



## **Political Monitoring traineeship (Scotland)**

Deadline: 23 July 2021

**newsdirect.**

## Who are we and who are we looking for?

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Newsdirect helps organisations keep track of politics by providing fast-reaction alerts and policy monitoring reports. Each day, we scan through the day's political output from the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, Westminster, Whitehall, political parties, think tanks and stakeholder sources.

With a close understanding of the issues our clients are interested in, we ensure that every reference is spotted and sent on. Our clients have total reassurance that all agreed sources have been checked, nothing's been missed and expert support - whenever they need it - is only a call or email away.

Members of our team need to be well organised and systematic in the way they work through source materials. Our clients require us to write in a clear and uncomplicated way and our deadlines require us to produce very accurate work at speed. That means we're looking for applicants who can thrive in an environment with these competing demands.

An understanding of Scottish politics too? Yes please. You'll need to demonstrate you can write from an impartial point of view and communicate the essential who, what, why and what next of a political development.

We've developed software to help us extract information quickly but we also rely on our research team memorising a large amount of client information so they can quickly spot a reference within a piece of text or spoken proceedings.

Does this sound like you? If so, keep reading..

## What's the role and what's the opportunity?

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**Earn while you learn:** We're offering a full-time salaried traineeship that will equip you for a role in our team, either as a parliamentary reporter or as an account manager. Over a six-month probationary period you'll be trained up on our monitoring system, checking sources, drafting content, writing news, compiling business listings and learning about the political process in a very hands-on and practical way. If you hit your training milestones during that time, you'll be guaranteed one of those positions after six months. We'd anticipate setting your role direction and goals at the three-month review and tailoring the second half of your training accordingly.

**Open up your options:** You'll be expected to learn client briefs across every portfolio area and to build an understanding of new and emerging areas of policy – whether that's COVID-recovery, the blue economy, the circular economy or 20-minute neighbourhoods. This on-the-job learning opportunity is what makes a Newsdirect role highly sought-after.

**Industry-recognised experience:** Monitoring the Scottish political institutions gives you a first-rate understanding of how politics really works. A few years spent with us is a phenomenal starting point for a career in policy-making or public affairs. Former staff members have moved into roles working for the BBC, Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, UK Government and the House of Commons as well as in high-profile policy and public affairs teams across Scotland and the UK.

**Impact:** From day one, your work will contribute to the output of our monitoring team. You will be involved in team discussions and regularly asked for your opinion on how we deliver the best possible service for our clients. From early on you'll be proofing the work of experienced team members, because two pairs of eyes are always beneficial when you're working at the pace we do.

**Culture:** Although we're rarely in the same office these days, we're a friendly and supportive team. Meeting deadlines requires focus, a collaborative approach and occasionally a muck-in mindset. We don't duck our responsibilities but we try and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. As we're a small business, there's also less hierarchy and you'll be supported to get hands-on with work and clients from the off. We're a Living Wage employer because we believe a fair day's work deserves to be paid.

**Equality of opportunity:** Newsdirect aims to be an equal opportunities employer and we are determined to ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, age, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation, marital status, or race. Neither should any applicant or employee be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

**Building a network:** Across our team, we have access to a wide range of useful networks and memberships, including the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), Association for Scottish Public Affairs (ASPA), National Union of Journalists (NUJ), Women in Public Affairs (WIPA) and many more. Members of our team have used these networks to build experience in podcasting, to learn about the policy-making process and to better understand our client environment.

## What's our structure and what does a working day look like?

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- Our **Reporting Team** works across Holyrood and Westminster sources, identifying relevant news and sending write-ups round the team on hourly deadlines. When parliaments are sitting, they also lead the live summarising of committee proceedings and cover government press conferences throughout the day. Reporters also lead the research of our forward planners and future business listings, a key part of our monitoring service.
- **Account Managers** look after a portfolio of clients and lead the delivery of their contracted daily, weekly and monthly reports. As the editorial lead for each of their clients, they also provide guidance and training to colleagues on how content should be prepared and new areas of interest. Working also as subject specialists, account managers maintain a close understanding of legislative changes within their policy area and write briefings and blogs.
- **Senior Account Managers** oversee their own clients as well as taking on additional responsibilities for work allocation, team training, mentoring and project management.

Our service is all about fast, intelligent scanning of the day's news and political output. We hit the ground running early in the morning, getting eyes onto the daily digest of news, questions, motions and speeches and scanning each item for information that's pertinent to our clients. Between 08:00 and 10:00, we are in 'newsroom' mode, working systematically through morning news and publications to get our daily bulletins out from 10:00 onwards.

On sitting days, we listen live to parliament and prepare summaries of anything relevant to clients. Government press conferences are also part of the service and across the team we'll be listening to many hours of live proceedings on busy days. When not summarising, staff will be checking stakeholder sources, editing weekly/monthly reports and proofing content for reports.

Towards the end of the day, we produce afternoon updates, prepare the following day's bulletins and, if scheduled, cover 5pm press conferences.

Our team produces a wide variety of client reports and briefings. These include:

- Daily and weekly tailored monitoring reports
- Daily bulletins on specific policy themes
- Live reporting of ministerial statements & oral questions
- Month-ahead forward planners and consultation/legislative trackers
- Monthly management and board reports
- Party conference and event reporting

## What about the working environment and culture?

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This is initially a remote working role and it is suitable for permanent home/remote working. Once our Edinburgh office opens back up you'll have the choice of working from home or from the office across the week.

As long as you have the right to work in the UK, we're happy to make this role remote, office-based or a combination of the two.

We shape our schedules around sittings of the Scottish Parliament and our deadlines, but we can be somewhat flexible on your hours if you have other commitments you need to accommodate.

We'll provide a laptop and full tech set up along with any workstation equipment you need.

## Job Details

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37.5 hours per week, Mon – Fri: 08:00 – 16:30

Starting salary: £18,525 per annum / £1,543.75 per month (pre-tax)

29 days annual leave (including bank holidays) + festive shut down + August half-day Fridays

Permanent position with a 6-month probationary period.

Some evening and weekend working is required to cover media briefings and party conferences. Hours worked on top of contracted shifts are liable for time off in lieu or overtime (time + a half), including during the probationary period.

Pay reviews take place after 6 months and annually thereafter. For reporters and account managers, progress to a senior role would normally be achieved within 18-24 months and would lift salary to the top half of the scale.

### Salary scales:

Traineeship                    £18,525 per annum / £1,543.75 per month (pre-tax)

Reporters                     £19,000 - £23,000 per annum

Account Managers         £20,000 - £25,000 per annum

If you have recent (within last 2 years) political monitoring experience (including internships) we will consider a fast-track route into a reporter / account manager position.

## Role Specifics

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We have a vacancy for a trainee within our political monitoring team. In this deadline-driven role, your initial training will focus on news scanning, retrieval and write-ups, building up client knowledge and insight to recognise and prioritise information. In the morning, you'll scan and summarise content from a set of agreed sources, taking responsibility for your own tasks and deadline. Across the remainder of the day you'll be monitoring the day's news as it unfolds, supporting account managers to respond to client requests and contributing to research briefings and forward planners.

In the second half of the traineeship you'll be ready to provide live reporting of parliamentary committees and other proceedings, working across a variety of topics and policy portfolios. You'll have to identify when a client or relevant policy is being referred to (and that's a long list!). You'll have the skills to separate the significant from the repetitive and create a readable summary of the relevant points. Summarising news reports and press releases will also be your responsibility and you'll work alongside account managers to further develop your understanding of their client-facing role and responsibilities.

### **Duties will include:**

- Scheduled daily checks of parliamentary business covering both Westminster and devolved assemblies
- Formatting content based on the Newsdirect style guide and circulating ahead of hourly deadlines
- Live summarising (via webcast) of parliamentary committees
- Correctly identifying when relevant policy issues and client organisations are mentioned.
- Scanning websites for relevant news items and condensing into news stubs
- Compiling weekly and monthly reports, news digests and forward planners
- Reporting from party conferences and attending policy and networking events as required
- Assisting with research for marketing and sales activity
- Helping provide a responsive helpdesk service for client requests

## Person Specification

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If the following statements match your interest, experience and skills, we'd love to hear from you:

- I can demonstrate a good knowledge of current Scottish Parliament issues and discussions
- I can convey the significant points in a political discussion clearly and accurately in plain English
- I'm a naturally organised person and enjoy working in a structured and fast-paced environment
- I'm able to produce accurate work to deadline and support colleagues to do the same
- I'm comfortable working in a service delivery role as part of a multi-tasking team
- I feel confident that I can work at the pace expected of a commercial news environment;
- I have an interest in political communication and some relevant knowledge and skills gained through study, internships or in the workplace

## How to Apply

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Please send a CV (2 pages max) and 400-word briefing on the ongoing talks between the Scottish Greens and the SNP. The article should be written in a style suitable for publishing on our **Insights page**.

No need for a covering letter - you can tell us why you're a great fit at the interview - but we would like to know when you would be available to start.

We will make our assessment of your ability to do this job based on the standard of your application rather than your academic qualifications. Your CV should set out the full range of your relevant experience, including any time spent in professional workplaces.

So, three things to send us:

1. 2-page CV
2. 400-word article
3. Availability to start or notice period

Send all of that to **admin@newsdirect-uk.com** by midday on **Friday 23 July**.

We will acknowledge all applications. We appreciate the time and effort they take to complete.

Long listed candidates will be asked to undertake practical tests (from home) ahead of a further shortlisting for interview. Interviews will be scheduled at a time to suit the selected candidates, most likely during the w/c 2 August.