If, through the scheme, the placement has an external mentor to check in on them, I think they can then feedback to the production.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium)*

### **Guidance for placement provision**

**3.40** Guidance and training for placement provision was also noted as a key enabler to hosting placements. Consultees suggested offering additional guidance to employers on how to host a placement, as well as providing mentoring training courses for employers.

*To have the structure and support of an organisation [with experience of running placements] is really beneficial, and it allows them to share their experiences with their contemporaries, which seems like a useful thing.*

*Senior production exec, production company (small)*

- 3.41** One consultee from an organisation which does not yet support placements also noted that further developing guidance for employers on how to host a placement would be useful as it could help upskill the company's own staff and encourage them to offer placement opportunities.

*Something that would be really useful to me as an employer if I was to take on a trainee would almost be that you need mentoring yourself to help me to know what is expected of me and the company. We could lay out a guideline of how this person is going to be trained, what channels we are going to take them through, depending on the role.*

*Senior production exec, production company (small)*

- 3.42** Additional capacity or support from providers was also noted as an important enabler in delivering placements and an area where more support would be valuable. For example, a few consultees suggested that further independent external supervision for the trainee from placement provider organisations can help to resolve this barrier by relieving some of the time burden from the production crew. However, it is important to recognise the scale of additional resource this would require, and the financial implications as a result.

*If, through the scheme, the placement has an external mentor to check in on them, I think they can then feedback to the production.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.43** Furthermore, some (five) employers highlighted how ongoing support from placement providers is beneficial for both the trainee and the host production company, when it is offered. By acting as an independent third party, the placement provider is able to offer a support network, facilitate feedback and share good practice to improve the placement.

### **Candidates**

- 3.44** Identifying and recruiting trainees who match the skills requirements of a given production was cited as another challenge by consultees from Children's TV and Film organisations, and it was the most commonly identified barrier amongst Film companies. The need to crew up within a short timeframe was said to exacerbate this problem, limiting the amount of time they had to find the trainees best suited for placement roles.

*A lot of times, when we are entering the time to bring a trainee in there are lots of other very important things going on. So, we can say we want to bring trainees in, but if we have to spend half a day vetting them to see who is right to come in, we sometimes might not do it at all as we have so many issues to solve.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

- 3.45** As a result, assistance with the identification of trainees was seen by six consultees as being an important enabler to offering placements. They felt the most effective schemes were those which make finding the right trainee as simple as possible, and often increase the likelihood that a placement will be successful.

*I think if we are going to go out to three different partners with a job and one can offer personal touch and three recommendations, versus 400 applications from a newsletter, I think that is where there can be value added that we as a team ... will look for.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

- 3.46** Specific production language requirements can act as a barrier for placements, and one which may be difficult for placement providers to overcome. In one case, a production company which produces Welsh-language content has found it challenging to find candidates who speak Welsh, meaning they have been unable to take on trainees.

*Another factor we have is that the majority of our work is Welsh language, the mentor and mentee usually have to speak Welsh, and I'm not sure whether ScreenSkills [or other placement providers] can fulfil that role easily. [...] If they don't speak Welsh, the opportunities can be limited because that is an important requirement of any work we do.*

*Senior operations exec, production company (large)*

- 3.47** Criteria for matching trainees also included the trainees' own personal interests and curiosities, as well as targeted areas for development. It was noted that this could be used to identify the best placement opportunity for the trainee on a production and inform development plans for the placement.

*One of the things you've got to work out, is what is someone's skill set is and what type of programme and what type of job within that programme would suit them.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

**3.48** As highlighted in Section 1, the creation of a diverse and inclusive workforce represents another key challenge for the industry. As a result, employer consultees were asked to consider how best to ensure that placement opportunities are open to everyone, with suggestions covering a range of practical suggestions for employers and industry and providers.

**3.49** Actively seeking to build a more diverse workforce was identified by consultees as important. For example, one consultee noted that making placements as open as possible, including through removing entry requirements, could be used to increase the accessibility of opportunities. Responsible advertising in terms of where and how roles are advertised was highlighted as a practical method used by some employers for improving accessibility to roles. This may involve using neutral language, avoiding jargon and using suitable formatting.

*We are allowed to find our own trainee(s), so I guess a lot of that is our responsibility in terms of how we would advertise that position. As a company, we always advertise as an inclusive employer, we welcome applications from diverse backgrounds and recognise that this is the way forward and are really mindful of that.*

*Senior production exec, production company (small)*

**3.50** Within responsible advertising comes the need to ensure that information about placement opportunities can be found by anyone and is presented in a way that is accessible to *all* individuals. This should help raise awareness among the general population about placement opportunities, including where they are available, who to ask questions to and how to apply.

*Promoting into areas that we would not promote into, so using job centres and unemployment agencies to get to talent pools who would not experience it or know to even apply. [...] There is also a big piece on Creative Careers Education [which] needs to start much younger so that young people understand that there are jobs available for them, there are a variety of job roles in the industry, and pretty much any skills that they would have would be relevant to a job role or department. It is about making sure that they can actually see themselves in the industry and hopefully then that will feed through so that when they are older and see those jobs, they think they could do that.*

*Talent manager, UK broadcaster*

**3.51** Meanwhile, using schemes which focus on specific demographic groups is another practical measure recommended by employers. Some placement providers, such as

MAMA Youth and Babassa, work with people from specific underrepresented backgrounds to help them succeed in the screen industries.

- 3.52** At a placement level, providing an environment where trainees are able to voice their needs or concerns was considered to be another important EDI measure, with the example of mental health and wellbeing support given by one consultee. This may come through support from the placement provider or internal training of staff, to help the trainee succeed within their placement role.

*I think people need to be more vocal about the support they offer from a wellbeing perspective, it's increasingly important to trainees. We have mental health first aiders, we have a confidential helpline [and] all of these things, but for us we've learned [the support] needs to be more present and that we should not necessarily wait for somebody to come to us with a problem.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

- 3.53** Providing sufficient funding for trainees was also seen by four consultees as one method for encouraging EDI through placements, as greater financial support allows placement opportunities to become more accessible.

*[Placements are] probably the best way of bringing people who can't otherwise afford to take the risk, even if they change career into something else, they have a broad experience. Maybe some guaranteed paid income might be a way through.*

*Senior production exec, production company (large)*

- 3.54** Finally, to support employers further, one consultee suggested placement providers could share best practice in how to host placements, particularly in how to manage different needs and helping to make sure each trainee receives an experience personalised to them based on their needs.

*I think that sharing best practice is something that ScreenSkills could really do well. For example, they could say "this company have had this person in, and this is what they put in place that works really well and this worked less well." [...] I think that could really help people into the industry more, particularly people with a disability, via encouraging sharing of best practice.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.55** In summary, the practical measures employers will be able to take, and subsequent level of support required from providers, will vary dependent on the employer context.

However, supporting inclusivity within placements was recognised amongst consultees as a key challenge to be targeted, both by industry and placement providers.

In summary, the research explored firstly the barriers to placements within the Film and Children's TV sectors, and secondly what components make for an effective placement. The research found consultees mentioned five different factors that need to be considered. These were financial support, capacity, guidance for placement provision, candidates, and equality, diversity and inclusion. The exact scale of the barrier and combination of support or enablers required under each of these barriers will vary dependent on the specific context of the organisation (e.g., the size, the sector), for example the scale of financial support appears to be more important to some placement providers than others.

### Recommendations from industry

- 3.56** Based on their experiences, employers suggested some recommendations for the provision of placements, to increase both the quantity and quality of placements. Generally, these recommendations included increasing the level of funding support; broadening of the trainee talent pool; provision of external mentorship and/or support; proactive relationship building and communication of placements opportunities; increased flexibility and responsiveness to industry needs; offering greater variety of placement opportunities; and more cohesion between different placement providers.
- 3.57** Most (13 of 17) consultees referenced the importance of funding in their ability to offer placements, and how a greater level of funding would incentivise them to use placements more regularly. This was emphasised by Children's TV consultees and consultees from smaller organisations. To improve accessibility of placements and encourage a wider talent pool, one consultee suggested how placement providers could include bursaries to cover costs such as travel. Two of the three organisations which do not offer placements felt that funding opportunities would assist them in offering placements:

*If someone said to me here is a month or two next March-April funded, I'm confident I could probably find some work. But there's no doubt the funding element is a key part to this.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.58** A number of consultees (nine) suggested that a broader talent pool would encourage them to take on more placements, particularly if the wider pool provided candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds. Two of the Film consultees emphasised the need for high calibre trainees within the talent pool, particularly given the level of demand for trainees from the sector.

*Helping to find people that fit the bill of what we want, with the right experience to do a placement that would really help. (...) Also, helping us to find people at different levels, not just entry level, that would be helpful.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

*I think they need more trainees or if they are going to have less trainees, they all need to be of a very high calibre given how busy the industry is.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

- 3.59** Greater financial support for trainees, in addition to employers, may be one mechanism for improving accessibility of placements. For example, one consultee suggested how the trainee talent pool can be limited based on the filming location, and that bursaries which cover a trainee's expenses may allow opportunities to become more accessible to people who may otherwise be unable to afford these costs. Whilst the Trainee Finder scheme does already offer some bursary support, greater awareness of this amongst employers and trainees may encourage future provision of placements.<sup>44</sup>
- 3.60** Provision of an external mentor or additional support was recommended by some (eight) consultees as another way for improving the quality of placements. By having an external third party available during the course of the placement, both the trainee and the employer be able to manage any potential issues more quickly and ensure the placement delivered value. Similar to funding, this additional external support was more frequently mentioned by Children's TV organisations, which typically have fewer crew members and so are more likely to face resource limitations.

*If within this six-month placement, they set certain goals, it gives the production more structure to work from, that makes it a bit easier. If through the scheme, the placement has an external mentor to check in on them, I think they can then feedback to the production. In previous roles, that is a structure I've used before, and I think that is always really helpful to get the external feedback from the placement.*

*Senior talent exec, production company (medium-sized)*

---

<sup>44</sup> See Animation Trainee Finder FAQs: [Support a Trainee Finder trainee - ScreenSkills](#)



*It is just having enough people in the team to have enough support for people. For the people who need a bit more help, I don't know that we always do them justice because we don't have the slack in the production team to spend time training people enough.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

**3.61** Being more active as a placement provider was noted by some (seven) consultees as another method to promote placements further. It was suggested that this may include building stronger relationships with employers, sharing best practice in hosting a placement and continuing engagement with employers post-placement to understand potential future opportunities.

*Proactive rather than just reactive; rather than having a line producer have to ring and say who they need, ScreenSkills could get shoot dates for a film and say we have people available, let us know and we can set up meetings with Heads of Department.*

*Senior production exec, UK independent*

*Sharing success stories and information about what happens to trainees post-placement [...] there could be the sharing of any success stories, e.g., do trainees leave the industry or are they able to continue working and progressing.*

*Production executive, UK public service broadcaster*

**3.62** Further, the ability for placement providers to be more flexible and able to respond more quickly to the needs of production companies was recommended by a few (four) consultees. Particularly for Children's TV companies, a few consultees mentioned how productions can be commissioned in a short space of time, and so there is need for the placement system to respond quickly in order to meet a production's recruitment needs.

*There is quite a strict criterion of who ScreenSkills allow (on Trainee Finder), so maybe they could be more flexible on that. For example, we had that trainee from local college, and they couldn't be funded through ScreenSkills due to their experience, and we had to fund it ourselves. Maybe more flexibility there would be helpful particularly when nobody else is available on the ScreenSkills list.*

*Production exec, production company (large)*

*It is about being able to react quickly to our needs, so that when we get a production we can go 'right, we've got production, what type of roles could fit this production' and then someone like ScreenSkills can come back to us really quickly.*

*Senior production exec, production company (medium-sized)*

- 3.63** Having a greater variety of placement opportunities was suggested by four consultees, three of which were Film employers. They believed there could be an expansion of opportunities to include roles in post-production, as well as a greater emphasis on roles which are difficult to recruit to.

*I know ScreenSkills do editorial, but I don't know if they do any other post-production placements. (...) I know it is slightly more complicated as it tends to not necessarily be people that the production employs, but there could another part of ScreenSkills that speaks to the post-houses directly.*

*Production executive, UK public service broadcaster*

- 3.64** One consultee also highlighted the importance of trainees having a sufficient length of time in a placement, as it provides the opportunity for the trainee to understand the business model more easily and develop skills and grow in confidence. This was seen as particularly important for entry-level trainees who might have just left school or college and require time to adjust to working in a professional environment.
- 3.65** Some consultees also mentioned how they have worked with number of different placement providers, and that it could be clearer as to when to use a particular placement provider. One consultee noted how greater cohesion between placement providers may help to simplify the overall placement offer and improve matching between employers and trainees.

*Industry bodies are not connected to each other enough, so there is a lot of crossovers between different organisations. Understandably often people will be signed up on different providers programmes and contact lists, so (we are) often getting the same people through multiple avenues.*

*Talent manager, film studio*

- 3.66** More widely, consultees also suggested placement providers should encourage productions to use placements more in general. At present, there is no mandatory requirement to take on trainees on productions, with it more dependent on the individuals involved in the organisation or on a certain production. Suggestions to tackle this issue,

included having something more consistent and transparent so that all productions are mandated to take on a certain percentage of trainees depending on the cost of production or total staff recruitment. More widely, one consultee indicated that a range of organisations, including ScreenSkills could actively engage with policy development and move this agenda forward.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.1 ScreenSkills, funded by contributions from industry and relevant partner organisations including the BFI and Arts Council England (ACE), work with partners to identify skills needs and build capacity, knowledge, and practice in offering placements. In this final section of the report, we present a set of conclusions based around the research questions posed for the study. Recommendations are provided for consideration to guide future industry activity based on learning derived from the research study.

### The role of placements in the sector

- 4.2 As noted elsewhere in this report, the definition of a placement used for the research is as follows:

*“Placements are all paid. Trainees all have a supervisor with whom they develop a training plan, which can include a range of experiences including work shadowing and task delivery. A placement is planned and conscious decision to develop professional skills. All placements aim to provide trainees at different levels (entry, early, experienced, expert) with a rich experience to help them build skills, networks and added confidence that helps them to work effectively in the industry.”*

*SQW Research Workplan 2022*

- 4.3 Consultees recognised this definition and it aligned with their experience of offering placements or considering whether to do so. Alternatives to placements such as work experience, college or university courses and training courses were also mentioned as ways to build experience of working in the sector. However, consultees understood how these differed from placement opportunities, emphasising the importance of the placement as a job role with training.
- 4.4 Placements were viewed positively because of their benefits to employers and trainees. Benefits for employers ranged from accessing new crew members and more diverse talent, to improving staff retention and filling skills gaps. Some also said that offering placements led to improvements to the quality of content (by introducing more diverse voices), and to the culture of the production team being invigorated by trainee enthusiasm and curiosity.
- 4.5 Meanwhile, for trainees, benefits included enhanced career prospects derived from networks with industry contacts, improved skills, and confidence (including both soft and technical skills), as well as gaining an insight into industry as a whole.

***Recommendation 1: ScreenSkills to continue to promote the value of placements by focusing on benefits to employers, the productions they work on and the benefits to trainees, and other providers and employers are recommended to do the same.***

## Placements supported

- 4.6** The majority of consultees (17 of 20) worked for organisations that were currently, or had recently, used placements in their productions. The number and model of placements hosted differed between employer organisations and spanned a wide range of roles including production, post-production, creative, financial, and technical areas.
- 4.7** Placements provide opportunities for individuals across all experience levels (entry, early, experienced and expert) to be supported into the sector and progress within it. However, the majority of consultees (13 of 17 who support placements) primarily used placements for individuals at entry level, and therefore this report reflects the experiences of entry and early career placements more than those for experienced and expert roles. Some consultees recognised that placements can also be a useful mechanism for individuals seeking to 'step up' into a more senior role and eight consultees had some experience of this.
- 4.8** One explanation for this is the perceived lower risk to production delivery associated with entry level placements. They assume more limited responsibility on a production compared to experienced individuals who would take on more responsibility within their placement.

***Recommendation 2: ScreenSkills to continue to raise awareness of the opportunities for placements at all levels (entry, early, experienced, expert) and using different models (multi-production and single production), and other providers are recommended to do the same.***

## Employment benefits for trainees

- 4.9** ScreenSkills have undertaken recent work to capture and share the benefits of placements for trainees. This research therefore focused on employer perceptions of trainee benefits. All consultees, including those who don't currently host placements, believed that placements are beneficial to a trainee's career prospects. The majority of consultees who delivered placements provided anecdotal evidence of examples of trainees who have subsequently progressed in their careers, either within their organisation, another organisation, or as a freelance professional.

## Barriers and enablers shaping the scale and effectiveness of placements

- 4.10** The research focused firstly on those components of practice that make a placement work effectively for both the employer and the trainee, and secondly on how to scale up the provision of placements whilst still maintaining quality across all of those different components. The research found consultees mentioned five different factors that need to be considered. These were financial support, capacity, guidance for placement provision and candidates, the fifth component, equality, diversity and inclusion, is an element that cuts across all the others.
- 4.11** An overarching consideration for the sector is that investment in the future skills of trainees does not happen without positive interventions from well networked agencies

and placement providers. The requirements to market, manage, build and quality assure this activity should not be underestimated and needs more investment than is currently the case. For example, placement activity at ScreenSkills in Film and Children's TV is currently managed by two individuals who also have other very substantive roles, with some administrative support. The recommendations that follow all need additional activity from a co-ordinating body in the form of marketing, case management, mentoring and project management. It is beyond our remit to scope these activities as single or multiple roles, freelance commissions or management responsibilities but many of the recommendations rest on having additional oversight and management capacity.

**4.12** In making these recommendations we considered the role of employers and production teams in assuming some of these additional roles. However, the culture of productions mitigated against an employer-led approach. Employers described their culture of working as being sporadic with intermittent periods of intense activity, limited lead-in times for projects, and competitive for both resources and people. This type of working is not fully compatible with the planned and considered approach needed to manage a skills development network. This is not to say that employers have no role in placement development and there are several recommendations that emphasise their role.

**4.13** In this section we now summarise key findings and associated recommendations with each of the components of effective practice in turn.

#### **Financial support**

**4.14** Placements are paid training opportunities and as such the availability of resource to cover this cost affects employers' decision making as to whether to offer placements (and the scale of that offer). Over half of consultees (11 of 17) who currently support placements indicated that partial or full funding influenced their decisions to offer placement opportunities. Likewise, all three employers which do not currently offer placements said that increased funding support might encourage them to provide placement opportunities alongside other internal factors such as capacity to do so.

**4.15** ScreenSkills funding to support placements is derived from Skills Funds. Productions which contribute to the Funds are able to access paid placement support. The Skills Fund model is therefore designed to provide and facilitate training, with productions able to access financial support as required. This model was viewed positively by consultees and, as none of them raised concerns about the process of applying, we infer that the process works well.

#### ***Recommendation 3: ScreenSkills to continue to utilise the Skills Fund model to support placements in Film and Children's TV on behalf of the sector.***

**4.16** The scale of financial support appears to be more important to some employers than others. Some see it as a primary driver and motivator to offering placements whereas for others it is a useful rather than essential. In Children's TV, all but one consultee referenced funding as an important enabler to some extent. In contrast, only one film

consultee mentioned how insufficient funding acted as a barrier to offering more placements.

- 4.17** Some organisations might appear to need the financial element of the support more than others. One response to this might be to introduce eligibility criteria such that financial support is targeted only at those that need it more. However, the current system is fair, easy to use and creates good will towards placements and introducing such a change could jeopardise that. To reflect the fact that financial support is a more prominent barrier amongst smaller companies, placement providers might consider providing the option for employers/productions to apply for additional support depending on certain criteria (e.g., size of company, budget of production).

***Recommendation 4: Placement providers to consider maintaining a minimum level of financial support for all productions with additional ‘top ups’ for employers/productions that meet eligibility criteria.***

### **Capacity**

- 4.18** Placement trainees are expected to have a mentor or supervisor with whom they develop a training plan. This requires dedicated time and support from production staff. In the context of busy production schedules, limited supervisor or mentor capacity was identified as a key challenge in offering placements or scaling up placements.
- 4.19** Employers need to be realistic about the amount of time that supervision or mentoring requires, and they also need to commit to making that time available. Information or support that makes those expectations clear to both employers and placement trainees, and that create a mutually agreed obligation (between the placement provider, the employer, and the trainee) can be included in any placement funding package agreement.
- 4.20** Consultees suggested a range of other measures or tactics to increase supervision capacity. These were to share mentorship responsibility between crew members, and to use additional external trainee mentorship during the placement. The latter option would provide the trainee with a point of contact to discuss progress, share learning and resolve issues beyond any local or line management context.

***Recommendation 5: Employers to ensure each trainee has a training plan that clearly set out mutual obligations and responsibilities.***

***Recommendation 6: All placement schemes with employers encouraged to explore the potential of using independent external mentors to support trainees on placements.***

### **Guidance for placement provision**

- 4.21** Effective placements need people to supervise and support trainees, but those people need certain capabilities. Requirements will differ depending on the specific employer context, for example those more experienced in offering placements will likely require

less support than those just starting on the journey to offering placements. Entry level placements will need different support to those who are experienced and on step up programmes.

**4.22** Reflecting this, consultees suggested they or others in the sector might benefit from one or both of the following:

- **Guidance about how to host a placement**, for example arranging insurance, interview questions, pre-arrival information, induction and so on. This could be in the form of a framework or structure of what should be in place with checklists of actions.
- **Individual employer-mentoring** for employers who might require personalised support to set up, improve or expand their placement offering.

**4.23** Consultees did not suggest the form of the latter although models from elsewhere suggest that it could be done by an individual working with an allocated group of employers or providing ad hoc support as required. This could be a permanent post or a freelance provider on a call-off contract. An alternative model would be through peer-to-peer support with employers linked through a buddying network.

***Recommendation 7: Placement providers to actively explore options for providing personalised mentoring support for employers offering placements.***

***Recommendation 8: Placement providers to create and promote a good placement toolkit for employers and trainees.***

### **Candidates**

**4.24** Identifying and recruiting trainees who match the skills requirements of a given production was cited as very important component to get right. This is challenging within the context of rapid turnaround within production timescales. Consequently, consultees felt the most effective schemes were those which make finding the right trainee as simple as possible, and often increase the likelihood that a placement will be successful.

**4.25** Employers wanted a larger pool of talent from which they could select trainees. Working with partners to identify ways in which the flow of candidates could be increased will be important here and could be done in a range of ways, for example, in partnership with a recruitment agency; or through outreach activities targeted at relevant college courses and sixth form university courses.

***Recommendation 9: Placement providers to work more effectively with partners to explore ways to increase the flow of candidates onto placement schemes, and resource application screening and assessment.***

**4.26** Linked to the above point is the need to ensure information about placement opportunities can be found by anyone and is presented in a way that appeals to all individuals. For placement providers, this includes targeting awareness raising activities at all stages of the education system and beyond, for example, in job centres and



through the national careers service. This activity should help raise awareness among the general population about placement opportunities, including where they are available, who to ask questions to and how to apply.

***Recommendation 10: ScreenSkills to continue to raise awareness of placement opportunities via existing routes and networks and work with industry and other providers to identify ways to promote opportunities to everyone, and other placement providers are recommended to do the same'.***

**4.27** Finally, and reflecting the importance of matching opportunities to trainees, a business development approach could be taken to actively manage relationship building in a sector or across sectors in a geographic area. A relationship manager with a case load of employers could work with them proactively to forecast likely roles, focus on those where the skills needs was most acute and identify key areas for targeted trainee recruitment ahead of the productions.

***Recommendation 11: Placement providers encouraged to explore the potential of using a proactive relationship management approach to connecting employers with forthcoming placement opportunities with trainees looking for skills development.***

# Annex A: Background documents and data

**Table A-1: List of documentation and data reviewed to develop this report**

Arts Council England (2020) <a href="#">Let's Create: Strategy 2020 – 2030</a>
BFI (2017) <a href="#">Future Film Skills: An Action Plan</a>
BFI (2020) <a href="#">Film and high-end television production in the UK, January – June (H1) 2020</a>
BFI (2021) <a href="#">Film, Education and Industry Employment</a>
BFI (2021) <a href="#">Screen Business</a>
BFI (2022) <a href="#">Skills Review</a>
BFI (2022) <a href="#">What's stopping young people from pursuing a career in the screen industries?</a>
Britainthinks (2022) <a href="#">BFI Next Up: Funding Strategy Consultation</a>
Grugulis, I. and Stoyanova, D. (2009) <a href="#">Social Capital and Networks in Film and TV: Jobs for the Boys?</a>
Grugulis, I. and Stoyanova, D. (2009) <a href="#">‘I don't know where they learn them': skills in film and television</a> In: Smith, C. and McKinlay, A. Creative Labour: working in creative industries. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
Screen Yorkshire (2022) <a href="#">Centre of Screen Excellence: Yorkshire</a>
ScreenSkills (2019) <a href="#">Quarterly ScreenSkills Barometer: July 2019 – October 2019</a>
ScreenSkills (2020) <a href="#">Children's TV Skills Fund</a>
ScreenSkills (2021) <a href="#">ScreenSkills Assessment 2021</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Become a trainee</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) Case studies from Trainee Finder [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) Children's TV Fund summary 2022 [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Contribute to the Film Skills Fund</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) Delivery plan and budget 2022/23 [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Film programmes for crew and talent</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) Film Trainee Finder – Example Training Plans [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) Film Trainee Finder – D&I Data [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Forecast of labour market shortages and training investment needs in film and high-end TV production</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) Number of placements '20-'22 [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) Placement plans – CPD [not publicly available]
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Support a trainee</a>
ScreenSkills (2022) <a href="#">Trustees' Report and Financial Statements: For the year ending 31 March 2022</a>
University of Brighton (2022) <a href="#">Higher Education work placements in the creative industries: good placements for all students?</a>



## Annex B. Research evidence

This annex describes the research methodology used to capture employer perspectives of placements within both Film and Children’s TV in the UK.

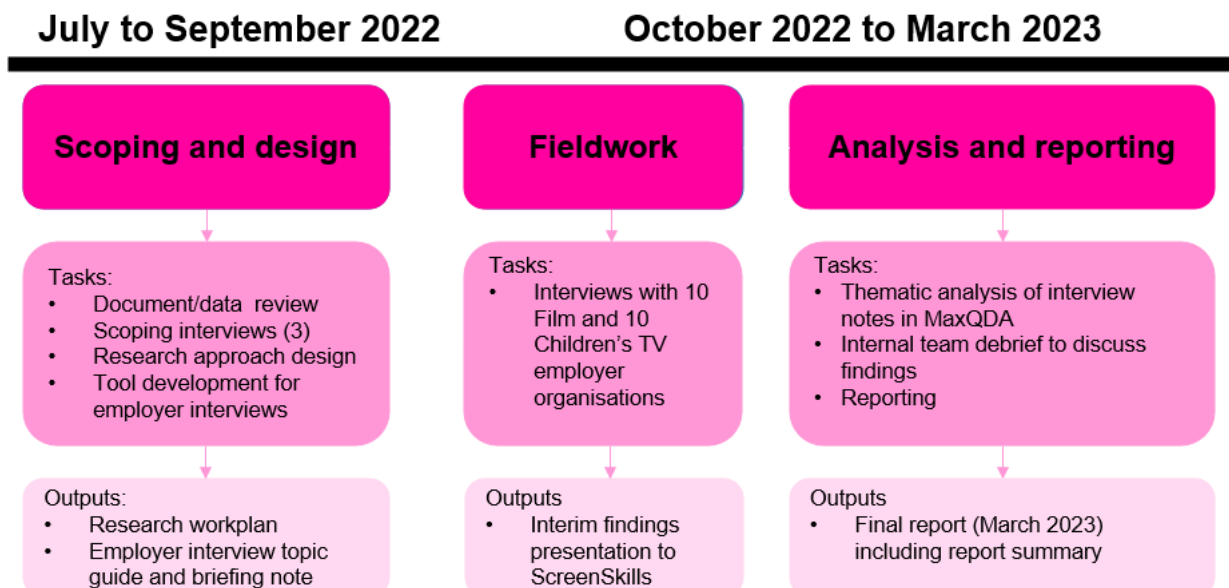
### Approach

**B.1** The research explored placements within both Film and Children’s TV to provide insights into employer perspectives on the use of placements in the UK and generate actionable recommendations to overcome barriers and challenges. It looked at the following:

- The current landscape of placements within Film and Children’s TV in the UK – including the types and levels of placements offered
- Any barriers to the industry offering placements, and how/where these can be overcome
- The enablers and elements that can make placements particularly effective – for participants as well as for employing organisations
- The attitudes of the sector towards placements more broadly, e.g., their perceived utility and the practicalities of offering them
- The extent to which placements help participants to gain paid employment.

**B.2** The research timeline is outlined in Figure B-1, alongside the key outputs.

**Figure B-1: Overview of the research methodology**



## Research questions and data collection

- B.3** The aim of the research was to gain employer perspectives regarding the use of placements within both Film and Children’s TV in the UK. Detail on the research questions and methods of data collection are presented in Section 1 (Table 1-1 and Table 1-2).

## Research design

- B.4** As part of the research design phase, SQW produced a research workplan. Its purpose was as to ensure mutual understanding of ScreenSkills’ range of placement provision, the aims of the research and the work tasks required to deliver it. It was informed by a review of documentation and data provided by ScreenSkills, alongside scoping consultations with two stakeholders involved in design and delivery of placements at ScreenSkills.
- B.5** During this period, SQW was advised by ScreenSkills to refocus the approach from trainees and employers to just employers, in order to boost the inputs from employers. Following this, SQW confirmed the research questions for the study in the research workplan and set out the plan for data collection and analysis, including how consultees would be invited to participate, and the draft tools including emails for contacting consultees, a participant briefing note and the interview topic guide.

## Fieldwork

- B.6** In total, 20 interviews were planned with employers, comprising ten Film and ten Children’s TV organisations. ScreenSkills identified a list of potential employee organisations, which were then sampled by SQW to cover a range of characteristics, including whether or not they supported placements, organisation size, and location. Following sampling, ScreenSkills then emailed individuals an invitation to participate including the briefing note, with those who consented to do so followed up with by SQW.
- B.7** The 20 interviews took place via MS Teams from November 2022 to February 2023, lasting c.50 minutes and following the semi-structured topic guide tailored to each interviewee’s experiences. Overall, there was representation from small, medium, and large organisations and across the UK (recognising that production locations will differ from head office location as well).
- B.8** Interview transcript notes were captured, including verbatim quotes, with these notes shared with interviewees to provide a check for factual accuracy. Research participants have not been named in the report, however, where quotes have been used, unique identifiers including position and type of organisation (e.g., Training Manager, Streamer Service UK) have been used, with these also shared with interviewees to provide a check for assuring confidentiality.

## Data analysis

- B.9** Interview transcript notes were subsequently uploaded and analysed in specialist qualitative analysis software, MaxQDA, to allow for systematic review.<sup>45</sup> This allows text to be systematically tagged with codes in order to identify common themes and reveal any emerging relationships in the data – thereby helping to ensure that analysis is comprehensive.

---

<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that three consultee interviews were not analysed in MaxQDA, with one due to the consultee declining this option and the other two due to the interviews being completed after reporting had commenced. Findings for each of these interviews have been added as key points in the research findings sections, alongside any key quotes for the latter two.

**B.10** The qualitative data was analysed on a question-by-question basis, with codes added based on findings and areas of interest highlighted at the interim report stage during a debriefing workshop between the SQW research team and ScreenSkills. Additional sub-codes were also added under each question as key themes emerged during analysis.

**B.11** Information from other secondary data was then triangulated with the primary evidence collected during reporting.

### Evidence base strengths and key considerations

**B.12** The evidence used in the research has a number of key strengths:

- **Support from ScreenSkills in securing access to key stakeholders:** The evaluation team at SQW were supported by colleagues in ScreenSkills to secure access to employers for interview. This allowed for a good level of engagement and provided insights from people bringing different perspectives.
- **Level of engagement with the topics discussed in interviews:** Across all interviews, consultees engaged effectively with the topics discussed and provided thoughtful perspectives that offered both critical and constructive feedback.
- **Provision of secondary information and data from ScreenSkills:** The provision and integration of (anonymised) secondary evidence from ScreenSkills, including detail on ScreenSkills offer and placement figures, provided SQW with a good understanding of the wider landscape for placements and ScreenSkills' offer.
- **Perspectives from both employers who do and do not offer placements:** The research engaged both employers who currently support placements and those who do not, which has provided evidence regarding barriers and enablers to offering placements.

**B.13** The research evidence also has gaps and limitations, and as such this report should be read with the following considerations in mind:

- **Engagement with the research varied between groups of stakeholders targeted:** As mentioned, SQW worked closely with ScreenSkills to ensure that key learning and insights were captured from a range of perspectives. However, there was more engagement from employers who currently support placements than those who do not, which means that evidence in this report is richer for some groups than others.
- **Insights are based on reflections from a small group of participants:** The study size did not lend itself to quantitative survey techniques, and the research questions were better answered using qualitative insights.
- **The focus of the research was on the employer perspective:** This research study sought perspectives from the employer side, however, we recognise that other stakeholders from different employers, training and learning providers and other recruitment support agencies would add further richness to the picture.

