



January 2021 Branch

There is some light at end of the tunnel in 2021, says Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary, as branches set out their plans for the new year.

The shocking daily death figures have ushered in a grim start to 2021 and as ever we salute all our colleagues in hospitals, care homes and at the frontline of the pandemic. The lockdowns we are all experiencing continue to have a devastating effect on some of our members' livelihoods. Preliminary results of an all-member survey show that almost a year on the effects and pressures caused by Covid-19 are taking a huge toll on mental health.

If you haven't done so far, please complete this survey which will provide vital data to help us help you and provide evidence for us to use when lobbying government on measures to protect media jobs: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/nujcovid>

The results can also be used by branches as they continue to support members and look forward to a new year as a campaigning union.

The other major concern is the effect of Brexit on the industry. This week we shared a statement with colleagues in the Federation of Entertainment Unions saying how disturbed we were to discover that proposals during the Brexit negotiations offering special travel rights for the creative workforce could not be agreed. The union is now seeking clarification on what is required for those in the UK traveling for work in the EU and for members working in continental Europe who need to travel to other countries. Current advice is to check the visa and other requirements of each country. Not that much travel is permitted in the present circumstances

as tighter regulations have been brought in to safeguard against new variants of the virus. It has also meant that the exemption on quarantine for news gatherers won by the union has been rescinded, hopefully temporality.

But despite the gloom and doom there is some light in the tunnel. The vaccine programme provides hope of us returning to a "normal" life sometime this year. The TUC is calling on unions to play their role in its Let's Vaccinate Britain campaign by encouraging people to take part and to bargain with employers for paid time off for their staff be get vaccinated.

The end of the month will see the fruition of an important piece of work by the union as part of its role on the government's National Committee for the Safety of Journalists. Working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Home Office, the police and industry bodies, the NUJ has been at the heart of putting together an action plan to protect media workers from the increasing attacks and harassment they face. I'd like to thank members who came forward to the committee to share their harrowing experiences of vile threats and intimidation for just doing the job. It's a plan we should all be proud of.

Another cause for some optimism is that there appears some evidence that news organisations and publications have weathered the storm better than initially expected. In his report for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (page 2), Nic Newman believes the shock of Covid-19 has led to a rapid and profound step NUJ change in companies plans for digital transformation. It has



also reminded the public of the need for a trusted source of news. He predicts a changing relationship and greater independence of the media from the tech giants as a clamour for greater regulation gathers pace.

The union must also be heartened that there is growing interest in its News Recovery Plan from governments in the UK as a way to reset the industry. As a result, the Scottish government's new working party on the future of local news is about to hold its first meeting, members of the Welsh Executive Council are in talks with ministers and last month a new Press Freedom and Media Sustainability All-Party Group was launched at the Stormont Assembly in Northern Ireland. The hollowing out of local news titles must be arrested.

The union has a heavy agenda for 2021, including putting together its plans for a virtual Delegate Meeting this spring. Turning a crisis into opportunity, we are hoping that having the scope to do things differently will allow us to open up debates, celebrations and events to the wider membership.

In Solidarity

Michelle Stanistreet

RESEARCH



02

What will 2021 hold for the media?

A report by the Reuters Institute gives branches plenty of food for thought for the year ahead

2021 will be one of profound and rapid digital change following the shock delivered by Covid-19, a report by Nic Newman, senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, has concluded.

The report surveyed media leaders and predicts a year of economic reshaping, with subscription and e-commerce models having become “supercharged” by the pandemic. Publishers that continue to depend on print revenues or digital advertising face a difficult year – with further consolidation, cost cutting and closures expected, says the report.

“The Covid shock has reinforced a view that the industry needs to break an unhealthy dependence on digital advertising, which is blamed, amongst other things, for encouraging clickbait, reducing quality, and creating a poor user experience,” it concludes.

New technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), will play a bigger role in journalism and the giant tech platforms will face greater examination of their power as governments attempt to introduce

regulation. It will become clearer this year how proposals by companies such as Google to pay for content will work and who will benefit. Calls by the NUJ for a levy on these platforms to pay for a revival of journalism will gather apace.

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of the report’s sample of editors, CEOs, and digital leaders across the globe said Covid-19 had accelerated their plans for digital transition. Business plans now include more remote working and a faster switch to reader-focused business models. The report believes audio will continue in popularity, with a greater focus on introducing payment for news media podcasts. The rollout of 5G and the proliferation of new devices, including wearables and smart glasses, will force publishers to adapt to new brands, devices and distribution channels.

The report asks: “Subscription-focused writers’ platforms such as Substack demonstrate the value of exceptional journalists working in a niche. But will growing pay disparities between stars and the rest create new tensions in newsrooms?” One outcome of the pandemic, the report noted, was that

the public realised how important it was to have trusted news sources, and newsrooms increasingly relied on the skills of specialist correspondents.

The pandemic showed public broadcasting in a good light: “Heavy usage of public broadcasters and their websites during the pandemic may have made it harder for critics to undermine existing funding models – a recurrent theme in many European countries.” And it had also led to the UK government shelving plans to decriminalise the licence fee.

Journalists will be hoping for the end of non-stop Zoom encounters, being able to get back to their communities, doing face-to-face interviews and reporting live sport and the arts.

Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2021:

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2021>

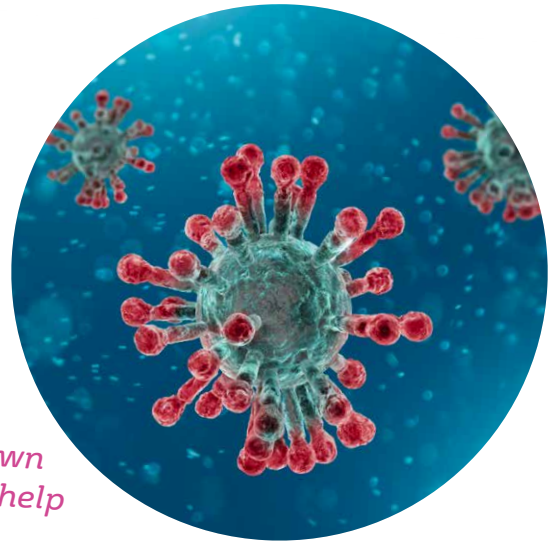
NUJ’s News Recovery Plan:

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/nuj-launches-news-recovery-plan/>

COVID-19

Latest Covid-19 lockdown advice

As the UK and Ireland started 2021 in full lockdown mode, branches will be needed more than ever to help their members during these difficult days



Members are asked to keep safe and follow government Covid-19 rules – according to the Press Gazette at least 19 UK journalists have died of coronavirus. News gatherers will continue to be categorised as key (or essential) workers. Make sure you carry your press card. The exemption from quarantine regulations has been dropped (hopefully temporarily). The NUJ's Covid-19 website page [www.nuj.org.uk/work/covid-19-information/] provides information on NUJ contacts, the latest government advice, legal briefings from Thompsons solicitors and advice on how to report the pandemic.

The union has provided training and webinars for members and reps on dealing with the effects of working during the pandemic:

Fair Deal for Freelances

So far, our lobbying of the Chancellor to make up payments to freelancers who have fallen through the cracks in the Covid-19 schemes have fallen

on deaf ears, but we will continue to press. Meanwhile, freelancers are still waiting for the next payment tranche arrangements due at the end of the month. The union is asking branches to use their contacts to lobby the government to maintain the £20 a week uplift in universal credit scheduled to end in March.

Domestic abuse

Cases of domestic abuse have increased since the various Covid-19 lockdowns. Branches can use the UN's "10 ways you can help end violence against women" guide [bit.ly/3bSG9PV] and the NUJ website gives information on helplines and FAQs [bit.ly/38Vqjlv] to help on reporting the issue and directing members to professional aid.

NUJ Extra

The union's welfare charity is supporting members who find themselves in financial difficulties because of the pandemic. Make an application or branch donation on the NUJ website: www.nuj.org.uk/work/nuj-extra/

Brexit

Since the UK and EU agreed a deal at the 11th hour in 2020, many aspects of how it will affect media workers living in the UK and members resident in EU countries remain unclear. Journalists who need to travel from the UK to the EU to work, unless it is for a meeting or for attending a conference, should check whether they need a visa or a work permit as rules will vary from country to country, although some do make exemptions for journalists. Check the government website: www.gov.uk/working-abroad and www.gov.uk/visit-europe-1-january-2021

The NUJ's Continental European council believes members resident in continental Europe will not have an automatic right to work in other EU states. Check for clarifications and updates on the NUJ Covid-19 website page.

RECRUIT

04

Welcome your photographers

Natasha Hirst, chair of the Photographers Council, explains how branches can support and involve their lens-based members



I was absolutely appalled to hear reports of photographers being made targets while they were covering anti-lockdown demonstrations – some protesters abused, spat and deliberately coughed over them while they were doing their job.

The NUJ will respond robustly to any attacks on its members and our thanks go to those who keep us informed of incidents. The union is working closely with the police to make sure our

photographer members are able to go out and about unhindered during the lockdowns. The general secretary is a member of the government's National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and has been using examples of attacks on members to help draw up an action plan to deal with the harassment of journalists, due to be published at the end of the month.

As part of these negotiations and in press statements, Michelle Stanistreet has said journalists cannot be treated like fair game and called for effective deterrents, including consideration of harsher legal penalties, to protect the media. If photographers are abused or see colleagues being abused, they should report the incident to the union. We advise photographers and videographers to always carry an up-to-date press card or IFJ press card and a copy of the police chiefs' protocol [<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/national-police-chiefs-council-guidance-on-working-with/>].

Where possible, photographers and videographers should try to engage professionally with police officers. The union will pursue

reports of the use of fake press cards. Non-journalists, including far-right activists, are using fake press cards and posing as press photographers and reporters during demos. NUJ members must only use their card for news gathering.

The Photographers' Council exists to represent the views of photographers in the union and can offer advice and put forward policies in their interest. Photographers make up 6.5 per cent per cent of the union's membership – they have been particularly hit hard by redundancies as newspapers increasingly cut costs by relying on freelances and so-called user-generated content.

The union's #useitpayforit campaign tells amateur photographers that if an image is good enough to be published or broadcast, it is good enough to be paid for and they should not risk the livelihoods of professional photographers by providing free content.

Photographers and videographers covering sport, the arts, travel and features have badly affected by a downturn in work caused by the pandemic and many are also missing out on government financial support.

Branches can play a role in providing networking opportunities, giving advice on securing new work and by recommending NUJ photographer members for jobs.

Action

- Invite a photographer member to talk about their work at a meeting.

- Support the NUJ's #useitpayforit campaign: www.nuj.org.uk/campaigns/useitpayforit/

- Encourage members to look out for each other when working in public and report any incidents of abuse or obstruction to the union.

Assange trial

Tim Dawson asks how can we safely protect our sources following Judge Vanessa Baraitser's adjudication on the US request to extradite publisher and activist Julian Assange?



For deportation to be granted, District Judge Baraitser was required to determine whether the offences with which the Australian was charged would merit prosecution in the UK. Her affirmative answer is a blow for free expression.

She considered minute details of Assange's alleged dealings with former US army intelligence analyst and Wikileaks source, Chelsea Manning, their exchanged messages via the Jabber app and the sharing of "rainbow tools" to break password hashes.

Finding that Assange could have faced charges had he published UK secrets, Baraitser quoted from the Official Secrets Act: "The restriction on... free speech is prescribed by law... Its objective is to safeguard national security by preventing the disclosure of information relating to the work of the... intelligence services."

This provision - that allows for the prosecution of those who publish as well as those who leak official secrets - has long been a feature of UK legislation. Its use, however, must be approved by the Attorney General. For half a century or more, governments have been reluctant to sanction the

prosecution of journalists under this statute.

The Assange ruling, however, is a disturbing reminder of the implicit jeopardy in publishing leaked official secrets. Just how much collusion with a confidential source does it take to risk prosecution? By Judge Baraitser's tests, very little.

Draft revisions to the Official Secrets Act, for which the government has promised legislative time, risk exacerbating this situation. Gavin Miller, QC, in a briefing prepared for the NUJ on the proposed changes says: "It is regrettable that the Law Commission has chosen to try and restrict the value of the public interest defence [for disclosures of Official Secrets by journalists]. Much better if it had recommended that the discloser's public interest defence was considered by the jury on its inherent merits."

The possibility of aggressive use of Official Secrets legislation arises as concern increases about the growing use of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (Slapps) - lawsuits

intended to intimidate and silence critics by threatening them with the cost of a legal defence. Already, libel, privacy and information protection rules provide numerous channels for the wealthy to harass reporters.

While Assange's cause célèbre status kept the trial in the public eye, now is the time for NUJ branches to campaign against the legislative harassment of journalists which is preventing them from serving the public interest and our right to know.

Action

- Organise a branch meeting focusing on the legislative challenges to journalism.

- Seek out NUJ members who have direct experience of such challenges to speak to the branch.

- Build links with campaigns that have related interests, such as those against blacklisting, undercover policing known as the spy cops scandal and unwarranted surveillance.

Put training on your 2021 to-do list

The NUJ has a full programme of online professional training courses plus our schedules for training reps

The union's twice-monthly newsletter, NUJ Active, provides all the latest news on events and relevant training.

Branches should appoint a training rep who can direct members to various courses, and liaise with NUJ Training to organise bespoke branch sessions. If your branch hasn't already, contact tutrain@nuj.org.uk to book your slot for Working safely through the pandemic.

The session is recommended by Mark Fisher, Edinburgh Freelance Branch chair, who says it was "packed with provocations and good advice" with branch members responding enthusiastically during the discussion that followed.

Caroline Holmes, NUJ trade union training co-ordinator, said: "The trade union training programme is now online and all courses are approached within the Covid-19 context and updated as the situation evolves." New courses continue to be developed as the need arises, so keep an eye out for the NUJ training website page [<https://www.nuj.org.uk/work/training/>] or email tutrain@nuj.org.uk for more information. Rachel Howells,



Caroline Holmes, NUJ trade union training co-ordinator, delivering the reps' programme

project manager of NUJ Training Wales, said: "We're continuing our usual range of live, interactive, subsidised courses on journalism, PR and communications topics. These include new courses on crisis communications, verification tools, securing broadcast coverage for your organisation, storytelling on social media and speech writing." With an extra £17,000 from the Welsh government, she will be putting on extra courses to support freelancers, people affected by redundancy and anyone struggling with the new world of digital work. Find out more at NUJ Wales Training: <https://www.nujtrainingwales.org/>

Joan Macdonald, training manager

NUJ Training Scotland, said: "2020 was a really interesting year for learning for Scottish members as courses moved online and became open to members in the UK and around the globe. This January and February we are offering courses including PR, Photoshop, writing for the web, filming & editing for Androids, privacy & confidentiality, WordPress, Collaborative Leadership Stage 2 and Scriptwriting." There will be extra training on green issues for journalists in advance of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which comes to Glasgow later in the year."

The government is scrapping its funding for the FEU Training project for members in England in April, but there is a full programme of professional courses available until then, including workshops on using Instagram, YouTube and email marketing and financial advice for freelancers. Book your place: <https://www.feustraining.org/>. Sign the petition to have it saved: <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning>

NUJ training diary:

www.nuj.org.uk/comms/archive/active/663.html

Fair Deal for Freelances

The Fair Deal for Freelances campaign seeks redress for those missing out on Covid-19 financial aid and is fighting for a radical reform of our rights to ensure job protection and benefits are not dependent on employment status.

This is why freelance members are supporting the Freelance Charter (see next page).

Mark Fisher, secretary, Edinburgh Freelance Branch

Being freelance you often feel like you're out on your own, the more so when you're trying to negotiate with a big, impersonal publisher. The atomisation of life during the pandemic doesn't make things any easier. Yet it's just as important for freelances to secure fair terms of work as it is for their staff colleagues. That's why I believe everyone should

support the demand for trades union collective bargaining that benefits all workers.

Dr Francis Sedgemore, chair, Freelance Industrial Council

Making a living as a freelance is precarious at the best of times, but one of the advantages of being self-employed is maintaining control over one's intellectual property and moral rights. With publishers so often demanding that freelance contributors cede all rights to their work, it is all the more important that freelance journalists organise collectively to resist such corporate pressure.

The NUJ's Freelance Rights Charter has a critical role to play in this.

Julian Elliott, photographer

Creators like me are

indebted to the NUJ. Having a charter to help underpin our creators' and moral rights is a great step in the right direction. Each and every day over a billion images are infringed across the world. The NUJ is a force that helps creators protect the rights that we deserve.

Bob Smith, photographer

Freelances craft content using their skills and creativity. It's vital for their livelihoods that they receive the recognition for this and aren't subject to unfair rights grabs.

Action

Promote the Freelance Charter to local employers and employer organisations.

Send a quote to freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk in support from your branch.

Find out more at:

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/campaigns/fair-deal-for-freelances/>

Tweet your support #FD4F

#FairDeal4
Freelances

www.nuj.org.uk/join

FREELANCE RIGHTS CHARTER

FAIR DEAL FOR FREELANCES

The Covid-19 crisis has further marginalised already vulnerable freelances working across the media industry – this NUJ Freelance Rights Charter demands improved protections and benefits regardless of employment status.

Support our call for a Fair Deal for Freelances, where all freelances have the right to:

- 1** Trades union collective bargaining to improve terms and conditions for freelances side by side with staff
- 2** Fair written contracts free from the threat of disadvantage for asserting their rights
- 3** Respect for their creators' rights and unwaivable moral rights
- 4** Equalised rights with employees including; sick pay; maternity, paternity and parental leave; unemployment benefit; full access to benefits and social securities
- 5** Choice over how they freelance and are taxed, with an end to advance tax payments
- 6** Work free from pressure to operate on a PAYE basis, or to incorporate, or work through umbrella companies
- 7** Equal health and safety protections including parity of training, insurances and security provision
- 8** Fair fees and terms, and prompt payments
- 9** Dignity and respect at work, free from bullying, harassment or discrimination, with parity of access to grievance procedures
- 10** Equal professional rights, including the right to protect sources, seek information and uphold ethical standards

#FairDeal4Freelances

#FairDeal4Freelances

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