

Ten Years of Positive Action

2011

2010

2009

2008

2007

theguardian

Yes, they do apply

Joseph Harker



They're not interested in journalism." "They don't apply." "We can't afford to lower our standards." These were just some of the excuses common across the media a decade ago to explain the lack of black or brown faces. Back then there was often little acknowledgement of the lack of diversity in the national press, let alone any interest in redressing it.

Fortunately the Guardian was interested and, led by then managing editor Chris Elliott, launched the positive action programme - to open the doors to young black and Asian people who hoped to start a career in journalism. Our aim was to give them their first experience of the national press, and to remove its mystique so that they could consider it an achievable career option rather than an unwelcoming and exclusive profession.

The thing that immediately struck us as we interviewed our first half-dozen recruits, was that there was a wealth of talent bursting to break into the press which had been completely overlooked. People with fascinating life stories, family histories and global connections. People who could strengthen the mix of writers we employed and commissioned.

As you'll see in this brochure, our first year's placements didn't impress only us: they went on to staff positions at the Guardian, the Telegraph, the Financial Times and the BBC. The falsity of those old excuses was exposed, as were the deep-rooted flaws and injustices of the industry's traditional old-boy recruitment.

The following year we doubled the placements to 12, and after that added a third week to their experience. Our own editors recognised the intelligence and creativity coming into the building, and tasked the young participants with research and writing, giving them constructive feedback. Black and Asian members of staff volunteered as mentors, offering further advice on working in the media. With this support, many placements continued to contribute long after their initial weeks in the building. Their comments over the following pages show how helpful they found their time here.

I'd like to thank all those Guardian staff who've done so much to support the programme - as interviewers, editors, mentors and administrators. There are far too many to name individually, but they should all know that their time and effort is hugely appreciated. In particular I'd like to thank Wendy Collinson, Aster Greenhill, Sarah Hewitt and Rebecca Waters, who've organised the programme over the years.

But most of all I'd like to thank all those who've applied for placements and made the scheme what it is. By their actions and their ability they've repaid the faith of those who launched it a decade ago. They have shown that to get the best talent, media organisations have to spread their net far and wide. And they have proved that all sections of society can make a positive and meaningful contribution, and deserve an equal right to have their voices heard. I wish them all the best in making the most of this.

**You can find out more about the scheme, and how to apply,
by visiting our careers website, www.guardian.co.uk/workforus**

We had to prove we'd changed

Alan Rusbridger



The positive action programme was conceived in 2001, after it became apparent that improving the diversity of our staff required a concerted effort to change perceptions of the national press among Britain's minorities. Given that, at the time, there were so few non-white faces in print, and that most newspapers had little contact with minority communities, we realised that we had to prove we were willing to change in order to encourage people to apply.

So we came up with a specially focused programme of work experience, targeted at young black and Asian people considering a journalism career, to enable them to see first-hand how a national newspaper works. They'd be given a mentor during their stay, and spend time on a range of departments across the newspaper and website.

We began by advocacy. Our journalists went out to universities and careers fairs to spread the message, and alerted minority organisations. Applicants were

then interviewed before being shortlisted for the scheme. Ten years later, more than 100 have taken part. As you will see over the following pages, many have described it as a pivotal moment in their journalism career. I'm very pleased that several have continued to contribute to us over the years, and that two are now on Guardian staff. We hope there will be many more.

More than that, our organisation has benefited from the input, ideas and differing perspectives of these young people. They've proved beyond doubt that having a greater diversity of contributors makes for a better news organisation.

In today's digital world, with ever-more interactivity, media companies cannot risk being out of touch with their readership, or with communities across the globe. The positive action scheme has played its part in enabling us to achieve this.

I thank all those who have helped to make it happen, and wish all its participants the very best for their future careers.

Experience was essential

Chris Elliott



Good intentions are not enough, nor wishes or concerns, no matter how well expressed. That's what the Guardian realised after much wrestling with how to encourage greater diversity among journalists, not only at the Guardian but in the wider industry. Practical experience was an essential start.

What emerged 10 years ago is the Guardian's positive action programme. Joseph Harker, a senior Guardian journalist

who heads the scheme, is helped by many others at the paper, who give of their time and experience (although I always feel we learn as much from the course members as they do from us).

Dozens who have been through the programme have started their career this way, some progressing to national newspapers, including the Guardian.

It has been a good start - would it be the right start for you?

I realised my dream wasn't impossible

Homa Khaleeli



Ten years on I still remember the terror I felt during the group interview for the work experience scheme. Fresh from academic life I knew what I wanted to do, but had no idea of how to go about it - and felt like I was the most confused person in the room. I had no connections or contacts in the media and at times even getting work experience seemed impossible. But as I stumbled embarrassed through my two weeks, people were only too willing to offer advice, encouragement - and a realistic idea of what it meant to work at a national newspaper. Of course I

remember the shiver of my first byline in the Guardian, but more importantly the fact that working in the industry might not be as impossible as I imagined.

After more work experience, and a journalism course at Sheffield University for which I was lucky enough to get a Scott Trust Bursary, I spent three years as a reporter on the Liverpool Echo.

Today I am a commissioning and health editor on the Guardian's daily features supplement G2, and am in a position to say the fear and embarrassment never completely goes away.

One giant leap: Homa tries the high jump for a G2 feature





Neena Dhaun

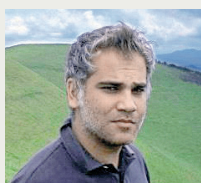
I was working as a freelance reporter on my local paper in Newcastle as well as doing shifts at Radio Newcastle, so the world of national papers was very new to me. All the journalists were very friendly and wanted to hear what I was interested in. I mentioned I had an interest in international development issues, and was asked to cover a story involving NGOs campaigning for coffee farmers. One of the proudest memories of the whole scheme was writing a piece for the Environment desk and getting my own byline – I still have the article to this day!

While there I found out I had got on to a Reuters internship in New Delhi. Six months in India, then I came back to London and did the GMTV trainee scheme. For the next few years I worked as a reporter for the BBC and Reuters.

I took a career break in 2008, travelling and volunteering for Unicef in South America. Since returning I've been working as a freelance BBC journalist.

Dino Mahtani

The Guardian's positive action programme gave me my first taste of a newsroom and how journalists go about getting stories. After the two-week placement, where I rotated through a variety of desks, I was asked to stay on at Guardian Unlimited, where I helped put together online coverage in the build-up to the war in Iraq. It gave me the credibility I needed to snag my first foreign assignment, with Reuters, as correspondent in the Democratic Republic of Congo. After Congo, Reuters moved me to Nigeria, and after another year I moved to the Financial Times, covering as the West Africa correspondent, and then subsequently as the Energy correspondent in London. In 2008, I left journalism to join a UN panel of experts undertaking an investigation into arms smuggling in Congo, and took over as head of that investigation a year later. Since then I have also worked on another UN investigation on Somalia and Eritrea. In essence these investigations have been reporting jobs, exposing individuals and entities involved in fuelling conflict, and pushing the UN Security Council to take sanctions against them. I am now retraining as a barrister.



It gave me credibility for my first foreign assignment



Nina Goswami

The scheme gave me the springboard I needed – that something special to put on my CV. I believe it helped me gain my first position on Fleet Street – as a trainee reporter on The Sunday Times.

While at The Guardian, I spent much of my time on an investigation called Big Brother Is Watching You and it gave me a taste for working on long-term stories. The awards I have won, or been nominated for, have all been for investigations.

After The Sunday Times I moved to The Sunday Telegraph, before specialising as a law reporter. I now work as a journalist and producer on the BBC News Channel.

Ravi Somaiya

Since his placement Ravi has written over 100 articles for the Guardian - for G2, and the

Media, Education, Film&Music and Office Hours sections. One piece centred on his encounter with Hollywood actor Kirsten Dunst. He has recently been reporting from London for the New York Times. He says: "Thanks for letting me into the Guardian as part of the positive action scheme all those years ago. It was an amazing opportunity."

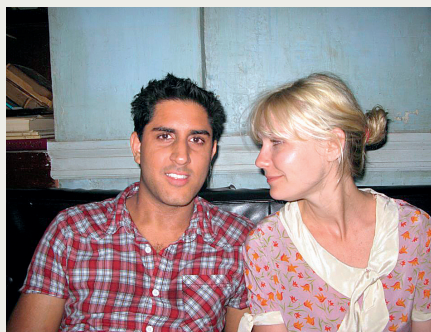


It opens doors and builds you up. It's up to you where you go next



Ravi Kumar

My experience at the Guardian was instrumental in helping me determine my career path. The programme equipped me with valuable skills. Since the programme I have worked with youth clubs, as an editor of a West Midlands youth magazine, an activist for human rights charities, and as a qualified life coach. The skills and values I learned at the Guardian contributed to all the posts I have held since. I would encourage any budding journalist to apply to the scheme. You will find it both challenging and stimulating.



Amanda Thompson

I had very limited knowledge of journalism or the many career options within it. The journalists I worked with were welcoming, candid and friendly, guiding me and highlighting opportunities to get more involved. My time there flew by; it gave me the confidence to focus on my copywriting and editing skills, encouraging me to embark on a postgraduate journalism diploma at City University a few years later. This scheme will open doors and build you up; it's up to you where you take that experience next!

Shabnam Younus

I can best describe my two weeks on the scheme as being sizzling hot – literally. Because during my placement, the UK experienced the hottest day EVER recorded. It was my final year at university, and I can still remember the heady excitement I felt about the opportunity to go to London and spend a fortnight at the paper I bought every week.

Inside the Farringdon Road offices I got my first taste of the delicious buzz of a news room. From the morning meeting to the end of the day rush - I loved observing, learning and working. It was never boring, as I was assigned to a different area of the paper everyday.

I am now in broadcast journalism - working for Key 103 radio station in Manchester - and still addicted to the rush of working in a busy news room. And I still have my signed copy of the Corrections & Clarifications book, given to me kindly by Ian Mayes himself.

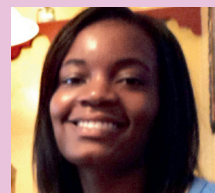


Elaine Okyere

The programme was the first time I had done any work experience on a national publication.

From working on the news desk to helping compile the weekly online quiz, it was a daunting but incredibly exciting challenge and gave me an extra push to continue with my ambition to be a journalist. After the Guardian I took a postgraduate diploma in magazine journalism. I then worked at Cosmopolitan Bride magazine as an editorial assistant before returning to the Guardian for a paid six-week internship as a junior commissioning editor on G2. I then worked at my local newspaper as a reporter before joining the BBC journalism trainee scheme in 2009. I'm currently working as a reporter on BBC Radio 1 Newsbeat.

I will always be grateful to the Guardian for the two weeks I spent there as it gave me a real taste of what it was like to be a journalist. The basics I learnt in the newsroom also stayed with me throughout my career.



Tomilola Ajayi

I stumbled across the scheme when I attended a media careers event at UCL where a Guardian writer was talking. In those days placements on national papers were like gold dust - and it was doubly hard if you were a young black writer with no contacts. Needless to say, I was ecstatic to be accepted - I couldn't believe my favourite newspaper was giving me this opportunity. The placement was a milestone moment for my fledgling career. As well as my first national byline, the experience gave me the courage and confidence to continue pursuing my ambitions.

Since then, I've done a variety of things, including freelance writing, helping to launch a music magazine, and working as assistant editor of the Methodist Recorder newspaper. And I've just started my ideal job: as an editor at Christian Aid.

Looking back, I know I wouldn't be where I am without the scheme. So thank you to all at the Guardian for enabling and affirming ethnic minority participation in the newspaper industry.



Dal Chodha

As a student at Central Saint Martins, I wanted to know: was a career in fashion and arts journalism really for me? Today I am the editor of an independent b Magazine and I contribute to various titles including Vogue India. The positive action scheme made me contextualise my work and always question why a piece need be written.



Japinder Dhese

I found it an enjoyable and thoroughly enlightening experience - an invaluable insight into the workings of a quality newspaper. However, subsequently I did not pursue a career in journalism but decided to become a psychologist. I am now working in the civil service. I'm delighted to hear the programme is celebrating its 10th anniversary and I hope it continues for many years.

Rosheen Kabraji

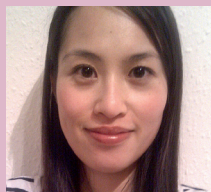


When I applied for the scheme I was editor of UCL's student magazine and I wanted to get a sense of the daily demands and atmosphere of working at a national paper in the UK. I found the opportunities to compare being at different desks, from home news and features to the website, extremely valuable for assessing what kind of role I enjoyed and the subject areas that really engaged me. I came away from the programme knowing that I much preferred working on features because it enabled me to go more in-depth into stories, and that foreign affairs analysis is what really fascinated me. Subsequently I went on to pursue a master's in international relations and have found that my background in journalism served me well in my internships - where I focused on policy research and communications - and finally in my current role as Asia Programme manager at Chatham House, where I am now on the receiving end of press and media queries.



Elizabeth Gyekye

Sitting in on news meetings was invaluable for a wannabe reporter in seeing how ideas are generated. After the programme I attended a postgraduate newspaper journalism course at City University. I then went on to a reporter role at the trade magazine MRW and I am now working as a news editor for the B2B mag Packaging News.



Yee Shun Fung

My youthful journalistic ambitions led me to the scheme after graduating from King's College London. I researched the background of cookery writer Harumi Kurihara, fiddled around on the news wires, and sat star-struck near Sam Wollaston. Whilst I did not become a journalist, I remember the experience fondly. It gave me my first insight into the world of work.

The highlight was visiting Parliament with reporter David Hencke



Mildred Talabi

This is one of the best things I ever did for my media career. In my two weeks I was able to get a taste of different aspects of the paper (and online) which helped me identify my areas of interest and the type of stories I would like to cover. I was invited back two years later to take up a paid role as a junior commissioning editor on G2, which was a fantastic opportunity. I went on to work for other publications, as well as to study journalism at Harlow College on a scholarship from News International, before deciding I really wanted to work for myself. I now run a CV consultancy and training business. I have also written a book, 7 Keys to a Winning CV.

Ramya Puttanna



It is hard to believe that seven years have passed since I took part in the programme. There are still several aspects of my time at the Guardian that will be ever-fresh in my mind. One of the strengths of the programme is the potential for each individual's experience to be unique. The highlights of my fortnight included covering a protest outside Downing Street and visiting the Houses of Parliament with Westminster correspondent David Hencke, which gave an insight into the world of politics. Of course there was also the thrill of seeing some of my work published and even today I still get a sense of pleasure seeing my Net Notes form part of the Guardian website archive.

The programme played an important part in my self-development by helping me follow my interest in journalism, and allowed me to write and campaign for issues that I found important. For example, the programme supported my application for a two-week project promoting social integration in Denmark. Here I was part of an international team of about 20 volunteers that hitch-hiked around the country and reported the experience to Politiken (a Danish national newspaper) before presenting overall findings to parliamentary representatives. I continue to put myself forward for voluntary projects and I strongly believe my Guardian experience has improved my chances of selection.

On a professional level, I have been working as a compliance consultant for almost five years. Although this is not related to journalism, I have been able to acquire specialist knowledge in the area of financial regulation and I regularly contribute to my company newsletter.

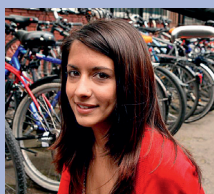


Martin Samuda

The scheme was a very enjoyable experience. My greatest memory was being sent to Wimbledon to cover the tennis. I was allowed access to Centre Court to watch Serena Williams and also sat in a press conference with Maria Sharapova.

I also remember how friendly all the people were and how they were never too busy to assist or give advice. Following the scheme I worked as an uploader for Guardian Unlimited, which gave me production skills. Unfortunately I was unable to break into journalism full time and changed career paths. I now work within schools as a home liaison officer and also within youth support.

'They watch her intently. They gasp when she turns a page'



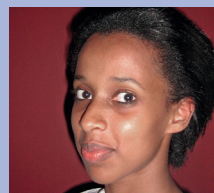
Ayesha Christie

It was an invaluable opportunity, and led to further work experience at Guardian Unlimited and opened doors to other publications. I was later offered a short-term post on G2 as junior commissioning editor. I have since been involved in human rights work, and as a legal representative for asylum seekers and migrants. Media coverage of immigration and asylum issues is highly influential, and much of it sensationalist and misleading. The insight into the workings of a national newspaper has been beneficial in trying to combat this. I have also contributed several articles to Comment is Free.

Ellen Jones

During her work placement, Ellen went to Covent Garden to help with a G2 feature investigating British people's willingness to queue - for anything! As Oliver Burkeman wrote: "Crowd member Ellen Jones starts reading the paper on a park bench, and slowly the others begin to form an audience around her. They watch her intently. They gasp when she turns a page. They clap when she solves a crossword clue. Pretty soon a number of other onlookers are watching, transfixed."

Since her time on the programme, Ellen has contributed several articles to the Guardian's Film & Music section, and is currently living and working in Los Angeles as a film journalist. She says: "The opportunity to do work experience at the Guardian made a huge difference to my career."



Haben Habteslasie

The experience cemented my ambition to work in journalism. I enrolled in an MA in print journalism at Sheffield University and am now freelancing for publications including Time Out, and developing my multimedia skills in a production company called Sketch.



Kiri Kankhwende

Working in different areas of the paper helped to focus my interests, and gave me a more realistic impression of a national daily. I went on to work as a financial journalist at a business news agency straight afterwards. I did internships at other newspapers before joining the Sky News subtitling department. After four years at Sky, I am now the press officer for a human rights charity, where I write the script for a weekly radio show.

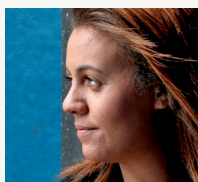


Khuê Pham

The first piece I ever published was in a foreign language. The language was English. I was German. I was a double minority on the positive action scheme. The Guardian was the first newspaper I saw on the inside: a hectic place with friendly people who encouraged me to have ideas.

I went back to Germany after university and I've been working for the weekly broadsheet Die Zeit for almost a year now. Being on the politics desk, I sometimes cover stories in England. I wrote a big piece about the phone-hacking scandal and the role the Guardian played in uncovering it. I was proud to have started out there. In international comparison, and for me personally, the Guardian is a very special place.

Carlene Firmin



Working across teams within the Guardian was invaluable; it demonstrated that I was only passionate about commenting and campaigning specifically on issues of inequality and injustice, rather than news reporting. Following my placement I pursued a career in the voluntary sector, working for race equality charity Rota, and undertook a masters in social policy. Five years later, having written two reports into the impact of gang violence on women and girls and set up a charity to train girls to campaign in their local communities, I was featured in Society Guardian and offered a monthly column, Girl in the Corner, commenting on the exact issues I was passionate about at the start of my career.

After being awarded an MBE for services to women and girls, I went on to become assistant director of policy and research at Barnardo's, leading their work on child sexual exploitation and youth justice. I have now joined the Office of the Children's Commissioner as the principal policy adviser for a formal inquiry into gang- and group-related sexual exploitation and abuse. Building an expertise on girls and violence has enabled me to write, campaign and advise on an issue I am passionate about; what more could a girl ask for?

I was offered a monthly column in Society Guardian



Kieran Ramful

The most useful work experience I've ever had. What stayed with me most were the values: accuracy, honesty and being truthful to what the evidence tells you. It was great to observe the daily editor's meeting, where anyone can put forward their own opinions. I'm now a book buyer at a supermarket, and the Guardian helped me on my journey.

Rumeana Jahangir

Doing work experience just as the paper went Berliner felt like a real privilege. I particularly remember Duncan Campbell and Ed Vulliamy being very helpful. As I'm from Manchester, some of the staff recommended that I contact the then northern correspondent David Ward at the Deansgate office. He took me on for another week and it was great to learn from David, Helen Carter and the late Don McPhee. They even let me do extra work experience during my NCTJ a year later. I am now a reporter with the BBC staff mag Ariel and working at MediaCityUK in Salford.



Szu Ping Chan

I still remember the day I sat in that group interview room. I felt confident, though I remember being too afraid to get up and go to the toilet just in case I drew the wrong type of attention. When everyone else bolted for the loos once the session was over, I knew I wasn't alone. Thankfully, a few weeks later I was back in the building - and five years later, I now work for the Telegraph on its business desk.

You can't learn everything in three weeks. But you will be able to get involved, pitch ideas and see them through. And the support you will receive during your internship continues long after you've left the building on that final Friday.

The morning meeting was a window into the editorial process

Kim Chakanesta



Prior to being selected, I had little real newsroom experience. The scheme was an excellent way to help aspiring journalists get some hands-on skills. The flexibility of the scheme meant that I could move from desk to desk. I started on the Money desk where I helped research a piece on green energy with Miles Brignall, which was later published. I then spent time on the City and Music desk, and the website. Between learning the basic nuts and bolts I also had an opportunity to sit in on the morning meetings, which were a great window into the editorial process. I continued to do some freelance work after I finished the scheme but decided to go back to university. In 2011, I graduated from the Columbia School of Journalism with an MSc in broadcast journalism. I am currently based in Atlanta, where I am completing a three month stint with the CNN international news desk as a Margaret Moth Fellow.

Aaron Akinyemi

With two bylines under my belt upon finishing my placement, I had the confidence to independently approach Guardian section editors with pitches after graduating, and have since secured a number of freelance commissions. So I'm grateful to the positive action scheme for the opportunity it afforded me. I have since gone on to work with CNN International and the United Nations Association.



Belinda Otas

The positive action scheme was a good way to get a first-hand experience of how a news organisation operates. I spent time in the newsroom and on the Guardian news website. Being a student at the time, it left the impression as to why resilience and persistence were two very important characteristics to have in this field. In terms of my career, the journey has not been smooth sailing. But the lessons I learnt during my time on the scheme still serve me well.



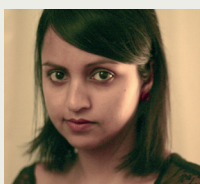
Sanoobar Patel

The scheme was a valuable experience for me. I was one of the youngest at only 18, but I learnt a lot during my time there. I got a place on the scheme after I'd given in my application for my journalism degree, but I was getting cold feet. Doing the scheme made me realise how desperately I wanted to be part of the world of news. A memorable moment for me was when Alan Rusbridger questioned me about the situation in Thailand during a news conference. Thankfully I had been following the conflict and could answer him, but I was terrified I would get it wrong.

I went on to do my journalism degree at City University and did many other work placements, but having the positive action scheme on my CV helped a lot. I worked as a journalist after my degree and even ran my own magazine called Nang!, which won the Guardian Student Media Award. I am now a marketing manager for Leyton Sixth Form College, but thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the journalism world!

Preeti Jha

I was a medical student when I applied for the scheme. It opened up a new world of editorial debates, finding original sources, and racing to meet deadlines. It provided the thrill of my first national byline. Swapping ward rounds for storytelling was not an easy decision, but the three weeks I spent at the Guardian gave me the confidence to pursue a career in journalism. I moved to India the following year to work as a reporter for the Indian Express – a national newspaper based in New Delhi. It was hugely exciting to be breaking news in one of the most rapidly changing cities in the world. But I was eager to pick up new multimedia skills and returned to London a year later, to train as a broadcast journalist on the BBC Journalism Trainee Scheme. In between online, radio and TV news, I entered and won the Guardian's International Development Journalism Competition, reporting on drought in northern Kenya. I'm now working as a political producer for BBC London TV, but every time I grapple with a career decision I still go back to my original Guardian mentor for some advice.



I still go back to my Guardian mentor for advice



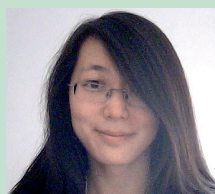
Samrana Hussain

This was an invaluable opportunity. My mentor gave me good guidance and advice, and I made contacts who've been useful for my freelancing work. After the placement I was offered a one-month job reporting the Asian Games in Doha, followed by a reporting role at the Beijing Olympics. As a trainee reporter for the Lancashire Telegraph, I was nominated reporter of the year. I also won a place on the ITV news training scheme, before going freelance in 2010.



Neeta Chityal

The programme was a memorable experience, and I met many interesting people. Although I did not go on to pursue journalism further, I have been able to use the skills I acquired from the placement, such as creativity and succinct writing, in my current role as a trainee solicitor. I found the experience invaluable in honing my ability to articulate my ideas.



Shanshan Dong

Working on different desks helped me decide I loved working in current affairs! It was good to build connections with Guardian journalists, and others starting their careers. I've used those connections to gain work at other media organisations. I recently began working for ITN as an assistant foreign news editor. The scheme kick-started my media career!



Shona Ghosh

If it wasn't for the placement, I doubt I would have pursued journalism. As it turns out, my time on the Society desk with Patrick Butler and Mary O'Hara was a formative experience. They instilled in me a sense that it was possible to write good stories ethically, and without 'tricking' subjects into controversy. I was sent to interview a reformed gang member, Lyle. It would have been easy to turn the boy into a caricature, a knife-wielding ex-criminal.

But I represented Lyle entirely in his own words, and produced a piece of which I could be proud. Almost a year later, I learned that Lyle had been fatally stabbed.

I would, at other papers, go on to be taught that it was OK to manufacture rows from quotes taken out of context. But I hope that something of Lyle still lives in that piece.



Alice Xin Liu

At the time I was preparing for my first job editing at an expat magazine in Beijing, and an editor at the Guardian said I should contact Jonathan Watts, the China correspondent. I ended up working with Jon as a news assistant for just under a year. I continued to write for Comment is Free, and now I'm the local editor of Index On Censorship in Beijing.



Prabjit Korotana

Taking part on the Guardian's positive action scheme gave me an insight into, and an opportunity to contribute to, a national newspaper. The experience of working at the Guardian has given me confidence and the feeling that I can write articles and features for national publications.

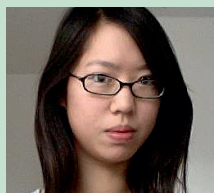


Elizabeth Pears

Knowing how competitive the industry can be, winning a place on the programme was a massive confidence boost. Within weeks of my placement I was a full-time trainee reporter on a local paper.

When I walked into the old Farringdon office I realised just how necessary the diversity programme was so I applaud those who fought for it, and the paper for sticking with it.

I went on to spend three years in local papers in north London and had the time of my life getting stuck into absolutely everything. I decided to go freelance, and I now contribute to The Voice and other publications. I have a blog on The Huffington Post and do radio work with the BBC and LBC. And, by no coincidence, I also contribute to the Guardian's Comment is Free section.



Ling Si Low

Always challenging and often exciting. It was great to rotate between desks and understand how many roles there are in an editorial office. I was encouraged to contribute my ideas and I researched and wrote several pieces. This gave me the confidence to freelance after graduating. I have now also developed skills as a filmmaker and broadcast journalist.



Vishala Sri-Pathma

On the scheme I loved the buzz of breaking stories, the quirkiness of the features desk and the idea of my work being influential. So I left my job at the bank and used my finance knowledge to get a job as a finance reporter. I'm now at the BBC producing business programmes. Looking back, those few weeks were pivotal.

Ella Marhsall



I was studying fashion journalism at the time I took part in the scheme. My first day was spent with Tony Levene on the Money section, which I was extremely excited about since his column was the first I read on a Saturday. I surprised myself on the placement; I took a real liking to Society, under the tutelage of the wonderful Mary O'Hara who is now a dear friend. Following my placement I was given the opportunity to write for the supplement's Practice and Leading Questions columns. I got a job as editorial assistant at Wallpaper* and have since become editor of the magazine's City Guides. Last year I was chosen by Finnair as one of four "Quality Hunters"; I was flown to most of the airline's destinations over a period of two months and wrote about my experiences on their website. Of more than 5,000 international applicants for a job of a lifetime, I had to ask: "Why me?" Apparently, they were really impressed by the fact I had interned at the Guardian.

It was like an educational kaleidoscope. Every day, new lessons



Navtej Singh Johal

The scheme solidified my decision to be a journalist. I freelanced for Society in my final year at university. After graduation, I worked for BBC Birmingham over the summer and then completed my NCTJ at Harlow while working at my local newspaper in Barking and Dagenham. For the last two years I've been working as part of the editorial team at MyMovies.Net.



Tamsin Evans

It was like being inside an educational kaleidoscope; every day the pattern shifted and I was presented with new, colourful, opportunities and lessons. It was exhilarating to be trusted with articles and deadlines. I made mistakes, and learnt from them. I currently live in Zimbabwe and am completing my first novel.



Kered Clement

I learned at the interview that journalism is not about regurgitating textbook knowledge, it requires personality too. I discovered more of that personality working amongst senior editors on the scheme. And meeting writers like Hannah Pool and Hadley Freeman inspired me to launch Complex Magazine, for multicultural women.



Aasiyah Dana

Inspiring and eye-opening. It was fantastic seeing how journalists had turned their passion for writing into successful careers. Above all, I loved attending the daily editorial conferences. It strengthened my desire to pursue a career in print. I've now gained specialist qualifications in fashion and lifestyle journalism, and am trying my hand at freelancing.

Sade Laja



The programme reinforced my desire to follow a career into journalism and my ultimate ambition

- to work on a national like the Guardian. A few months after the scheme I arranged a month's work experience with Society Guardian while studying for a journalism MA at Westminster University. I wouldn't have been able to arrange the placement without the initial contact through the positive action scheme.

In 2009, just after I had completed my MA, I successfully applied for a writing role at the the Guardian's business division - Guardian business and professional. After the project ended I was offered the role of reporter on two of the Guardian's professional networks, Guardian Healthcare and Guardian Government Computing. I hope to continue writing extensively about healthcare in the future, as it is something I thoroughly enjoy and want to continue learning more about. None of this would have been possible without the positive action scheme. Long may it continue.

None of this would have been possible without the scheme



Matthew Xia

I hadn't attended university, but luckily the interview panel respected the experience I had. The scheme was educational and I met inspirational journalists; but ultimately I decided against a career in staff journalism. I recently directed a piece at the Royal Court exposing the branding of west African children in London as witches.



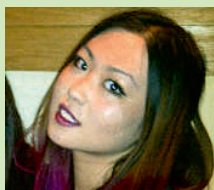
Coco Khan

I work as an editor at a small magazine-publishing house whilst freelancing as a culture writer. It's difficult to quantify the scheme's impact, but I know it provided me with inspiration. I fell in love with culture magazines during my time at the Guide. It gave me an understanding of the problems and how to get around them. It made fantasy become reality.



Samira Shackle

The scheme was a lot more structured than most internships, and having a personal mentor also helped. I pitched ideas for stories and wrote several articles, one of 1,200 words. It meant that when I went to my next placement, at the New Statesman, I had the confidence to pitch more ideas. I subsequently got an editorial job there.



Anne Huang

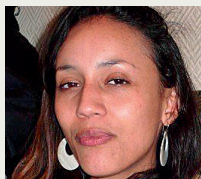
I found it a fantastic experience. Each desk was different, which was great. The news desk was fast paced, with emphasis put on research and facts, whereas features had more creativity in their articles. I stayed on the news desk for a few days, which was where I realised I work best under pressure. This realisation steered me towards PR, though I still use everything I learned.

Nina Kelly

The scheme gave me an insight into a world that I had long gazed at from a distance. Putting faces to names and understanding how the pages of such a familiar publication were created was invaluable experience. Particularly memorable were the early morning editorial meetings - often chaired by Alan Rusbridger himself - to which everyone was invited. I remember my spell on the Society Guardian desk very fondly, and the journalists I met there were a great help as I struggled to get my first by-line.

I ended up getting a couple of pieces published in Society Guardian, as well as a blog on the website. I am still in touch with some of the journalists who made my work experience at the Guardian so worthwhile, and these networks have helped me since.

I got a job as a reporter on a financial trade magazine initially, and have since made a move over into PR and more general communications. I have just begun a new job as a PR consultant for a company based in the West End.



Arj Singh

When a friend told me to apply for this scheme I thought they were mad. If someone told me then that it would be the first step towards a career as a national news reporter I would never have believed them. But the amount of stories I was allowed to write, and the ever helpful staff, gave me the confidence to choose this career. Now, after a journalism MA and six months in the world of advertising, I'm a multimedia reporter with the Press Association. I'm not sure I'd be sat where I am writing this, while the night editor isn't looking, if it wasn't for the scheme.

The staff gave me the confidence to choose this career



Shibani Mahtani

The weeks were perhaps the most intellectually and journalistically fulfilling of my life. I was treated like part of the team at every single desk. I spent a few days on news, which was definitely the high point for me. I graduated from the Columbia School of Journalism in New York, and am now interning at the United Nations.

Sharanjit Hunjan

The scheme is very good because it gives you a clear insight into what it would be like to work in journalism. I saw the hard work, dedication and passion you needed. After talking to various journalists at the Guardian I realised that there weren't many jobs left in the sector. So afterwards, I completed a course for teaching English and went to Sicily to work as a TEFL teacher - a job I have loved. The scheme helped me find out which career path I really wanted to take. As I am always interested in writing, I now also know what to do if I want to do freelance journalism in future.

Bim Adewunmi

I was one of the older applicants, having graduated in 2005, and had already worked on local newspapers. The scheme was great - I had placements on different desks across the paper, and managed to get my first piece of writing published in my first week (in *The Guide*). All the editors were great - accommodating, encouraging and happy to share knowledge. A few were themselves from minority backgrounds and keen to get more diverse voices into the media. I got to see what goes into the making of the paper - seeing what happens on the other side, after you've done your pitching. By the end of my three weeks, I'd made contacts with several editors, many of whom still commission me. I'm now a full-time freelance journalist. I've done shifts with the Guardian and written for most parts of the paper, as well as national magazines. I recommend applying to everyone starting out in journalism.



Vaishali Bhardwaj

I could see what desks I really enjoyed working at, so the scheme helped me decide to pursue a career in sports journalism. I went on to internships with BBC Sport and the Times. I now freelance for FourFourTwo magazine and I also co-present Beyond the Pitch's weekly podcast, World Football Insider.



Maxine-Laurie Marshall

I was actively encouraged to pitch story ideas to section editors, and the feedback I received proved to be invaluable. Since the programme, I avoid obvious and safe interview questions. On returning to work as an editorial assistant at a trade publication, I began pitching news and feature ideas to my editor. I took on more responsibility and was made a reporter.

Hazelann Williams

I was 26. I'd left my full time job in social housing to pursue a career in journalism. This placement offered me a chance to see what living my dream would be like. It did not disappoint.

Talking to other young people, I realised I was not the only person struggling to start my career, but we were able to motivate each other. I am still not where I want to be, but I am very glad I went on the scheme.



Merve Logman

I immediately found myself rubbing shoulders with senior commentators, listening mole-like to their lively discussions.

Leaving the Guardian and returning to my day job left me feeling temporarily deflated but I knew that the editors I'd worked with would always welcome contributions from me.

I have always valued the work that goes on in the printed media. It has a real sense of purpose. So if you get the chance to take part in this experience, I recommend you go for it. Good luck.

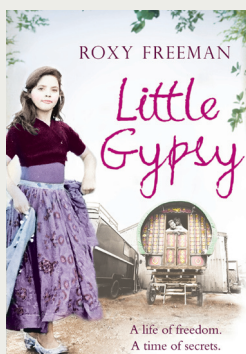
Roxy Freeman

The scheme had an enormous impact on my career and on my confidence.

I applied for the placement shortly after completing my NCTJ certificate at Brighton Journalist Works, but it seemed inconceivable that I would ever get selected. I nearly fainted when I was - people like me just don't do things like that!

I got the opportunity to see how the various parts of the paper evolve - from the brain storming meetings in the morning to what ends up on the news-stand. At times I felt quite overwhelmed and worried that I wasn't making the most of the experience, but thanks to my wonderful mentor, Aditya Chakraborty, my confidence increased with each passing day.

I wrote a couple of small pieces that got into print, but making contacts was the main perk for me. During my final week I acquired a commission for a piece on my upbringing. The article ended up being featured on the cover of G2 and was spotted by a commissioning editor at Simon & Schuster publishing who contacted me and asked me to write a book. Two years later, thanks to the positive action scheme, I am a published author (Little Gypsy: A Life of Freedom, a Time of Secrets). The exposure of that one article also led to numerous commissions



from various newspapers and magazines, so I now have a regular flow of freelance work.

After the article an editor called asking me to write a book



Shanthi Sooriasegaram

Although I always wanted to work in the media, I was less sure what kind of journalist I wanted to be. The scheme was a truly tailored experience made all the richer by the levels of interest my mentors showed in my career path. I gained several by-lines and spent time in the multimedia department, where I was able to film and edit material for the website. I have since completed a masters in journalism and now work as a documentary researcher/AP for Channel 4 and the BBC.

Akilah Russell

From speaking with some of the most noted editors in the UK, to even a simple chat by the coffee machine with one of the other work experiencers, it was a time I will always remember. Having my name published in G2 as well as on the website was an experience that will continue to benefit me. Now I have graduated from my degree in journalism, I work full time in a traineeship at the black newspaper, The Voice, as an online staff writer. I would encourage any other young budding ethnic minority journalist to take a chance and apply. It might change your life.



Reni Eddo-Lodge

It definitely changed my career prospects for the better. Working next to editors meant advice was there when I needed it, and I could develop and refine my writing style. Since being given the opportunity to take part in the scheme, I've written for Comment is Free. I also won a high commendation from Channel 4's Best Young Blogger competition.

Toby Bakare



After graduating I was a little undecided about what to do next and the only dates I had in my diary for the summer ahead were a long weekend at the Edinburgh Fringe followed by two weeks of work experience at the Guardian.

But the placement was great as I got to see how a national paper was put together and how it sustains itself. It was great to sit in on the daily conferences; but the really good thing about being on the scheme is that it is not a watching brief but an opportunity to pitch ideas, research and ultimately do a bit of writing yourself. Seeing my name in print hit home that what a journalist writes has the potential to reach wider audiences.

So after a summer experiencing life at a national newspaper, and the latest in contemporary theatre, I was a lot clearer about what I wanted to do and why. Without the internship I wouldn't be doing my diploma in newspaper journalism and I wouldn't be striving to join this career now, so for that I am eternally grateful.

**Afterwards
I was a lot
clearer about
what I wanted
to do and why**



Arwa Aburawa

I loved every minute and I am so grateful I had the opportunity to work with such amazing journalists. Everyone was genuinely encouraging and gave me loads of opportunities to write, pitch ideas, and apply myself. The time I spent at the Environment desk was really eye-opening and I'm now an editor at a leading green blog for the Middle East.



Kaamil Ahmed

I was already set on becoming a journalist but the scheme left me even more determined to make it. Those three weeks were amongst the most enjoyable I'd had. I got to visit the Olympic Stadium, and sit in on podcasts being recorded. Since then I've become news editor for my university newspaper, and I also went to Egypt to film a documentary.



Rekha Jogia

I was not looking forward to joining the ranks of “serial interns”, but the positive action scheme advert sounded like the opportunity I was looking for. After three weeks at the Guardian, I had spent time at about five different desks. It's true that the rush for internships is a bit maddening, but getting this scheme on my CV was worth its weight in gold.

Mehreen Khan

The placement came while I was still doggedly determined to avoid any thoughts about a “career”, but after the three weeks my mind was made up. The most valuable part of the desk rotations was the responsibility and the expectation that I should be constantly pitching to my editors. The process of pitching stories and then seeing them published remains the biggest kick I get from journalism. The pieces I published and the advice I gained helped me win a prestigious student journalism prize, and I'm currently on a three-month placement at the Financial Times in London.

I didn't look forward to joining the ranks of 'serial interns'

Nabeelah Jaffer

The cliché of the photocopying and tea-making intern abounds, but this scheme quickly



proved itself a genuine opportunity, as I found myself spending my first Monday morning sitting in on the paper's daily editorial meeting. It provided a rare opportunity to enter a structured placement at a newspaper, which allowed us an insight into different sections of the paper. Writing everything from film reviews to G2 shorts, I was also encouraged to pitch my own ideas and pursue my own stories. My weeks at the paper left me feeling more informed about journalism, both as an industry and in terms of the opportunities and difficulties in publishing your work. Having just finished my degree, I hope to put my experience into practice.



Mei Leng Yew

I was amazed at how much opportunity and support I was given. I have one year of university left but I'm now certain that a career in news journalism would be ideal for me. I hope to do a journalism masters or a traineeship. Meanwhile, I have successfully pitched ideas to editors I met during the placement and have been paid for my writing for the first time.



Neha-Tamara Patel

Working with G2 allowed me to experience the high-pressured environment of daily press, whilst my time in the multimedia department was a great insight into how current affairs are developing interactively. I have gone on to complete further work placements and internships, and I will soon be taking the interactive journalism masters at City University.



Nalini Sivathasan

I discovered that I really enjoyed desks which I had not really considered in the past, like the Consumer desk. I don't know what aspect of journalism I want to specialise in, but the work experience has taught me the importance of combining traditional writing skills with an interest and knowledge of social media and digital platforms.

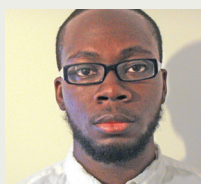


Jen McPherson

Working at the national news desk as the London riots unfolded was a great learning curve. Through monitoring BlackBerry's messaging service I learned more about the value of social media's role in reporting news. This internship has motivated me to pursue my ultimate ambition of working as a foreign correspondent and provided grounding for how I should achieve this.

I learned the value of social media's role in reporting the news

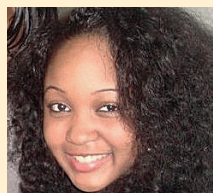
Chudi Onwuazor



I have always had a passion for writing. Initially it was fiction but as I grew so did other passions and I saw sports writing as a means of killing two birds with one stone - doing something I loved, writing, about something I love, sports.

Having been made aware of the internship by my sister, I knew I had to apply as I felt it would be the next step in improving myself as a writer. I have already spent some time blogging on my own site and writing for other companies. For me the internship is a learning experience and hopefully it will open my eyes to what this industry is really like. I'm looking forward to seeing how the different departments work and how they come together under one umbrella.

Of course I'm hoping to get a chance to see how the sports desk operates, and hopefully I can pick up some hints on how to improve from some of the best writers in the country!



Cheyenne Bunsie

I have always loved to write in many forms, such as poetry, stories, reviews and reports. I looked to the many journalists out there for inspiration as well as information and realised that very few looked like me or perhaps represented minorities' experiences. I hope doing this internship will give me a priceless insight into what my future could be.



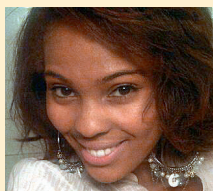
Amy Hall

More ethnic minorities and women would not only mean a refreshing variety of voices but also a media that is more relevant to its audience. I found the interview experience surprisingly enjoyable as I felt that people really wanted to hear our ideas and I enjoyed discussing them with such a wide range of people. I look forward to starting my placement.



Charlotte McKenzie

I was so excited to be picked as one of the lucky 12 people and couldn't wait to get started! Everyone has been so helpful and given me great advice for my future career in journalism. I've tried to keep the journalists' and editors' email addresses, and I'm following them on Twitter so I can keep updated and pitch further ideas for their sections!



Kamilla Baiden

I learned a lot more than simply how a newspaper was run. I learned transferable journalistic skills, knowing what different types of stories are good to cover, and how you are able to take a different angle on them. I was able to get great advice from editors on my writing style and have since decided to pursue journalism after I finish my degree.



Nadiya Takolia

I have always believed in the importance of diversity and its potential to enhance personal and professional experiences. This applies just as much to journalism as it does to any other field.

I applied to the scheme not least because, as an aspiring journalist, it is rare to have the opportunity to work with some of the most talented and experienced individuals in the field. I believe it is important to demonstrate to both Muslim and non-Muslim communities that Muslim women are active citizens and can play a valuable role in society if given the chance. I am particularly interested to learn how newspapers, the "traditional" choice for current affairs consumers, are able to adapt and successfully harness the potential of the internet and new media platforms.

I hope that the internship will allow me to channel and develop some of the key skills needed in journalism and be a valuable stepping stone for a career in the profession.



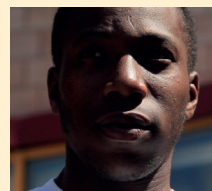
Farah Jassat

I had hoped that the scheme would provide invaluable insight into the world of journalism. However, it did far more than this. Not only was I exposed to the media industry in action, but this industry was given faces. From the outside the Guardian seemed an impenetrable organisation; an intellectual abstract whose paper and ethos I admired. But coming here broke down the psychological barriers. I was encouraged to voice my thoughts and pitch ideas. This gave me a confidence in my ability for which I am truly thankful. Insight and exposure is futile when not combined with the positive energy to mould it into something constructive. This internship has confirmed my desire to pursue a journalism career, and given me the confidence to just go for it!



Siraj Dattoo

I was not sure what to expect from the internship; I asked myself how much work I would have and whether I would learn much. One of the most important things I learned over the two weeks is to keep pushing ideas forward. Being at the paper has reinvigorated me, opening my eyes up to opportunities of personal development and growth.



Tayo Yusuff

I knew from the first day at the Guardian that I would love the multimedia section, mostly because it is consistent with the career I want to pursue. My time there really helped me understand the cross-platform aspect of the newspaper and the major changes affecting the print industry. After completing the positive action scheme, I feel so much more confident.

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006