Corporate Watch freelance contributors guide

November 2019

We want to encourage more people to work with Corporate Watch on research and writing, besides our co-op members. The aims are to: broaden our coverage of different topics; involve more people in our work, creating wider connections; help spread research and writing skills by offering support and training "on the job".

We are looking for work that is informative, breaks new ground, and will be useful in supporting struggles against corporate power and capitalism, and for radical social change.

Commissioning work

We welcome contributions from people who don't have previous research or writing experience. For example, if you, your neighbourhood or workplace are being affected by a corporation and you want support to investigate it yourself, we would be happy to hear from you. We are glad to give advice on developing project ideas that fit our interests and values. We can help with writing and editing, and may be able to offer more specific research training too.

For new contributors, we will usually start by asking people to work collaboratively on a report or article with co-op members. We may also sometimes commission short articles. We won't usually ask someone for longer pieces of work until we have some experience working together.

Before starting work, we will agree a deadline and an estimate of the time (number of hours) it is likely to take. If things change as the work goes on, the contributor should keep in contact and get approval for any changes.

We all generally work from home. We have a small office/store in London, but this is not usually available for contributor working.

All work is edited by co-op members before publication. If there are bigger editing issues (e.g., research points that need development, issues of principle, or structural issues with the text) we will discuss these with writers, and may ask you to do more work on the piece. For new contributors, and on bigger projects, we will often read early drafts to give feedback and identify any potential issues before the final stage.

Usually, one person will edit, with a second person proofreading on larger projects. Sometimes the editor may ask the other co-op members for feedback too. Occasionally we may ask for input from members of the CW advisory board, or other specialists in our network.

Pay

The co-op sets an hourly pay rate, currently £12. This is the same for all freelance contributors, and for work of all kinds, e.g., for IT support or illustration as well as research. Sometimes we have paid above this rate for very specialist work we couldn't source otherwise, e.g., particular design or IT work.

We will agree an estimated number of hours in advance for the work. This can be revised by mutual agreement as the project goes on. But the contributor needs to keep in touch and get agreement for

any changes.This system relies on people being genuine and honest with us. We want to support people who will take longer because they are learning new skills. But if someone consistently bills us for more time than we think the work needs, we probably won't hire them again.

We will ask contributors to invoice us for the agreed amount after the work is finished. We should pay invoices within two weeks.

Why we pay as we do ..

Our pay rate is clearly below NUJ recommended rates for freelance journalists, or academic research salaries. But it is similar to or above the levels of pay "enjoyed" by many of those our research supports, such as precarious carers, cleaners, and couriers. And, unfortunately, it is all we can afford as a small co-op funded by donations and a few charitable grants.

We have set the freelance rate slightly above the hourly rate for co-op members, which is currently £11.56. This is because we recognise there are advantages to co-op members, including more secure employment.

On the other hand, co-op members have to commit to spending a portion of their time on admin work, meetings, proofreading, dealing with problems facing the co-op, etc. Co-op members have also worked at reduced pay when times are hard. Co-op members work part-time for Corporate Watch and often work other jobs.

Standard UK media practice is to pay for written work by word number rather than time spent. On the whole, we think paying by the hour is fairer – because it better reflects the time and effort put into the work. For example, some research may be very difficult and in-depth but only need writing up in a few words. Also, we want to support people with different levels of experience and speeds of working.

Publishing and licensing

Most Corporate Watch work is published on our website. We also produce some printed books and pamphlets. Often, work will be published in both media – e.g., books will include text previously published online. We only pay once for work published in different media, except for time spent revising or updating.

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Most work is published without an author byline. We can also include a personal byline if authors wish. Also, we may sometimes decide that a byline is necessary, e.g., if the work includes views that we do not feel reflect those of the co-op as a whole.