

# **END-OF-CONTRACT INTERVIEWS**

**the purpose and principles of an intervention  
to improve the support of television careers**



**Bournemouth  
University**

AN INTERVENTION TO **IMPROVE** THE CAREER SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WORKING IN THE TV INDUSTRY

# END-OF-CONTRACT INTERVIEWS

THE PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF AN INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE THE SUPPORT OF TELEVISION CAREERS



WE ARE SUGGESTING A **MODEST, SPECIFIC & PRACTICAL** INTERVENTION THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED *SWIFTLY*

**TV FREELANCERS**

A PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT **CRISIS**



THE NUMBER OF 'MISSING' OLDER WORKERS (50+) IS ESTIMATED TO BE IN THE REGION OF

**35,000**



THE NEED FOR **SUPPORT**

EXPRESSED A NEED FOR A MORE **nurturing** ENVIRONMENT, WITH **HR-TYPE SYSTEMS + PROCESSES**; CAN WE LEARN FROM PERFORMANCE REVIEWS & EXIT INTERVIEWS?

THE HAEMORRHAGING OF TALENT BY MID-CAREER



MORE ACUTE WITH THE STEADY GROWTH IN DEMAND FOR **CONTENT**

RELATED TO GROWTH OF STREAMING SERVICES EXPOSED THE EXTENT OF THE

**KEY SKILLS GAPS AND SHORTAGES** AT MID-AND SENIOR LEVELS

- TRANSPARENT RECRUITMENT PRACTICES
- CLARITY ABOUT WORKING HOURS
- DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- STANDARDISED RATES OF PAY
- APPRAISAL & CAREER SUPPORT
- REPORTING PROCEDURES
- TRAINING & CPD

THE ISSUES:

**PROJECT-SPECIFIC & INDIVIDUALISED** EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

**SHRINKING** OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS



EXPANSION OF **FREELANCE WORKFORCE**



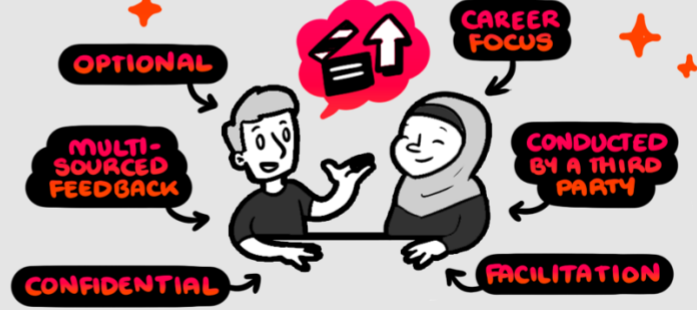
LACK OF ACCESS TO THESE RESOURCES MADE WORKERS FEEL **ISOLATED**, AND CONSIDER **OTHER CAREER OPTIONS**



MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE **RETENTION CRISIS** AND OTHER **INDUSTRY ISSUES**

**THE EOC INTERVIEW**

- 1 AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROJECT REVIEW
- 2 FACILITATE MEDIATED FEEDBACK TO EMPLOYER
- 3 DISCUSS OVERALL CAREER DEVELOPMENT & PROGRESSION



# End-of-contract Interviews: the purpose and principles of an intervention to improve the support of television careers

## Introduction

This paper sets out the purpose and principles of an intervention to improve the career support of people working within the television industry through the introduction of what we have called End-of-contract Interviews. By detailing the essential elements and rationale for this proposed new intervention, we offer a practical response to a crisis currently threatening the UK television industry: the haemorrhaging of talent by mid-career point. We have frequently used the metaphor of a leaky pipeline to describe a situation in which an over-supply of talent at entry-level gradually diminishes to a point, further along the line, of serious shortages of suitably skilled people (eg. Wallis & van Raalte, 2022). This phenomenon has existed for a long time in the television industry, but has become noticeably more acute with the steady growth in demand for content from around 2015. Large numbers of highly skilled, experienced people are lost to the industry in a mid-career 'brain drain' at the very moment they are most needed. The number of 'missing' older workers (aged 50+) has been estimated to be up to 35,000 (Steele, 2022) suggesting a problem of attrition now threatening the sustainability of this industry.

In what follows, we first explain the industry's retention problem and identify at its heart the need for more proactive support of the industry's freelance workforce<sup>1</sup>. We then set out the rationale for the idea of the End-of-contract Interview as a specific intervention. We outline its principal features and suggest a four-step process for its implementation. In formulating this specific proposal we are not suggesting it as a silver bullet that will end what we know to be a widespread, complex and systemic set of retention-related problems. Rather we are suggesting a modest, specific, and practical intervention that could be implemented swiftly. We offer this proposal with the caveat that what is set out here will need to be piloted, evaluated and costed. Neither are we suggesting that television freelancers are alone in experiencing an absence of support, and comparisons can certainly be drawn with skilled contingent workers within other sectors (Sulbout et al 2022). However there are few other industries facing the same scale of crisis in retention that are so wholly dependent on a high skilled contingent workforce.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'freelance' is used broadly in this context to refer both to those who are registered as self-employed (either as Sole Traders, or by trading through small limited companies), those on successive short-term PAYE contracts, or some combination of these arrangements.

## Background and context

Significant changes affecting the nature of work and employment in the latter part of the twentieth century were felt with particular force within the television industry. From being considered one of the last bastions of union power in the 1970s and early 1980s, the consequences of deregulation have altered the industry beyond recognition. As employee protections evaporated, many of the obligations traditionally associated with responsible employment shifted from the employer to the individual. Although previously existing obstacles faced by those seeking work in the industry certainly diminished, new obstacles emerged: traditional barriers to ‘getting in’ were superseded by the challenges of ‘getting on’. The task of establishing and maintaining a career (previously clearly signposted and well-supported by media employers) was no longer straightforward. The shrinking of employment contracts, and the expansion of a freelance workforce defined by project-specific and individualised employment arrangements, became normalised. Along with the loss of pensions, sick leave and other protections and support, Continuing Professional Development and training became the concern of the individual. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, the television industry had become characterised by insecurity, informality and high levels of “flexible” (non-standard) work arrangements (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008; de Peuter, 2011) often resulting in careers with a limited ‘shelf-life’ (Wallis & van Raalte, 2020).

Any shift of responsibility from employer to individual comes with risks to the safe supply of an appropriately skilled workforce. Governments therefore resort to compensatory measures of various kinds to encourage skills development. New Labour’s introduction of Sector Skills Councils in 2002 is typical of such policy initiatives, and the creation of Skillset (later renamed Creative Skillset, and the precursor of ScreenSkills) was intended to promote skills within the ‘creative media’ sector, which included television within its remit. Notwithstanding growing recognition of the importance of more experienced workers, such initiatives have in the main tended to prioritise entry-level skills and recruitment which in the case of television, made any perceived skills ‘problem’ appear to be an easy fix indeed. Work considered to be creative and self-actualising has always had immense appeal to young people, and thousands of graduates emerge from UK universities each year with their sights set on just such work (McRobbie, 2016), quite apart from multiple non-graduate entry routes. Not surprisingly, therefore, entry-level over-supply has long been a defining feature of work in television. As a result, the policy-driven preoccupation with entry-level skills became largely a displacement activity creating a noisy distraction from cumulative under-investment in continuing professional development, advanced skills training, and the career support of an increasingly freelance television workforce.

For many years the industry’s retention problem was barely acknowledged. It was only the swell in demand for content related to the growth of new streaming services, particularly from around 2015 (later complicated by the production set-backs of the first Covid-19 lockdown), that exposed

the extend of key skills gaps and shortages at mid- and more senior levels. Whilst a healthy supply of entry-level talent has continued unabated, the brain-drain leading to shortages of those offering experience in key production and management roles is now widely recognised as being a major problem, evidenced by reports of ‘a capability gap’ where people are promoted without the appropriate experience, training or skills because no one suitable for the role could be found (often with implications for the mental health and wellbeing of both the overpromoted and their teams: see Film & TV Charity, 2021).

Whilst high levels of attrition in the UK’s television industry continue to be widespread, they are not equally spread. We know that the brain drain affects some professional areas more seriously than it does others. Women are more likely to leave the industry in larger numbers than men. And despite many years of entry-level initiatives aimed at those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, they remain significantly under-represented at mid-career and more senior levels. We still have only a partial understanding of the complex reasons for this phenomenon, or what could be done to stem the outbound flow. Neither do we fully understand the correlation between the retention crisis and a range of other concerns currently besetting the industry, including poor management, a high risk of bullying, and poor mental health. More research is needed. For the purposes of this paper we construe the underlying problem broadly in the terms in which we found it to be frequently expressed, namely as being a *lack of support*.

## **The need for ‘support’**

One of the striking features of our own research into the experience of work in the UK’s unscripted sector is the extent to which workers frequently referred to feeling ‘unsupported’ (van Raalte, Wallis, & Pekalski, 2021). As one contributor stated: ‘It’s great to have job autonomy, but too often this leaks into feeling unsupported in your role.’ (SoP 0501)<sup>2</sup> This was a complaint echoed many times over in different forms, and one that seemed to imply multiple causal factors suggestive of poor management (or no management at all). Our findings echo those of The Film & TV Charity’s work in this area (Wilkes, et al., 2020). Many anecdotes offered to us clearly illustrate the point:

‘I once approached three senior managers (across two weeks) to express that I was feeling overwhelmed and needed support. Each one advised that I speak to another person. Following speaking to all three, nothing changed and I was still working 14-hour days to try and please the Series Producer.’ (SoP 0730)

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<sup>2</sup> Quotations included here are from the *State of Play 2021* study, hence the referencing system from that research is adopted in their use within this proposal.

'Lack of support (both emotional and practical) when workloads become unmanageable. Productions mostly being understaffed, and schedules being focused on saving money rather than providing adequate amounts of time to carry out the work without consistently having to work extra hours (unpaid) for long periods of time.' (SoP 1027)

The sense of feeling unsupported, then, is related to many various and inter-related aspects of the work culture of television production. Issues to which this lack of support were attributed included a need for: more transparent recruitment practices; clarity about working hours; standardised and transparent rates of pay; detailed job descriptions; reporting procedures (particularly in the case of grievances or Health and Safety concerns); appraisal and career support; as well as training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It was the lack of access to many of these basic resources that seemed to leave workers with a strong sense of being alone.

Collectively, this data contains an expressed need among many television freelancers for a more nurturing environment and the kind of systems and processes that (in a non-freelance context) an employee might typically look to an HR department to provide. Even where broader concerns about the experience of work in television were the focus (such as poor management or lack of communication) they were (at least in part) attributed to, or thought to be accentuated by, the absence of proper HR systems and processes, and related lack of CPD (and resulting competencies). The feeling was particularly acute when it came to the individual's personal and professional development where there was 'no protocol for feedback' (SoP 0560). Respondents typically believe that, in general, 'television expects you to take on new roles and tasks as you progress in your career but no attempt is made to support those progressions...': it is a case of 'every person for themselves' (SoP 0842). 'No feedback at end of contract' (SoP 0575) was a striking and repeated complaint. One respondent related how, after nine months of working on a project, they had been removed from their role with 'no explanation or opportunity to discuss it...' (SoP 0111). Seldom was there any expectation that there should be 'basic entry/exit chats' (SoP 0980) between employer and worker, and even where this happened, it was 'often pretty negative/not particularly constructive.' (SoP 0317) It is clear, then, that if there is to be any stemming of the flow of those leaving the industry by mid-career, employers will need to find ways in which multiple concerns are addressed about lack of support and the need for more robust HR-type systems and processes.

## Borrowing from established HR practices

A good human resources (HR) department that serves both the employer and the employee proactively seeks ways to create a positive work environment. Its areas of responsibility normally include the administering of the organisation's employment policy, overseeing the recruitment and on-boarding of new workers, and facilitating CPD and training. Finding ways in which some of the principles of good HR protocols can usefully be adapted and applied within a freelance project-based employment context will require both resolve and some creative thinking. Nevertheless, the current need is such that various recent initiatives suggest a growing appetite among both employers and freelancers to find ways to do so. Examples include schemes such as Make a Move which is funding on-the-job training for experienced practitioners identified as ready for a more senior role (ScreenSkills, 2020); The Time Project which is promoting more responsible working hours (The Time Project, 2021); as well as a renewed interest in mentoring<sup>3</sup>. Our own recommendations for how production companies should be 'supporting the development of all staff, including freelancers' (recommendation 2.5) are set out in *State of Play 2021* (van Raalte, Wallis & Pekalski, 2021).<sup>4</sup> Based on our findings – and the clear correlation between expressions of a need for support and the need for improved mechanisms of communication – our focus for the intervention proposed within this paper is deliberately narrow. We set out with the specific aim of identifying where there may be opportunity for: feedback from employer to employee; feedback from employee to employer; and those points where the employee's performance, continuing professional development needs and work aspirations could be constructively reviewed and discussed. We have found it to be instructive, therefore, to consider two practices commonly used by industries where more extensive HR processes are standard: the performance review, and the exit interview. Whilst neither are directly transferrable to a freelance context, we suggest that both provide potentially useful points of reference when considering how freelance support could be improved.

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<sup>3</sup> Mentoring is another HR practice that could provide a valuable mechanism of support for those working in television production. Research into some of the challenges and benefits of mentoring schemes across the UK's Creative Industries has recently been undertaken by Oxford Brookes University (Gannon et. al., 2022).

<sup>4</sup> The six recommendations of *State of Play 2021* were: 1 Broadcasters should take responsibility for the pipeline that is created to fulfil their demands; 2 Production companies should take responsibility for the wellbeing of all staff, including those employed on freelance contracts; 3 BECTU and other representative organisations should work with industry leaders to develop employment standards and protocols, as well as raising awareness of key issues throughout the industry; 4 An industry coalition should set up a third-party organisation, recognised by Ofcom, to monitor and support the management of human resources within the industry and to act as an independent standards body to protect the rights of employees, including freelancers; 5 An industry coalition, working with ScreenSkills, and drawing on DCMS support, should address the gap in the provision and uptake of training for television staff with hiring and team management responsibilities; and 6 DCMS should actively support the strategies outlined above, enforcing the compliance of broadcasters with working practices designed to improve working conditions, diversity and skills development throughout the industry.

### *1. Performance reviews*

Performance reviews (or appraisals) have become a well-established HR management practice, often considered to be a crucial element in the broader management of performance across an organisation. What is usually a one-to-one review with a more senior manager conventionally involves a retrospective assessment of an individual's performance in relation to previously set goals, an articulation of future goals, and a discussion about what improvements or adjustments might be necessary for such future goals to be achieved. These conversations will often have direct implications for contractual arrangements such as pay.

In one form or another performance reviewing is widely practiced, despite long-term criticism levelled at some potentially negative aspects of its traditional application. Criticisms have included: there being an over-emphasis on short-term performance at the expense of long-term planning; encouraging of rivalry and politics at the expense of teamwork; and promoting a sense of fear at the expense of support and collegiality (Deming, 1986). On a purely pragmatic level the process is also often thought to be too time-consuming and cumbersome, failing to provide the value necessary to justify the effort/cost involved. These and other concerns have prompted many organisations to adapt their performance management systems to be more employee-focused, for example, by replacing the traditional performance review with ongoing coaching and feedback (Mueller-Hanson & Pulakos, 2018). The use of multi-source feedback (sometimes referred to as 360-degree feedback) is now also widely used, where a performance review (usually facilitated by a third-party) is informed by the perspective of peers and subordinates as well as from supervisors (and may even include feedback from external sources such as customers). It has been argued that multi-source feedback reduces bias, increases perceived fairness and promotes organisational trust (Karkoulian, et al 2016).

We are not aware of anything equivalent to performance reviews happening among the television freelance workforce, even in a primitive form. There has been little incentive or opportunity made to provide feedback (in either direction) in the project-based context of television production. Indeed, the giving of feedback seems often to be side-stepped for reasons of time (and therefore cost) and in the let-sleeping-dogs-lie belief that too much honest reflection may be best avoided in the interests of getting the project completed. Yet it seems to us that some form of project-specific reflection could provide significant benefits for both the freelancer and the employer. Performance reviews have been found to be motivating when engaged in routinely, when the focus is on individual improvement, learning and development, and where the process is transparent and straightforward. For example, the signposting of continuing professional development (CPD) and further training opportunities in the context of a discussion about future goals may otherwise never take place. There are clearly aspects to this kind of structured career-focused



conversation that could provide precisely the kind of career support that television freelancers tell us they are lacking. We can see particular value in aspects of the 360 degree approach to feedback in a context in which different people on a project may have significantly varied impressions of an individual (especially in a culture in which self-promotion and impression management may be a significant factor). The issue then becomes primarily one of appropriate timing, opportunity and expertise. In this regard it is worth briefly considering another common HR practice, the exit interview.

## 2. Exit interviews

Exit interviews are undertaken at the termination of a contract. Conventionally for the benefit of employers, they are standard practice in many organisations as a way to gauge why employees choose to leave a company, and to highlight possible retention issues. They might typically ask departing employees what the company could have done to keep them, and whether or not they would ever consider returning. Some will also ask for comment on the level of training and support received. As with performance appraisals, exit interviews are not universally embraced. There is a body of literature that has questioned their reliability and usefulness. Issues of concern include: the truthfulness of respondents, the focus and limitations of the subjects covered, and the potential for the misinterpretation, misuse or non-use of the information gathered. In one study of a large publishing organisation, researchers found that despite having a well-designed interview process, there was almost no analysis or interpretation of findings. Instead, information that could have been used to address problems was filed and ignored (Johns & Gorrick, 2016). Nevertheless despite potential pitfalls, anyone who has been immersed in a company will have some insight into how the employing organisation operates from a perspective that management is unlikely to have. They will have experienced first-hand the organisation's culture, leadership, and day-to-day processes and practices. This is useful knowledge which, if it can be shared and utilised properly, provides valuable insights for organisational long-term improvements at every level.

As with performance appraisals, there is no direct equivalent to exit interviews within the context of freelancers working on short-term television projects. The planned departure of an individual who has completed their contribution to a project (or come to the natural end of the project) is hardly comparable to the termination of long-term employment. Also, the need always to keep doors open for possible future reemployment leads to the propensity to say not goodbye but *au revoir*. Nevertheless, whilst there are many challenges, the principle of getting feedback – if only in the form of a 10 minute chat with a linemanager – has gained traction. Whilst this is not an 'exit interview' in the accepted sense, feedback at the end of an individual's contract not only provides the most logical point at which to give and receive, but provides its procedural rationale. For the successful establishment of any new practice, embedding that activity into a generally accepted sequential process is what enables it to become a

routine. In this sense, the exit interview provides a model for how feedback could be built into the life of a project in such a way as to become one of its processes.

## Key challenges

In the exploratory period of this study we have had conversations with a wide range of industry professionals who share our concern about the industry's leaky pipeline. This proposal for End-of-contract Interviews is not a consensus view, but rather an idea born out of a discursive, tentative, and aggregated process. Those with whom we spoke in the earlier stages of this process would have had no more idea than we did about the direction in which our thinking would travel. Based on these conversations and our own research, there is unquestionably an appetite for improved communication and individual feedback, and this is often related to acknowledged poor practice in the on-boarding and ending of contracts for freelancers. An intervention at the point at which an individual is coming to the end of their contract emerged as seeming to be the best proposition. Yet there are several key challenges/disincentives to implementing this. These include:

- **Time and/or opportunity** – It is clear that there is never a convenient time to undertake exercises of reflection, and as employees come to the end of their contracts, the completion of tasks (and the individual's increasing focus on their next contract) means that there is little incentive to make the necessary time for review.
- **Cost/resources** – There is nothing in most individual programme budgets to facilitate career support, continuing professional development or training. This is generally left to the individual to engage with in their own time and at their own cost.
- **Expertise** – Many of those with management responsibilities told us that they had received little or no management training, and lacked confidence in their own ability to undertake these kinds of management processes.
- **Trust** – Unmediated feedback from an employer (e.g. a linemanager) can be extremely valuable. However, this is not always the case. Indeed it can be unwelcome, and even counter-productive. As one company executive told us, such conversations can become overly defensive to the point where they are not thought to warrant the emotional investment.

- **Honesty and candour** – Both from our conversations and from the literature on the subject it is clear that feedback given directly to the employer by the departing employee is likely to lack candor, particularly where possible future employment is at stake. (In areas where there are particular skills shortages, the same may be true of the employer.)

One way of addressing these concerns is to position the proposed intervention as a service managed by a third-party (typically the approach taken by an employer offering 360 degree or multi-source feedback for example). In this way, the cost of the intervention could fall outside that of the specific project to a broader funding stream (even sector-wide, as in the case of schemes such as Make a Move, or a number of current mentoring initiatives). The third-party would then manage the process, ensuring impartiality and confidentiality, and provide the necessary expertise, particularly in relation to the career-focused aspect of the intervention.

### **Features of an effective intervention**

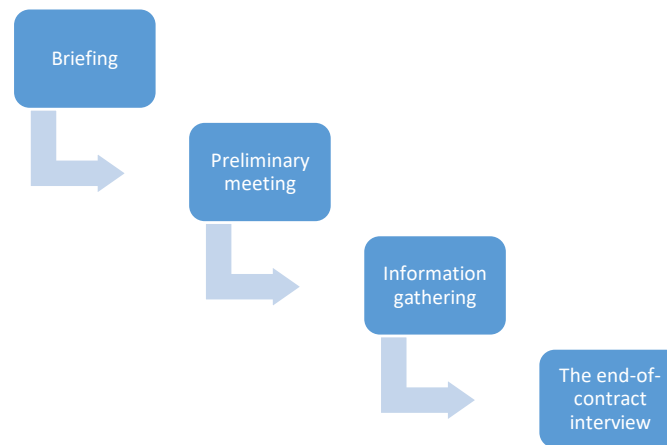
**In essence, the EoC Interview as envisaged here would consist of a one-to-one conversation (with some additional preparatory communication) between a freelance beneficiary and an interview facilitator at the point at which that individual's involvement in a television project is coming to an end. Its primary purpose would be threefold: 1) to provide an opportunity for a subjective review of the project informed by constructive feedback from colleagues/associates; 2) to facilitate mediated feedback to the employer where this could contribute towards improvements in processes and practices on the part of the company; and 3) to provide an opportunity for the discussion of matters related to the individual's overall career development and progression.**

We envisage that for both practical and funding reasons, this is set-up as a scheme ultimately overseen by a body like Screenskills (in a similar way to a scheme like Make a Move) and funded as an industry-wide scheme. (The broader funding implications should be considered as part of the pilot stage as costs become clearer.) Production companies would apply to be part of the scheme, and this process might include certain qualifying factors such as their having achieved certain management standards/kitemarks currently in development (eg. standards relating to issuing of timely contracts, appropriate job descriptions, proper on-boarding processes, etc.). Participating companies would nominate a key point-of-contact for the service provider to liaise with. The service would then be offered to an agreed number of freelancer beneficiaries who had requested to be included in the scheme. (It may be appropriate to restrict applicants based on length of contract, although this would have to vary from role to role.) In proposing this intervention, we have identified the following as its essential features.

Optionality	Not everyone will need or want to participate. The scheme would not allow mandatory participation (equivalent to a performance appraisal) but rather offer a service for those who ask for it.
Confidentiality	For the intervention to have any value there has to be complete honesty and therefore trust in the process. Complete confidentiality is therefore an essential condition.
Conducted by third-party	Outsourcing the proposed intervention to a third-party is likely to help to engender trust and to facilitate confidentiality. Time pressures, the necessary expertise, and the need for consistency are also pragmatic reasons for why this is best done at arms-length.
Multi-sourced feedback	Wherever possible, feedback to an employee should be obtained from more than one source. In other words, we recognise the value in adopting the principle of '360-degree' feedback (discussed above) as far as is practicable.
Career focus	An essential element of the EoC Interview should be time considering the career aspirations and plans of the interviewee, since this has been one of the areas of support notably lacking. The end of any project provides an individual with a moment to take stock, and the aim here is not to provide advice but a framework for review and possible planning.
Facilitation	The aim of this interview is to facilitate the provision of feedback both to and from the interviewee, and to provide structure and expertise for a career-focused conversation. It is not intended to proffer advice or direction, but to facilitate reflection and planning.

## A four-step model

Having established the principles set out above, we turn our attention to how this End-of-contract Interview could operate in practice. We suggest a four-step model: first, a collective briefing at the start of the employment contract; second a short preliminary meeting towards the end of the employment contract; third, a preparation period; and fourth, the End-of-contract Interview proper. Whilst this process is spread over the length of the project, we expect one-to-one 'contact time' to be limited to no more than two hours (up to 30 minutes for the preliminary meeting, and up to 90 minutes for the interview itself). We will briefly describe each of these steps:



**1. Briefing:** It is important to communicate near the start of the project what the End-of-contract Interview can offer, together with an outline of expectations associated with it. This provides an opportunity for people to opt in/out as the optional nature of the offer must be clearly understood. So too must the principle of confidentiality be communicated. We suggest that this need take no more than 10-15 minutes and could be done in groups, as an agenda item of another meeting, or even take the form of a pre-recorded video briefing.

### 2. Preliminary meeting

Situated towards the end of the contract period, this brief meeting's main purpose is to negotiate/clarify the aim of the forthcoming interview and to discuss the nomination of those people who the freelance beneficiary would like to get feedback from. Areas to clarify would also

include: the facilitated nature of the meeting, and the role of the facilitator; whether there are specific areas that the beneficiary would like to receive feedback on; any particular aspects of their career they would like to explore with the facilitator; and what preparation will involve.

**3. Preparation period:** Between the preliminary meeting and the interview, two kinds of preparation are required. The beneficiary will need to gather the appropriate feedback from those nominated to provide it. This will be based on an adaptable questionnaire with provision for some free text responses. At the same time, the beneficiary will also be asked to undertake an exercise designed to encourage career reflection based on any core concerns or issues that were highlighted within the preliminary meeting. These will be submitted in advance of the Interview. (NB. This need not be a replacement for a direct conversation with a line manager about the project – indeed such a conversation may help to facilitate the EoC Interview).

**4. The End-of-contract Interview:** The EoC Interview proper is the culmination of this process. As indicated above, it would consist of three main elements: a review of the individual's performance in the current project informed by multi-sourced feedback; a review of the project in respect of feedback useful to the employer; and a discussion of the individual's broader career development and progression. The focus would be the development (or assessment) of a career plan with strategic goals and identified career opportunities.

## Next steps and conclusion

This proposal is intended to provide an outline of the purpose and principles of an intervention to improve the support of freelancers working in television. What we have called an End-of-contract Interview has been briefly described but not fully developed and is entirely untested. The next step should be a prototype design phase in which the detail of each of the four stages proposed is expanded, and this should be followed by a pilot phase. We anticipate that the pilot phase would require an iterative process, in which review and revision would follow each implementation step. We also recommend that this should feed into a rigorous piece of action research examining broader questions about the nature of high quality career support for freelance workers. At that point roll-out feasibility and full costings would need to be set out.

As part of the process of developing this proposal we have become aware of examples of good practice within industry that mirror some aspects of the idea presented here. All such initiatives are to be encouraged. A 10-minute feedback chat with a line manager is many times better than no feedback at all. Our intention here has been to raise the bar of what could be done, rather than simply describe a minimum standard. Moreover, we hope to provoke some wider discussion about what itinerant workers might need if they are to begin to feel the career development support

that they say they require. This proposal is intended to be no more than a starting point. The retention issues that, ultimately, we are attempting to address remain complex and have implications for many aspects of the freelancer's experience. (How can a line manager raise a concern about an individual's apparent failure to perform a task, for example, if that individual claims they didn't know it was their job because they were never given a job description?). There are unlikely to be quick fixes. The point is to find as many ways as possible to help make working in television a more positive experience and a television career one that is truly sustainable.

## Acknowledgement

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