Another way to rip off freelances!

“HERE IS your FastFunds payment breakdown for the assignment ‘Brooklyn’s Northside Media is Stiffing its Workers’ (HuffPost); payment $700; transaction fee -$2.50; total payment to you $647.50.”

That was the message that greeted US freelance Luke O’Neil when he tried to pick up payment for a piece about an illustrator going unpaid for two years (top tip: stop doing the work long before that). That hefty cut to get paid immediately made Luke think: “am I being pushed into taking a payday loan?”

It turns out Huffington Post outsourced freelance payment admin to WorkMarket, catchline “the smartest way to organize, manage and pay your freelance contractors”. It’s now owned by payroll software corporation ADP. Luke found WorkMarket Vice-President Mousa Ackall announcing the service in January 2017: “thanks to Fast Funds Mobile, you can pay your freelance contractors”. Times blogger about it. He found video of a 2017 interview with the Chief Technology Office of the New York Times, Nick Rockwell, explaining how they use WorkMarket to manage the 5000 freelancers he said they have at course of a year.

Straight away the Huffington Post responded that it’d disabled FastFunds. A little later ADP issued a statement that they’d “decided to temporarily suspend WorkMarket’s FastFunds offer until we can review the practice more carefully.” Then the New York Times clarified that it had not in fact contracted with WorkMarket: the video had been posted prematurely and it had been taken down.

Blogger 3: factor 0. The Freelance is very interested to hear from journalists who encountered similar schemes: email Xfactor@londonfreelance.org © Mike Holderness

Afghanistan update

LONDON Freelance Branch Committee has established a subcommittee to discuss sending a delegation to Kabul to meet the Federation of Afghan Journalists, a newly-established journalists’ union formed from 17 organisations that existed before. Members of the subcommittee are: Safi, Tim and Mike. The Federation of Afghan Journalists is in mourning following the killings of four more of its members since April. As reported at www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1809ifi.html nine journalists were killed in an April double suicide bombing in Kabul and a BBC reporter was assassinated in Khost province on the same day.

Mohammad Salim Inghar, a cameraman with Afghan national TV, is the latest victim. He was killed on October 18 in a Taliban attack in Kandahar, in which Kandahar police chief, General Abdul Raziq and the provincial intelligence chief, Abdul Momin, were also killed. Mr Inghar was 64 and a father of six children. According to Reporters Without Borders, 14 journalists and one media worker have been killed in Afghanistan in the year up to 30 November 2018. The journalists’ federation believes the figure is much higher than reported by foreign press.

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Brexit mystery deepens

AS WE go to press just ahead of a vote in Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement, it’s becoming impossible to predict what will happen next with Brexit. Will there be a rapidly-concluded deal, a catastrophic “no deal”, the prospect of a Norway Plus arrangement for the UK or even a possible second referendum on whether to stay in the EU?

In view of this, it’s unwise to give advice in print that will almost certainly be out of date, so we direct you to our latest guides online at www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1811brit.html for our many members who are EU nationals in the UK and www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1811brit.html for the many UK nationals in the EU who are in the NUJ. Watch for updates online. Meanwhile, EU nationals in the UK are advised to register with their embassies for updates on what to do in case of Brexit.

To summarise: applications for the EU Settlement Scheme for EU nationals to register to stay in the UK after Brexit (“settled status”) will open on 30 March 2019. EU nationals should start gathering up any proof of their stay and economic activity in the UK to “evidence their residence” for their application. UK Prime Minister Theresa May has already pledged to EU nationals, “your rights will be protected, even in the event of no deal”.

Some EU countries with restrictions on being a dual national are making moves to relax these for UK nationals wishing to naturalise, in some cases for a limited period after Brexit. Stef Blok, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, recently pledged that even in the event of No Deal, his government “will ensure a decent solution to British citizens staying in our country after 30 March 2019… we won’t let these people down” (the Freelance’s own translation). UK nationals in the Netherlands will not need to apply for permanent residence post-Brexit; they will be contacted by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service and “invited” to apply.

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