

Sub-editor — Journalism

A sub-editor checks over the stories which journalists write, making sure they are factually and grammatically correct, and suitable for the target audience. They edit the stories or headlines before fitting the stories into the available column space in the newspaper, magazine or website where they are being published.

The Work

You could be:

- checking over stories (copy) for spelling, grammatical or factual errors
- rewriting and shortening it, as necessary, to suit the newspaper's 'house style', target audience and to keep within the word count
- making sure that stories are accurate and do not break any copyright or libel laws
- checking up with the author or journalist on any queries
- writing 'standfirs' (introductions) to the stories and creating catchy headlines which fit within the space
- helping with the design and layout of the pages and adding last minute news stories
- cropping (trimming) pictures and writing captions for them
- compiling tables of information, such as sports or election results
- adapting the layout of print copy for the website.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for sub-editors can be from £21,000 to £25,000 a year. Senior sub-editors can earn £25,000 to £40,000 a year. Chief sub-editors for national newspapers may earn from £50,000 a year.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) suggests rates for freelance sub-editors, according to the type of publication and length of shift. Details are on the NUJ website.

Conditions

- On a weekly paper you will work mainly during the day and probably at weekends.
- On a daily paper you will work shifts, including nights.
- Working late to meet newspaper deadlines can be stressful.
- You will work on a computer in an open plan, sometimes crowded office, along with other sub-editors and journalists.

Getting In

- Entry is very competitive.
- There are no formal entry requirements, but most people have a HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in a journalism subject. You can find a list of accredited journalism courses, some of which are in Scotland, on the website of the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ).
- Entry requirements for an HNC or HND journalism course are 1-2 Highers plus some subjects at National 5. A pass in English is normally required.
- Entry to a degree course in journalism requires 4 Highers including English or Media. Many degree courses also require a portfolio of your work.
- You need accurate spelling and knowledge of the rules of grammar and punctuation.
- You need knowledge of relevant computer programmes, such as Photoshop or InDesign.
- It is helpful to have had paid or unpaid practical experience. You can get it through college, university or local newspapers or by contacting national newspapers directly.

Full details of the entry requirements and training for journalism can be found in the job profile, [Journalist or Reporter](#).

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- excellent communication skills
- good observation skills and attention to detail
- excellent written English and the ability to adapt writing style to suit the publication
- strong research skills
- a knack for creating eye-catching headlines
- the ability to meet deadlines
- an eye for design and layout if working in print
- self-confidence
- a knowledge of the law as it affects journalism.

Training

- Most entrants have done vocational training in journalism, either in their degree or at postgraduate level.
- The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) offers short courses in sub-editing.
- There are also distance learning or online courses available.
- Otherwise, training is on the job, combined with NCTJ qualifications.
- Many large newspaper groups offer in-house training.
- Advanced IT training can keep you up to date with technical changes.

Getting On

- In journalism, making contacts is very important for developing your career.
- Many sub-editors go to different newspapers on different days.
- Moving to a smaller publication can give you broader experience, as a smaller team will interchange duties.

- If you get a permanent job with a newspaper, you could apply for a senior post such as news editor, features editor, or chief editor.
- Online journalism is an expanding area.

Contacts

Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC)

Website: www.bjtc.org.uk

X: @BJTC_UK

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BJTCUK

Chartered Institute of Journalists

Tel: 020 7252 1187

Website: cioj.org

X: @CloJournalist

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Chartered-Institute-of-Journalists-108017897514/?fref=nf

National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)

Tel: 01799 544014

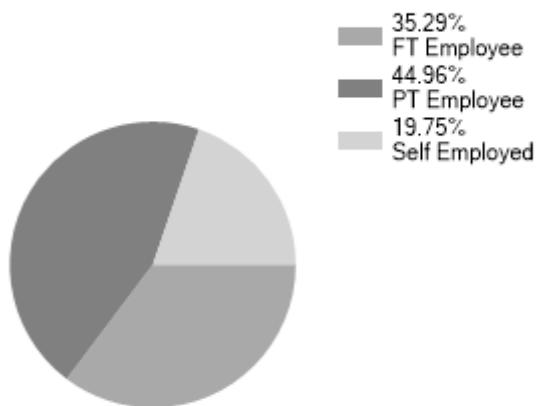
Email: info@nctj.com

Website: www.nctj.com

X: @NCTJ_news

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

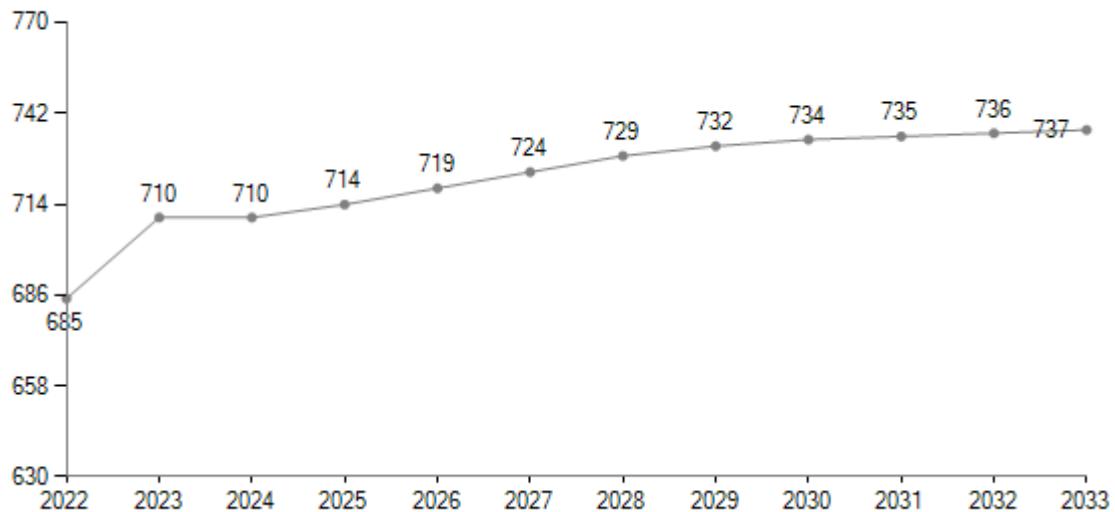


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)