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In 2014 we convened two research workshops on the issue of talent in Scotland's screen industries, funded by a grant from the Royal Society of Edinburgh. These involved a broad range of contributors, including representation from key Scottish broadcasters, practitioners and support agencies, alongside UK-wide academics and international comparators from Europe and the US (see Annex for more details). The workshops set out to explore a number of themes around conceptualising talent; best practice; talent clustering; and new digital pathways.

The findings are briefly summarised below in relation to two of the areas of interest to the inquiry: (1) The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide; (2) How to retain in Scotland those with the necessary creative skills. Detailed reports and outputs can be found at the online resource created for the project: <http://shapingscotlandtalent.co.uk>.

The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide

There appears to be confusion within the screen industries in terms of drawing boundaries around a definition of talent, with the result that policy conventions tend to vary widely. For example, Creative Scotland leans towards looking at talent from the point of view of a narrow grouping, e.g. the artist, and a hierarchy often exists in which onscreen talent, writers and directors are afforded higher status than craft, technical and production crew. By contrast, the rationale for industry support through Scottish Enterprise is related to economic impact and involves aggregating a much broader group of activities. By overstating the weight of the sector and grouping a multiplicity of activities under the term 'talent', it is difficult to determine exactly what is occurring within the screen industries in Scotland. Moreover, due to the disparate nature of the wider creative industries, it is also difficult to speak with one voice, which is in conflict with the preferences of government policy for a single coherent approach. While more research is required to capture the patterning of work within the highly complex set of activities that constitutes the screen industries, greater precision regarding the discourse employed by public sector agencies around talent and creativity would be welcome. This would be a step forward in terms of tailoring policy towards the complex and specific needs of different workers within the sector.

A key issue in terms of identifying and nurturing talent within the screen industries is the need for recognisable 'routes of progression' within what is a highly precarious environment. This is challenging given the non-linearity of career paths and involves not only demystifying specific roles but also offering achievable narratives of how to make a living in the screen industries. Policymakers must acknowledge and encourage transparency regarding the difficulty of building a career within the sector and must ensure new pathways to entry for screen 'talent' from a wider range of backgrounds. This can be achieved, in the first instance, through the continuation of modern

apprenticeships within the creative industries and advocating paid internship provision.

How to retain in Scotland those with the necessary creative skills

While Scotland may successfully train a large number of students in film, TV and media, a high level of migration occurs after graduation, posing issues around retention of talent and development of a skills base. A move towards local TV in certain areas may offer one solution to nurturing and retaining talent but without the necessary infrastructure, such as a film and television production facility with a large-scale visual effects centre, it is difficult to argue that the full range of opportunities for talent exists. Having a critical mass with more productions coming through every year would boost the number of below-the-line and craft positions, yet the importance of the cultural aspect of film should not be overlooked at the expense of commercial and economic activity.

Similarly, in terms of television, although there has been some decentralisation of production to Scotland, along with the other nations and regions, there was evidence from the workshops that Scottish drama production, in particular, is struggling against continued metro-centrism and competition from other nations such as Wales which has succeeded in becoming an established drama hub. Concerns were also expressed about the practice of 'warehousing' and how far regional production quotas were approached in a box ticking manner. Strong emphasis was laid on the importance of 'pump-priming' productions that would encourage the establishment of the depth of talent required to deliver large-scale productions in the future and to offer a training ground for workers in the sector.

We hope these observations are of assistance to the enquiry.

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Annex: The programme of workshops on the issue of talent in Scotland's screen industries

The first workshop was held in Glasgow in March 2014 and was concerned with conceptualising talent, issues of diversity and stimulating talent in the nations and regions. There was a broad range of contributors from policy, the academy and industry, including representation from key broadcasters and institutions in the form of BBC Scotland, STV, Channel 4 and the Edinburgh International Film Festival. This was in addition to public bodies and industry organisations such as Creative Skillset, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Screen HI and Women in Film and TV, along with a number of UK-wide academics. As a comparator to the Scottish context, this included a group of researchers from the University of South Wales examining Roath Lock drama studios and network production beyond the M25.

The second workshop, held in Edinburgh in May 2014, was concerned with specific initiatives in place to identify and nurture talent and potential new pathways into the screen industries that have opened up due to digital technology. Again, we assembled a broad range of practitioners, policymakers and academics, with representation from Creative Scotland and UWS's Creative Media Academy and specific initiatives such as BECTU's Stepping Up scheme for existing talent and Digicult's slate of Scottish Shorts. In an attempt to look at alternative models of talent support outside of Scotland, we also welcomed international speakers from New Danish Screen, the Carsey-Wolf Center for Media Industries at UC Santa Barbara and Stony Brook University's digital filmmaking programme in New York in which 20 filmmakers make 20 films over 20 weeks.