

# Call For Crew - Audio

## Neil Peplow

Okay, I'll count down 321. Thank you, Hayley for the introduction, and welcome to the call for crew session, joined with industry experts to look at an issue that the industry is currently facing, where we're going to explore how we can develop a fully diverse and sustainable workforce across the whole of the UK, especially in light of the current production boom. So, from the Production Guild of Great Britain, I'm very happy to introduce Lyndsay, Lyndsay Duthie, who's its Chief Executive Officer. This is an award winning film and TV expert with over 20 years experience in the media industry as an educator, a television executive producer and broadcaster and with credits for BBC ITV Channel Four Channel Five sky discovery. Her academic career led her to become head of school for film Media and Performing Arts at the University of the creative arts and University of Hartfordshire. So welcome, Lyndsay. We also are very lucky to have Gareth, Gareth is head of film and animation experience skills, the industry led skills body which is continuing to support growth and future innovation in the screen industries by investing in the skilled people that we need to be part of that and as an academy and BAFTA award winning producer of films including The King's Speech, screen skills, guarantees and the delivery of the BFI his future film skills programme and sets of strategic direction for the film Skills Fund. Welcome. And finally, we have Kevin, Kevin is head of partnerships, nations and regions based Channel Four's new HQ in Leeds, and plays a key role in the delivery of the for all the UK strategy, the biggest structural change in the broadcaster's history. And as part of this, he's leading the four skills, which is channel four has major new commitment to skills training and development in creative industries. Hi, Kevin. So I'm going to start by just kind of outlining where we're in terms of the skills review that BFI is undertaking, and where the kind of key themes are landing. And then what we're going to do is go through what the panel members are currently finding in the industry in terms of skills, issues and gaps, and what the current solutions that have been delivered to address that and what else we need to do as an industry to ensure that we do have a sustainable and diverse workplace. So

## Neil Peplow

we were tasked by the DCMS to look at skills and provide a snapshot of what we are facing in terms of the main issues of an industry that's faced unprecedented growth over the last five years. But we had to do that by recognising the incredible work and knowledge that's already out there. So rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, we undertook a rapid evidence review. And from that we found from the work that's been done by screen skills, production guild, the broadcasters we kind of discovered nine key themes. And those were that the skill shortages are apparent through all levels of crew in all grades, and particularly shortages of production management roles. But ultimately, this is a issue which is not kind of narrowly focused. That is it's substantial and it's growing. Secondly, the work is needed to continue to improve the diversity of the workforce in the sector. In particular, if we're going to find longer term solutions, we need to be able to recruit from a more diverse talent pool. That thirdly, the number of apprenticeships, uses certain parts of the sector remains low. And there's currently work for instance, being done by Screen Skills in collaboration with Warner's and Netflix to look at models that might help and kind of allow more apprenticeships be delivered on set, that there needs to be a more joined up

approach with hiring further education and industry to create clear pathways into and through industry, that the working conditions and well being concerns. This was something that came up a lot leading to retention issues. So the fact that there are strains in terms of crew availability, that's creating kind of a level of stress, which is then leading to people either new entrants leaving because it's not a workplace that they feel comfortable in or people potentially retiring earlier than they were planning because again, there's there's there's just too much work at the moment and not enough people to deliver the skills shortages are impacting productions in having to promote people earlier than potentially they should be promoted. And also then that leads on to the kind of availability of training and how that varies by nation by regions locally. And increasingly How can freelancers access that training, especially when there's very different times due to the kind of pressures of Delivering on a on a production schedule. So finally, the kind of the final thing which emerged was a belief around that some of the softer skills like leadership and management weren't as deep as they should be. And this can also be part of the the issue around early promotion that if somebody is given a role, they also need to be supportive in the softer skills that may then be added to their skill set in terms of being able to manage a larger crew. So those were the nine kind of key themes that came out, we put together five focus groups, one, which was looking at how do we get research in place, which gives us an ongoing dashboard. So we can look at trends, not just now, but also future planning for workforce, which will increasingly use technology like virtual production, a second focus group was looking at removing those barriers to hiring and supporting apprentices. A third was improving entry points into industry making clear what the pathways were for careers. Fourthly, how to improve retention and what we would need to do to address our own sets. And finally, improving career progression and training through CPD in a freelance workplace. So those were the five focus groups we brought together, we consulted with around 100 plus people in each of those, each of those as a total through those groups. Separately, we did research directly with production to look out what are the current kind of issues that are being faced today on set. And we are now working on what the main findings are? Well, the main recommendations are highlighting best practice, and publishing a review, which will be at the end of March, beginning of April, to be able to, to kind of cite a joined up approach to addressing this kind of mid to long term. So getting industry in it, particularly working with colleagues that screen skills was incredibly important in this because we need to know exactly what we had to address from the people who are facing this problem on a daily basis. So that's where we're at. And I kind of think what would be really useful is to hear from the panel in terms of their own personal experience, around what the current skills issues are, that they can they can see unfolding in the industry. So Lyndsay, if you would mind if I started with you. If you could give us your insight, that would be fantastic.

### **Lyndsay Duthie**

Of Course you've given an excellent summary there of some of the main issues. And I think the UK Skills Review Group was a great opportunity just to bring all of that together. And for us all to focus. And we're very much all on the same page there. I think the issue really is and I say issue, we're embracing this challenge. So I think that is the messaging, while we recognise things need to be done. There's lots of things happening, and we will get this right. And you know, we'll be even stronger for it. I think for us the issue is the scale. It's the sheer demand that we need. It's not just a handful of production coordinators or production managers, we're talking hundreds 1000s, potentially and it's we know this boom is going to last for Well, we hope so for the next three to five years while we have all this stage space development happening as well. So how do we manage the scale is sort of what a first

question, Industry Training good industry training takes time as well. So we've already got a very busy workforce, how do we then release them to go and undertake this training, without put more pressure on them as well. So looking at clever and innovative ways, which I'm sure we'll come on to, as the session evolves, how to manage that with virtual learning environments, and hybrid working, perhaps to solve some of that. So say, the scale the time to release release people, but also getting the message out there of what is available. I think the focus groups in the UK Skills Review Group that we came together on, we realised just how much is happening and when Screen Skills does so very much. But it's how do we navigate that? And how do we get that message out there? I get requests all the time, usually from family members or friends? How do I get into the industry? And I say, have a look at Screen Skills. And that just opens their mind completely. But if they don't know to look there, how will they get that information? So there's a bit of messaging that we need to look at as well. I'll let the rest of the panel speak. And there's lots I can say. But I'll jump back in a moment if I may.

### **Neil Peplow**

Gareth, Screen Skills as mentioned there, what view from from Screen Skills in terms of current issues?

### **Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

Yeah, I mean, that the point that Lyndsay raised about scale, and the differential between supply and demand at the moment is the key issue. And it's a golden problem to have, you know, as an ex freelancer, I know that there was some fallow periods where my career where I wasn't working. So you know, we have to celebrate the fact that things are very, very busy. But we're an industry that that has a high demand and a need for great resource, whether that be stage space, whether that be people whether that be ideas, and the problem is is none of those things have an instantaneous solution. You can't bake a location manager with experience overnight. You can't build a new studio in a heartbeat, you know. So we have to, we have to look at the longer term strategy. And I think that's that's been part of the, the issue to date is that we've been meeting short term need, with some fairly short term solutions. And actually, if we want to protect UK PLC, the screen industries for the long term, then we have to look beyond sort of three to five years, we need to be putting pipeline solutions in place that have a, you know, sustainable model that would run up to sort of 10 years or so. So it is a volume issue. I wouldn't necessarily say it's all 1000s and 1000s. In some circumstances, it's having 20 to 50 Really good, experienced well supported individuals in service and critical roles. But yeah, for us, the big thing is that it's no one could have foreseen how well we would bounce back from the pandemic, production levels are booming, which is great, we should celebrate that. But what we have to do is meet that demand now with the supply part of the workforce development chain.

### **Neil Peplow**

And Kevin, you you're you're responsible for the for for the UK strategy in the skills and training, kind of from the perspective of the regions. Are there specific issues that you're that we're facing in the regions that need to be addressed differently?

### **Kevin Blacoe**

I don't know whether different is the right word, but there are there are variations. I mean, I think I'd agree with everything that has been said, By Lyndsay and Gareth and yourself, Neil, in terms of the scale of the challenge. So there is no one role. There's no one area that needs exactly, editors, or

production management loads more than others. So, you know, it does cut across all of the different roles and the needs of the sector at the moment. And I think obviously, from Channel Four perspective, we are trying to really focus on supporting the development talent in the nations and regions. And those issues are, are challenging. And I guess there's a coupled with the fact that there's historically been, and sometimes still is that drain of talent towards London as well. So there's kind of that additional factor in there. To some degree, so it's, and I think, so we'd always put that lens of where across the, you know, whereabouts in the country, what the specific needs of those producers are, as you know, we work really closely with our producers as part of our models. So it's about their feedback. It's about them the research that the screen skills lead on in terms of understanding those specific challenges. And I think to Gary's point, actually, it is both a short, medium and long term challenge that we're trying to deal with, all at the same time. And that's really hard. They that is, you know, trying to sort of both, you know, I'm involved in some of the meetings, other broadcasts, where it's like, right, what can we do over the next three to six months, it helps alleviate some of these problems in production management. Great, and sometimes the challenge will be that might then it takes, you know, resourcing focus away from in the sort of slightly longer term, how do we address some of the perhaps a more sort of the cultural issues around the importance of training within the system, finding time for, you know, talent and freelancers to be able to have that. And then that longer term thing that Lyndsay mentioned, actually, what's the next pipeline of talent? Like? How do we make the sector more accessible and relevant to people from diverse backgrounds from any part of the country? So it's, I mean, it's, it's a great challenge to have, but it is all encompassing, if you want it to be and, and then so finding the solutions is, it's going to be tricky, but but doable.

### **Neil Peplow**

And also we have to remember that in the nations there are different approaches to education and training because the devolved responsibilities, those governments, which then adds another layer of consideration to potential solutions, so Lyndsay, talking about that diversity, focus, and you know, the fact that we are facing this this difficulty in, in in skills, gaps and shortages, how do you marry the two? Because one is obviously a kind of longer term strategy around how can we engage people from education at school onwards, and that kind of cultural shift on productions to reaching out to perhaps a wider pool than the they're currently aware of? How can you see that working on a practical basis?

### **Lyndsay Duthie**

I mean, I think there's there's various approaches and it is a mixed approach, as you say, from entry level through to mid level and so forth as well. Mentoring schemes are a great approach and we've we've run one in partnership with the British Film Commission supported by Screen Skills as well. And that was open to early entry experienced expert levels right across so that's been really interesting. We've learned a lot from from that experience, as well to see what kind of support is needed because it's quite different from from someone from entry level to that mid level trying to jump up and step up. And as Gareth and Kevin have mentioned, as well about not burning them out as well not promoting people too soon without that resource and support around them to ensure that they're successful, and that they stay and retention is really important. there as well. So that diversity and inclusion message is really important. So again, it's getting that message out there at all levels. And it was interesting, I did a session at a focus, and we were talking about exactly this. And then someone said, Well, how do I find out? You know, how do I still get that information. So it is really a task on all of us working in the

industry to make sure we're spreading that word, we were talking about our back to school campaign where everyone is tasked to go back to their local school, or where they went to school to just give them an insight to what their career path is like. And I think when you let people know, there's more than a handful of roles in film and television, we're talking perhaps 200. Plus, on a film set, probably more Gareth will probably tell me there's even more, but you know, those roles are less known sometimes, you know, the production accountant or locations and so forth. So it's it's sort of letting people know about these other career paths, and that the door is open to absolutely everyone. So I haven't solved it, I know in the answer, but we're looking at everything we can and learning really, and listening and seeing how we can have impact. And I say, get that message out there that, you know, we really, really want to welcome everyone and get those voices into industry.

### **Neil Peplow**

And it is a highly competitive labour market across all sectors at the moment. So construction are looking at a shortage of 200 to 300 to 300,000 people in the next, I think, five to 10 years. So he obviously kind of getting people to understand that there is a career and this is how you can actually access that career. It's kind of crucial when there's other players in the market. And Gareth that's something which Screen Skills has been focused on. I'm just wondering if you could highlight better.

### **Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

Yeah, I mean, we've been taking a multifaceted approach here because there is no one solution. And one of the things that we recognise is this all has to be done in partnership, we've taken a very collegiate approach and just wanted to publicly applaud both Kevin for his work on the unscripted fund as a broadcaster in Lyndsay's work as a training provider. Because unless we knit all of this together, we're not going to stand a chance to solve it. But it is important how we market the opportunity of working in the screen industries. I mean, one of the gags I use which Lyndsay alludes to is when I'm doing careers and outreach. I always say on the King's speech, I hired 456 people, there was one director, there's four producers of one writer, and the other 450 people had proper jobs. And we talked about those proper jobs. So it's how we market the opportunity, you know, something that we're doing that Screen Skills at the moment is looking at, you know, what roles do we highlight? You know, something that a lot of us do, and a lot of Fe and he colleges do. If you want to promote working in the film business, you show a picture of someone with a camera? Well, you only ever need one person to hold the camera on any one set. So is that being fair in how we market the opportunity? Should we be actually spotlighting those other roles? We're currently recommissioning, our cinema campaign that source success over the course of the last two years and we deliberately focusing on roles that are not set based. We're also looking at skewing the promotion slightly to mid and later career people. So moving the focus slightly from new entrants to those that are already mid career. So I think it's constantly being agile enough to flex and respond to as much of the challenge that is in front of you and working in partnership with the BFI in partnership with the broadcasters and streamers with all of the productions that are paying into our skills fund and peer organisations like PG GB and BFC, etc. You know, it's critical that we're all aligned in this because we're stronger together, we're so much stronger together.

### **Neil Peplow**

So so we looked at it from the perspective of a potential new entrant in terms of actually getting information about having a career in the industry, once they're lucky enough to have found a route in what are we currently doing to support them to ensure that they've got the skills that they need, and that they're able to progress once they're into the industry? Kevin, is there any specific schemes that you're running a channel for, which is helping me that transition?

### **Kevin Blacoe**

Yeah, now? Well, I would say, there are the specific things that we run the things that we help support, you know, more collectively, so Gareth mentioned the unscripted Skills Fund, exactly, you know, that sort of major overarching initiative to be able to provide training in scripted space that is industry led, so it's kind of there, it's not Channel Four as a broadcaster saying, we're going to put X, Y and Zed training on and that's what we think is the right thing, actually, the value of it is that it's a combination of the broadcasters and the producers coming together and say, This is what we need as a, as a collective group to take those things forward. So there's, there's those examples where, you know, we can, you know, use our public service remit sort of weight as a broadcaster, our funding and ability to help, you know, drive these things on, but do it in a way that's not sort of dictating or not sort of saying actually, this is our agenda and therefore, you know, that's what is available. So I think there's those areas. There are then obviously then specific things that we run that are, you know, close to our You know, our strategy, our objectives, or our programmes or the Indies that we're working with, once people are have got through that entry level stage, I think that's an increasing focus for us as a channel. And for for skills we do a lot in the entry level space, which is great. We're doing work in schools engagement, which is, which is really good. I think increasingly, we want to sort of broaden what we do as people look to develop their careers take on that sort of CPD and point to initiatives like the the factual Fast Track programme, we run in collaboration with the BBC, and Creative Wales in Wales, and also with Screen Scotland, in Scotland, Northern Ireland as a good example of where it's trying to help develop people in a way that gives them the sort of the training and skills, also the workplace and opportunity to step up to that kind of exact role without being necessarily not supported and expose in a way that that can be can be the case sometimes. So it's, there's always that mixture of different programmes are running, and they will change I think, I think the sort of the, the overarching Screen S skills, lead stuff will always be there, and rightly so. And then underneath that, will look to sort of flex and do things for six months, maybe 18 months, and then react again to what's needed and sort of redeploy a sort of resources and interventions that way.

### **Lyndsay Duthie**

I jump jumping back in. That's excellent everything Kevin said, but I think there's also some practical things that need to happen. So things like good childcare, you know, we've got the Wonderworks at Warner Brothers Studios, Levesdon, which is one of the first of its kind to have childcare, actually, in a studio. I mean, I left production, trying to juggle the work life balance with a family and my husband also working in production, it was not, you know, a nightmare. So there's some practical things that we need to look at and get better at this meet some brilliant mental health and well being on set initiatives on a Screen Skills partner with with the FCilm and TV charity, and so forth. So I think there's some things around the edges as well. And the culture, as you say that that needs to happen just to create, you know, that, that keep that pipeline going and keep that retention going.

**Kevin Blacoe**

I think that's absolutely right, especially when we talk about our ambition to access a broader, more diverse talent pool, I think where some of those barriers can be more, we just are just overlooked. And we assume that everyone has access to a car, and can therefore drive to set something, and productions and shoots and things like that in a way that, you know, is easy to dismiss, because we're probably all from the same background where that doesn't seem to be problematic at all. So I think if we want to be able to, I think these write those things around the edges that actually can be really quite hugely influential in stopping people from accessing a career and then developing that caring responsibilities. And there's one that we've seen quite a bit with people who just don't have the time and they can't come into offices or go and take part in schemes because they can't get out of those sorts of care responsibilities. Well, so it's, I think that's exactly right.

**Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

Similarly, I mean, we are seeing a shift, thankfully away from the industry considering only degree level learning to be sufficient. And we were looking at schemes that run for a shorter period of time in a more intense way, as a part solution to that because obviously, if you are drawing on the talent pool that's coming through HE or FE, you are predefined in terms of those that are following that path and might come on into the screening streets. But we've seen real success up in Leeds, for example, Kevin with the Centre of Screen Excellence, which we launched with Screen Yorkshire a couple of years ago, and the second cohort that has just graduated 67% of those have gone into paid work 100% In two of the the pathways being production assistant and electrical. And that is a shorter learning period with a more intense focus on a split between both classroom and practical learning, and doesn't come you know, the person who graduates isn't encumbered with 10s of 1000 pounds of debt. That probably sounds like I'm negging on degree level learning, it absolutely has its place. And there are certain roles and grades where you need that level of theoretical learning, but there are many others that you don't, you know, and encouraging productions to look at school leavers. You know, people that are that that slightly younger group, I think it's all part of the mixed ecology we need to move towards because there's no one silver bullet that's going to really solve all of this.

**Neil Peplow**

I think I think that that's a very good point that there is a very complex matrix of stakeholders issues and ways to actually solve them. And I think that can only really be developed with industry. So you're talking about like pathways from HE FE, that doesn't need that industry involvement for them to understand what they need to teach the students for them to be relevant on set from day one because they say Not everyone can end up being a director when they graduate. It's

**Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

but but also managing expectation of the breadth of opportunity that exists within screen industries. And this was why I slightly pushed back a little bit on Lyndsay's 1000s and 1000s. Comic because, you know ons has us out as a standing workforce of 216,000. Now, when you hear that construction have got 200,000 bodies They need as just to top up the existing workforce that would that would almost be a doubling of our workforce. So I think we have to take a slightly measured approach that we're not over promoted overclaiming and under delivering, which is why I always like to take a slightly more measured view of just how many people we need to bring up and throw, of course, at the front end, you

need that high volume. Lyndsay so right. But yeah, I just want us to recognise that we are an industry that, that, you know, 216,000 is on or around our outstanding workforce.

### **Neil Peplow**

And, Lyndsay, there's one thing which has come out from the review, quite specifically, which is near the current levels of demand. And production means that there's little time actually during production for training. And also kind of more HR practices, which you'd get if you're a longer term employee in companies, for instance, you know, feedback sessions, and here's your job description. Here's where you need to get to for your next position up. And this is what they are doing. There are practical ways where productions can take that responsibility on where that kind of feedback and space for training and then development of the individual can happen.

### **Lyndsay Duthie**

Yeah, I mean, it's a massive culture change, isn't it to really, as you say, value CPD, where you do in other sectors where it's a prerequisite, you have to deliver X numbers of CPD and prove that and so forth. We've been a little bit more, I suppose, light of touching in some instances and a lot of learning on the job. So I think there's, you know, we've got an opportunity, the pandemic has shown us that we can make things happen overnight, we can move to online learning and hybrid working if we have to. So there's some opportunities there. And I know Screen Skills have done really well with online learning, we've developed our own virtual learning environments. So we it's not just a kind of an extension of doing a Zoom masterclass, but really developing some really good interactive content, creating learning communities so that cohorts can sort of stay together beyond the life of the course, and support each other with their learning as well. So sort of having some of that time shifting, available to do some things online and sort of out of just always having to be in person in the classroom can really help. But building it into a schedule is really difficult. Particularly if you've already sort of got those pressures on you, and then saying to someone right now, the weekend, you're gonna have to spend training, you know, it's sort of managing all those things sensibly. So it's not easy. But I think there are some real opportunities with virtual learning environments to try and improve some of that as well.

### **Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

And the further challenge given that we have such high production levels at the moment is those periods between freelance contracts where typically someone might be able to go and take a piece of training, those periods of our squeeze to the extent that people are literally wrapping, one show on a Friday night and their on set on the next show on a Monday morning. So that that's tricky. I mean, one of the things that we're doing at Screen Skills to your point about career progression and it lacking standardisation in our industry. And you know, most of us, if we were to share our personal stories would be built on a little bit of good luck and good fortune, some happenstance meeting the right people opportunity, and they're not doing a bad job. But what we're trying to introduce, and there's some brilliant work being done by colleagues at Screen Skills at the moment where we're looking at a number of different grades, and just going right, what are the core competencies? What would we expect as an employer, someone that's coming to an interview for that role to be able to do, because if we get that right working with industry, we can then evolve it to job descriptions, which typically don't exist in our industry. If we have our job descriptions, we can then start to see the points of difference. And then what do you need to be able to do to move up from being a third ad to a second, or from a production



coordinator up to UPS? You know, we can start navigating some of that because it's all been a little bit artisan, to date as an it's sort of find your way through it as it were.

### **Neil Peplow**

Is there anything which Channel 4 is doing to help craft a kind of career through production or through the organisation itself?

### **Kevin Blacoe**

I mean, I think, for us, it's about that really close relationship with those Indies. And one of the reasons we have moved out of London is to have commissioners closer and able to sort of, you know, build those those strong working relations, where they then understand the needs of that business, who's there the talent that they're working with, and can sort of feel like then report that back to, you know, myself, you can help put budget towards training schemes and other colleagues in Channel 4 can actually do things. I don't think we have, we don't have a sort of a set sort of structure in terms of, you know, this is how they should, you know, try and structure their career development will obviously then support with the areas that we think are really important and that's around some of those skills that is, you know, around this as diversity and representation within those productions and helping indies to meet the the aims and the vision that we have in those sorts of instance around say, you know, as around how we can support and get more disabled talent to be involved in productions and things that way. So it's, it's, we probably craft stuff around the way that they will want to structure that because all those businesses are a little bit different as well. And they kind of all work in different ways. And you mentioned before about it being different in different parts of the country as well, Neil. So this, I think we we try and at the heart of our model is that relationship with the independent production sector. And so we, we take that as our cue that way.

### **Neil Peplow**

So then if you've got those kind of job descriptions and structures in place, which kind of gives some some clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, then what you're saying is, you can actually then craft a response to let's say, bringing people living with a disability into production, you know, in terms of adjustments as required. And so you can build off more adaptive approaches from some that sort of

### **Kevin Blacoe**

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And I think then it's a kind of collective effort panel for in terms of, you know, myself looking after for skills, and the kind of the more formalised training, and I work with Screen Skills, and I've worked with the NFTS, alongside our colleagues in the creative diversity team are particularly focused on, you know, diversity representation across across the sector that way. And, and I think what we really what we really, really welcome is indies who are particularly passionate and will have good practice, or who have a, you know, a real focus, talking with certain ones about, say, production management and how we can support that, but actually coming to us and saying, We would like to do something more, you know, and then we can take that and hopefully broaden it as well. So it's not just something that they're looking to do, actually, is there a programme there that we can make bigger on or, or using other circumstances as well. So I think, again, it comes to, we don't, it's back to, you know, ultimately, it's those producers who know, the challenges they're facing more acutely than anyone else. And so we, you know, we obviously, look at the research, and we look at our own work as

well, but hearing it firsthand from them, and then when they have ideas about solutions, that is really the stuff that we love to try and roll with and move forward with as quick as we can.

**Neil Peplow**

So sorry, after you Lyndsay

**Lyndsay Duthie**

I was gonna say, I also think this knowledge sharing really helps people take ownership of their own careers as well. Because if they can see what is the skills gap that I have, what is the job, the thing that I need to be able to jump to the next level, they can go and seek that out themselves and prove to the next employer, yeah, I've done that I can show that. So I think you know, it works for everybody in that way.

**Neil Peplow**

And then that helps also helps the training provider understand what types of courses they'll need to deliver based on what that next step up is, and so that it kind of it helps a lot of different stakeholders in you know, that the industry that needs to answer.

**Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

And some of this doesn't need human intervention to signpost, people to the next thing that they can do we are so we some of you are aware, we have a community of users within Screen Skills. Now, if anyone does a piece of activity or take some online learning or is in receipt of a bursary, whatever they create an account, we have 141,000 account holders now. And within that community, we're able to sign posts next best action, we can do a basic assessment of the self identify things that they've done, and promote either new stories that would be of interest to them, or courses that are about to shortly run, or other opportunities within the sort of broad Screen Skills portfolio. And we're currently looking at whether AI can be lent into a little bit more heavily to be able to do that without that need for human interaction, because it means that people can, you know, on the bus home after wrap look on their phone and sort of spend a bit of time on it or, you know, either up late at night, or whatever. So it's about trying to create that sort of careers guidance, in a way that anyone can access it in a sort of snacking way without having to go to a studio to sit down to be taught for a week or so because that is really difficult to engineer for a number of people.

**Neil Peplow**

The open, transparent kind of data or information that people need is a focus of what we need to provide in order to start to think about how do we have a more sustainable and diverse workforce long term. And one thing that has come up is how do I find a job? Once I've done a course? How do I know what the opportunities are? And is there a job board? Or is there a database or so Lyndsay? Lyndsay, in terms of your members? Are they kind of wedded to WhatsApp groups? Or do they look where where do they look for people to fill these gaps that we've we've currently got?

**Lyndsay Duthie**

That's interesting. I mean, obviously, at the Production Guild, we run an availability list and we have employers come to us direct, you know, for jobs and so forth, as well. So yeah, it's been a real mixed

approach. And obviously, at the moment, you know, there's not very many people available. So it's quite interesting to hear some of the innovative ways producers are going about this. But yeah, it's just a real mixture. I mean, trainee finders is a great starting point on Screen Skills, which I know our members will use as well. We have a supplementary membership scheme for those that are a little bit junior as well to kind of get their first credits and step up as well. So it's yeah, it's it's not easy, but there's lots of different things happening.

### **Kevin Blacoe**

I think there's a I think that's absolutely right. I think what we've observed and I've tried to spot as well, particularly since the first lockdown, but it happened before, to some degree is coordination and dialogue between talent managers, and the broadcaster's as well, and in that space, so we, we support TV Talent North, which is sort of a Facebook group that covers a lot of opportunities. And that was particularly relevant when lots of freelancers actually were out of job in the first, you know, of working that first line and helping them to understand what those those roles were, I think there is more, more joined up sort of dialogue and thinking across, particularly on a regional basis. So that's, you know, in this in Manchester, and Leeds and across Liverpool as well, sort of all collectively working with the broadcaster's in that space, too. And there's another area I just wanted to flag, if that was all right, is really interested in, in how we diversify, I think goes back to Gareth, talking about different ways of learning and training a bit. But I think that's a really good point, being more innovative in the approaches, and also looking for more really good training providers to get into space, we work some great great training providers, there's just not enough of them. And they're just not, they're not spread out enough as well, we would like to see more regionally based trainers that can then really feel like, actually, you're hearing from people who've been there and done that, in that particular region in that particular space. And so I think that's another area that that we're particularly interested in.

### **Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

And that's an area that is also suffering from this production, boom, I mean, talks about the pain points for physical productions and post production not being able to get labour, but training providers who are often very reliant on industry practitioners to be able to come in and do workshops, do master classes, you know, a lot of them are now being asked to go back to production go go on to proper, proper jobs. I mean, shows how desperate things are out there, Lyndsay, someone phoned me the other week to ask if I'd go back to first. But there we go. So it is it's also a pain point for the training providers in terms of availability of teaching talent that our industry practitioners. So for anyone who is watching this panel, and feels that they would like to give back, whether it's through mentoring, whether it's through some work with some training providers, whether it's, you know, support in any of our sort of groups, and I know, Lyndsay, now run some, you know, have as your regional councils, you know, anyone that's in the industry that's hearing this today, you know, we need your help and support to pay a bit back to help us through this tricky time.

### **Neil Peplow**

And I think that, you know, element of the training provider, because they've got, obviously, they're facing issues, I say in terms of availability, people to teach the flex current flexibility productions, how they can build sustainable businesses, you know, particularly outside of the Southeast, and the region's, how do they have that longer term business plan, so they know that there'll be delivering the

same thing over the next three years. And it's kind of understanding the support mechanisms that might be put in place to allow that to happen. The other area, which we touched on briefly, which was HE, and the role that HE plays in being able to bring people into the industry, is there anything that you've seen around best practices around linking between outside of you know, the NFTS, and the well known film schools, London Film School, for instance, any kind of best practice around HE that has led to a close collaboration with industry?

**Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

Well, I think what I'm seeing is better harmony. You know, when I first came into Screen Skills, four and a bit years ago, you know, I'd sit on panels and industry would accuse HE of not supplying the labour force they need and, you know, HE would accuse industry of not giving them the right access or insight to be able to craft that, that labour force. So I'm seeing a lot more integration and interaction and you know, there are certain sites that are incredibly effective, you know, Middlesex, with Edie are doing a really, really good job, you know, the connected campus group up in Leeds, are doing a really, really good job. So it's sort of, you know, no one owns the problem, and no one owns the solution. But by working together and bringing that private public partnership together, I think, you know, good, really good work can be done.

And Lyndsay, you're about to say something?

**Lyndsay Duthie**

No I was gonna say the same it is about those partnerships and working with industry, obviously, academics will say it's not just about obviously, that the final destination of the job, it's about learning critical skills, and the dissertation, all the rest of it, but they do have opportunities with professional development modules to do something really good. And to really bridge this, this gap and skills gap. When I was the other side of the table at the University of Hertfordshire. We partnered with the Production Guild of Great Britain and ran production accountancy training. And that was a great way of which selected 10 people to go as part of their professional development module. So they switch that out and had bootcamp training and learn about you know, production, accountancy, and invariably all got hired on to, you know, Junior roles within that. So that was a great way of sort of using that time and space. But But interestingly, with students as well, when you put on extra workshops, unless it was part of the exam or part of the grade, they wouldn't always turn up. And you would have this real kind of disconnect, like we've given you this opportunity that you need to kind of need to listen. So there's so many different things at play to try and join up all of those dots. But But Gauss absolutely right, you know, there is that sort of will and partnership, need to make it work

**Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

an important thing, in HE is helping us manage expectations. I mean, I went to a graduate show a couple of years ago, we went around the room and asked for everyone thought their first job was and it was all director, producer, writer DOP. And I said, is anyone interested in becoming adept at digital imaging technician and no one put their hand up? I could have got them working on the Star Wars film The next day, had they been interested in that entry level role. So we all have this role to play, about

managing, managing expectation of what those first couple of years in work are going to look like, really look like.

### **Neil Peplow**

And then we have FE and I, we're going to apprenticeships, because they're different in different nations. And there's successful schemes in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and their difficulties with Screen Skills are looking at ironing out in terms of UK gov approach to apprentices. But the more general question around further education and the role that that could play, because obviously, you've got people in construction courses in makeup courses, who could have already shown a kind of an interest in those skills that could potentially go into our industry. Have you seen work around those skills being used and transferred across into new entrants? From FE?

### **Kevin Blacoe**

Do we see examples of adding this sort of work that, that Gareth mentioned earlier about the Centre for Screen Excellence and all those sorts of areas? And we, I think, in terms of it's kind of not it's not irrelevant to us, but actually, I think it's accepting that all those different ways into the industry are totally legitimate. And so finding, you know, the work that we do to support entry level development and steps should be fairly agnostic when it comes to that. And so actually know if there's those work based sort of training schemes that they're just as valid on and actually, in lots of ways, yeah. Should be, as you know, supported.

### **Neil Peplow**

So one final question, whilst we're wrapping up, if you had to kind of highlight one thing that we talked to me things we should be doing, because what we've just said, is a very complicated problem. There's not a silver bullet that's going to solve all, what are the key things you think we need to do to get this solved in the next the next two to three years? Because like, realistically, it's not going to be solved overnight? What would be the key things that you'd look to do? Okay, who wants to go first? I, Lyndsay, you, you, you like you're confident enough to keep

### **Lyndsay Duthie**

Oh, my goodness, there's there's so many things, just three things, it is hard. And we've touched on lots of them already. In this session, you've talked about barriers, things like childcare, well being sharing of knowledge, letting people take ownership for their careers making space for it. I think, for us, the Production Guild of Great Britain, we're essentially a membership organisation that runs training to support our members, our trainings quadrupled. We could be doing more and more and more, but we're very focused on on our particular grades. We do work with partners. So I think for us, what would be really helpful is where there's tenders that we're going for is perhaps quicker turnaround, so that we know, yes, we've definitely got that training to deliver so that we can schedule it and paste it a little bit better throughout the year with a programme running rather than Oh, we've got some training happening now that we could have a sort of perhaps a three year plan of this is what it's going to look like. That would be a practical thing from from our position. But my goodness, starting here is yes, there's too many things to say I'm gonna let someone else say something.

### **Neil Peplow**

I think it does address one area that you've said was the sustainability of training providers long term and that kind of regular pattern delivery. Okay, Gareth, you're next.

### **Gareth Ellis-Unwin**

Okay, desperately scribbling out some bits? I think three things I would promote or ask people to think on is firstly, unification. We are stronger together, no one owns the problem. No one owns the solution. We've got to all work together to meet this challenge. Secondly, I would just say everyone needs to engage with the issue. You know, using a crass analogy, no farmer moans about not having a crop to reap if they haven't planted the seed the year before. Sorry, I've turned into Jonathan VanDam overnight. But you know, they people have to engage with the importance of training and workforce development, and it can't happen overnight, and it can't be someone else's issue. And then finally, I think it's just that longer term strategy. Let's start looking beyond short term funding cycles are what is a much bigger issue. We've got a real brass ring to reach for Currently, we are seeing production levels never seen before. In the UK, and if we want to maintain that, then we're going to have to put time effort resource overtime into our workforce.

### **Kevin Blacoe**

Yeah, I think Gareth said the things I thought about made them sound more articulate and compelling. And lots of eyes, I think, been having that joint dialogue where that's between broadcasters and in these training providers and the sector, where the HE and FE and the schools as well. Collectively, we need to always have that sort of ongoing dialogue about this and owning the problem, as Gareth says, I think there's something interesting about how we define what roles within in our sector look like and where they come from. So we look, you know, we're looking at the moment around piloting some new schemes around particularly digitally focused around short form content around social content, particularly out of Leeds, where we've got our four studio team. So I think broadening our sort of horizons a little bit and saying, Actually, we can draw in from a, you know, a wider selection of backgrounds and interests and and opportunities. It means there might be more spaces still to fill, because, you know, we brought in what was the sort of work that we do, but I think it will make sort of will improve the situation overall. And then the final bit for us in particular, is that sort of really laser like focus on diversity, inclusion, and really trying to break down the barriers to accessing the sector overall.

### **Neil Peplow**

So So just in summary, I think we've obviously identified what the issue is in terms of the skill shortages. But it does feel like there's a, there's a chance here to take this tendency to an opportunity, especially on diversity inclusion, but we will have to take ownership of the next steps and industry, working, like you say, with the training providers and across all the different stakeholders that we've outlined today, really needs to lead this in order for it to be effective long term. So the good news is we've got people like you already working in this space and addressing it now. And all that good work is being done. It just feels like it doesn't need it doesn't need that scale. And it does need that sharing of knowledge and information which will kind of amplify the impact. So thanks very much for being part of this panel. And yeah, I hope you at home or wherever you're watching this have got something from this session. Thank you. Bye.