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Government publishing consultation described as ‘inadequate’

A new report to improve skills for the publishing industry has been described by a major professional organization as ‘inadequate’. The Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP) has criticized in detail Skillset’s consultation process 12 months after the Publishing Skills Council was launched.

Katharine Timberlake, SfEP’s marketing and PR director, says, ‘Questions were not asked, answers were not given and the evidence was patchy and poorly presented. Important issues and valuable opportunities are in danger of being overlooked because the strategy is based on an ill-prepared consultation paper.’

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media, was given responsibility for publishing skills in April 2008, to consult on training and recruitment needs across the industry. The resulting consultation focused on both the demand for and investment in skills, and also in raising the perceived skill level within the current workforce.

The SfEP’s principal criticism of the consultation is the lack of data. Skillset have:

- not consulted the self-employed even though they are a significant part of the workforce
- no knowledge of current training provision
- ignored public information publishers
- displayed low standards of research and publishing protocols.

Gerard Hill, SfEP’s mentoring director, says, ‘Our suggestions for the strategy are based on experience of the changes and challenges facing the publishing sector.’

Kersti Wagstaff, an advanced SfEP member, says, ‘Government policy is barely conscious of publishing other than newspapers and magazines.’

The SfEP is waiting to see whether the final strategy, due out in May, incorporates its ideas.

END

254 words

Notes for editors

1. The full SfEP response to the draft publishing strategy is available for download at [www.sfep.org.uk/pdocs/SfEP-response-PSC-draft-strategy-April-2009.pdf](http://www.sfep.org.uk/pdocs/SfEP-response-PSC-draft-strategy-April-2009.pdf).
2. The full consultation document is available at [www.skillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset\\_12226.pdf?5](http://www.skillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_12226.pdf?5) and the resulting draft strategy is available at [www.skillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset\\_13532.pdf?1](http://www.skillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_13532.pdf?1).
3. SfEP membership comprises freelance and in-house editors, proofreaders and other editorial workers, plus publishers and other businesses and organizations. The SfEP works to promote editorial standards, uphold the professional status of editorial workers, and encourage the use of services offered by its membership. It also holds an annual conference that is open to members and non-members alike. More information can be found at [www.sfep.org.uk](http://www.sfep.org.uk).
4. SfEP media releases are available at [www.sfep.org.uk/pub/news/news.asp?id=0](http://www.sfep.org.uk/pub/news/news.asp?id=0).

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