

Finding a job in UX - resources



This document is a work in progress, started by [UX Glasgow](#). We will keep adding to it and improving it.

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Feel free to comment and make suggestions so we can make it better.

Note: We are based in Scotland so know more about the UX jobs in Scotland but we think these resources should be relevant for the UK.

[Tash Willcocks had started grouping some resources in a LinkedIn post](#) and we reused most of them in this document.

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Defining roles and skills

If you are unsure about the difference between an interaction designer or a service designer for example, GOV.UK has [definitions for the roles in the user-centred design job family](#) and for each of them, they describe what is expected from a junior, senior, lead and more.

Note: in government, UX designers are called interaction designers. Outside of government, many of these roles might be defined differently. What makes someone a mid-weight, a senior or a lead for example will vary a lot. This is the type of thing you should research or ask before you join a company/organisation.

More resources

- [Service Design and UX Design: What's the Difference?](#) - DesignLab
- [Comparing service design and business analysis](#) - Ben Holliday
- [Overlaps between user experience and other disciplines – a benefit, not a problem](#) - Duncan Stephen
- [Explore Tech Roles](#) - Not sure what jobs to look for in tech? explore some common job roles
- [Building a progression framework for a multidisciplinary organisation](#) - Emily Webber
- [How we brought our user-centred design professions closer together](#) - Blog DfE Digital, Data and Technology
- [Skills of a great digital designer](#) - Gerry McGovern
- [The Vandalisation of 'UX'](#) - Max Taylor

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Permanent, contractor, consultant, self employed, what's the difference?

There are different ways you can be employed, this will affect how you are paid, your notice period, the recruitment process and the benefits you get among other things.

Permanent

You are part of the organisation who employs you:

- they pay you monthly
- the recruitment process might have a few stages
- once hired you will have an onboarding process, a probation period (it could be a few months or longer) and get some benefits (sick days, holidays, personal development time/plan and potentially additional benefits, like a personal development budget, private healthcare, life insurance and more)
- notice periods (= how long you need to keep working once you resign) vary: 4 weeks is pretty common, it can be shorter or longer and might be longer if you have been in that organisation for a long time. This should be explained in your contract of employment

Self-employed sole traders

You can be both employed and self-employed at the same time, for example if you work for an employer during the day and run your own business in the evenings.

More info here:

- [HMRC Working for yourself](#)
- [Thinking of working for yourself](#) (PDF from HMRC)
- You can maybe find work on the [Digital Marketplace](#)

Contractor

You can find more information in the section of this document: [working as a contractor](#).

Broadly: you might work via an umbrella company (inside IR35) or as a limited company (outside IR35).

In both cases, you will probably be paid weekly, have a week notice (it works both ways, you could also be let go with as little notice as one week too), you need to plan for your holidays, sick leave and training as the organisation you will be working for won't pay for that. The recruitment will be quicker with fewer stages (probably just one interview).

You pick your own project and clients. You usually don't have to justify career breaks, so there is a lot of freedom.

You will make more money, but it is a riskier option compared to being a permanent (harder to get loans, no sick pay or maternity/paternity pay for example). You might need to have your own laptop and licences (software and more) do your own tax (umbrella companies will do this for you)

Consultant

Depending on who you are working for, it could be the best of both worlds between 'permanent' and 'contractor'.

Like a permanent, you are paid by the organisation employing you, and are paid monthly with similar advantages, like paid training, personal development time, paid holidays etc... They will find clients with projects for you to work on for a few weeks or longer. You might be the only consultant on this project in a team of permanent staff from the client. Or you can work with other consultants from your organisation on the same project with or without permanent staff from the client.

When there is no project for you to work on, you are still paid and might spend time on internal projects or personal development for example.

This is more secure than being a contractor, but you won't be able to pick your projects and you will make less money.

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Graduate / training programmes

Some organisations are starting to have training programmes where people are paid while being trained. It's worth looking into these:

- [BBC Design, Engineering & Technology](#)
- [MadeTech Academy](#)
- Manchester Metropolitan University - Become a user experience professional with [hands-on work experience and a degree apprenticeship](#)
- [NHS Digital graduate scheme](#)
- [SPARCK - User research academy](#) (not just for graduates - close now, next cohort next year)
- [TPX Design Graduate Scheme, launching](#) June 2023 (not accepting new people for 2023)
- [Version 1 accelerate digital academy](#)
- [UX training by User lab](#): a free 8-week training programme, soon to be hosting its second cohort in Newcastle upon Tyne in January 2024. The course is only available to people:
 - Aged 19 years and older
 - Living in Newcastle, North Tyneside or Northumberland
 - Resident in the UK for at least 3 years

There are probably more out there - we will add more as we hear about them

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Where to learn more - Mentoring, courses, accessibility

There are courses at various prices and mentors (usually for free) to learn more about your practice.

If you live in Scotland, you might be able to claim for an [Individual training account](#) (up to £200 toward a course per year) the scheme has closed for 2023, but is worth looking into next year.

Courses

Some of these have scholarships available, worth contacting them if you can't afford the programme, they might have help and funding available.

- [BrainStation](#)
- [Content Design London courses](#) (for content design)
- [Experience Haus](#)
- [FutureLearn](#) - some courses are free some you need to pay for
- [Interaction Design Foundation \(IxDF\)](#) (online, learn at your own pace - £12 per month paid yearly for a student, £20 for a professional)
- [Love Circular](#)
- [The School of good services](#) (for Service design - ask about bursaries)
- [Service Design Academy](#)
- [Snook trainings](#)
- [UX Design institute](#) (not cheap but worth checking if you can afford it)

Mentoring

- [ADPlist](#)
- [Government Digital Service Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Mega Mentor](#)
- [One Million Mentors](#)

Don't forget about accessibility

67% accessibility issues come from design (this is 2 in 3). So as a designer, you should learn about accessibility. [Source: Anna Cook for Deque](#)

Future learn and Interaction Design Foundation (mentioned above) have courses on accessibility.

You can also learn with:

- [Accessibility Scotland videos recording of previous sessions on Vimeo](#)
- [Inclusive Design 24](#) (videos from previous years available)
- [Texthelp webinar: Resources: Demystifying Digital Accessibility with CDDO](#)
- [W3C: Introduction to Web Accessibility](#) (free)

Stéphanie has a [blog post with various accessibility resources](#), most of them are free

More resources about UX

[Resources for new designers](#) - Laura Yarrow

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Networking: Meet-ups - Who to follow

Many people don't like networking, but it's quite useful to understand the job market and make connections with people who will signpost you to job openings.

Meet-up are useful for this, many are now online as well which might work better for some people.

Don't be shy on LinkedIn: if you see that the person you're interested in is active on it, don't just follow them but request a connection with a short message. Most people will accept the connection. Twitter used to be a really good place to network but not so much anymore.

Be careful with Medium, there is good content and advice there sometimes but also some really bad ones. Especially if you are new to UX, keep a critical mind.

Newsletters and blogs

If you don't want to spend too much time on social media, some people have newsletters which will curate some good content for you, check blogs too.

[we will keep adding here]

- [Adam Silver - newsletter](#)
- [Andrew Duckworth - blog](#)
- [Cathy Dutton](#) - blog
- [Emily Webber](#) - blog
- [John Cutler - newsletter](#)
- [Stephanie Walter - newsletter](#)
- Vicky Teinaky: [Vickypedia](#)

Meet-ups

Meetups are always valuable ways to connect and learn:

- [UX Glasgow](#)
- [UX Edinburgh](#)

But also:

- [Northern User Experience \(NUX\)](#)
- [Ladies that UX](#) (Manchester)
- [UCDxGOV](#)

[we will keep adding here]

Other ways to meet people

[Virtual Design Coffee](#) - Barbara Mertlova

Who to follow

Benjy Stanton has a [blogroll](#), you should have a look and follow some of these people or subscribe to their newsletter

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Where to find job ads

- [Civil service job search](#) (UK wide)
- [POCC jobs board](#)
- [Myjobscotland](#) (public and third sector jobs in Scotland)
- [Underrepresented in tech](#) (This matches people looking for opportunities with people who have one to offer)
- [Where are the Black designers?](#)
- [Work for Scotland](#) (for the Scottish Government and its agencies)
- [Open doors](#) (for juniors)

Recruiting agencies

- [Discovery to live](#)
- [Futureheads](#)
- [G. Digital](#)
- [Harvey Nash](#)
- [Hays](#)
- [Lorien](#)
- [Parity](#)
- [Public Sector Resourcing](#)
- [Social Responsible Recruitment](#) - SR2
- [Source](#)
- [Stealth IT Recruitment](#)
- [Venesky Brown](#)
- [Zebra people](#)

[add more...]

Applying/preparing for a role

This link from DWP can be helpful: [How to ace your job interview](#)

Even when a role is not exactly right for you, do apply:

Worst case scenario: you won't hear back but you can keep the prep you did for future roles. If you get an interview, this is interview practice and valuable information, even if you don't get the role or don't want it.

Portfolio

You don't always need a portfolio to find a role, but it will be asked quite often and is a good to have.

This blog post from GOV.UK has a lot of good advice: [How to create a portfolio to apply for a design role in government](#).

If you are new to design, you might not have a lot of projects to show. Keep in mind that you can also showcase things you have done outside work, and which are not exactly design related but which can still show your process and your skills.

Don't only show the polished/finished, show your working and explain your process.

While on project, remember to keep examples of your working so you use them in your portfolio update. If you are not allowed to share anything, you can recreate elements of it instead.

Your portfolio doesn't have to be a website. This could simply be google slides.

Use STARR

- **S**ituation: give the wider context
- **T**ask: what was the task/project
- **A**ctions: what did you do? What steps did you take, focus on your contributions
- **R**esults: what was the outcome(s), what did you achieve?
- **R**eflections: what did you learn? What would you do differently?

For your portfolio, use this framing for the project as a whole.

For an interview, prepare by using this framing for smaller things like tasks or parts of projects which will support and illustrate each of the skills the job ad is requiring.

Keep a trace of your preparation for an interview for other future interviews, that way you will end up with a little pool of answers for skills frequently asked for design roles.

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Working in Government (as a permanent)

In Scotland, you can work for the Scottish Government, they are mostly based in Glasgow and Edinburgh but also in other parts of Scotland (like Dundee and more). There are some UK wide departments like HMRC (in Glasgow and Edinburgh) or the Ministry of Justice, the HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the Student Loans Company (SLC) for example.

There are also 32 Local Authorities (LA), also called councils.

This blog post from Stéphanie Krus: [How to start working for the government and the public sector](#) explains all you need to know, and provides advice to apply and prepare your interview.

This GOV.UK blog post [How to land a job as a junior designer or researcher](#), can help too.

Note: there are restrictions when working for the government, like your nationality and you will need to get a security clearance or at least a [Disclosure Scotland certificate](#).

If you have specific questions, get in touch with Bobby, Kat or Stéphanie who have experience of working in Government.

Website to look for jobs

- [Civil service job search](#) (UK wide)
- [Work for Scotland](#) (for the Scottish Government and its agencies)
- [Myjobscotland](#) (public and third sector jobs in Scotland)

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Working as a contractor

There is a lot of information in this post by Ian Ames: [So you're thinking of becoming a contractor](#)

How it works for the public sector

Most of the time, you will deal with a recruiter who is recruiting for a gov department, but it could also be for a recruiter who is recruiting for a design agency who is the one who has the contract with the department.

You might be the only contractor in a team of civil servants, or it could be a mix of consultants from an agency, some contractors and some or no public servants.

For the recruiters to find you, you need to get in touch and upload your CV in many places. And you can also do that directly with some design agencies.

Recruiting agencies

- [Discovery to live](#)
- [Futureheads](#)
- [G. Digital](#)
- [Harvey Nash](#)
- [Lorien](#)
- [Parity](#)
- [Public Sector Resourcing](#)
- [Social Responsible Recruitment](#) - SR2
- [Source](#)
- [Stealth IT Recruitment](#)
- [Venesky Brown](#)
- [Zebra people](#)
- [Hays](#)

There are probably more out there. Could be worth following them all on LinkedIn but it's a lot of noise.

Some design agencies keep pool of contractors

- [Hippo digital](#)

Some agencies don't do that but post on LinkedIn from time to time when they need one, so follow them:

- [Made Tech](#)
- [Opencast](#)
- [Sparck](#)
- [TPX impact](#)

IR35, umbrella companies or your own Ltd company

Contracts will be either inside or outside IR35. This is a tax thing.

Recruiters can help you with this and put you in touch with companies who will deal for this for you for a fee. For example [Paystream](#).

They will also ask you your day rate inside and outside.

In short, your inside rate is usually higher because you will be taxed more. The recruiter will help you set the right rate if you are not too sure.

[Take home salary tool from Paystream](#) can give you an idea of what your 'take home' salary will be depending on your day rate.

Inside IR35

This seems to be the most common and this is the easiest one to do. You need an umbrella company. They are the one you are actually working for, your contract of employment is with them, and they are the ones paying you. They deal with your contract with the gov department, they deal with your taxes for you, some even have sick pay and more, they can deal with your pension too. Like when you are a permanent, you don't have to do anything in terms of tax or accountancy.

They take a fee in exchange, make sure you get paid and that everything is in order. When the contract ends, they can deal with the next one for you as well.

If you have expenses, like transports etc... you might have to pay for it yourself, and you can't deduce it from your tax, unless you discuss this ahead of accepting the contract and the gov department is happy to pay for it.

There is a [P87 form from HMRC](#) for tax relief that might apply in some cases.

[Working through an umbrella company \(GOV.UK link\)](#)

Outside IR35

You need to have your own LTD company, you are the director of it. Again there are organisations out there who will help you create it and deal with the accounts and tax. In that case, the clients (the gov department) pay your company, and you give yourself a salary as a director of your company.

In this scenario, you can deduct from your company income expenses like food, accommodation, transports, material and some trainings etc... which means you pay less tax and make more money that way.

Creating your own company is usually easier to do if you have some help as you need to make sure you set it correctly. There are many rules, like for the name you will give. It's best to also have someone doing the accounts for you to make sure you declare your tax correctly.

Some useful links:

[Set up a limited company](#) (GOV.UK link)

[Registering your company - step by step](#) (GOV.UK link)

Moving from inside to outside and vice versa

Again it might be best to have help in this scenario for the tax. So unless you stick to one type, you should really plan to pay for people to help you with this.

Sick pay, no work, holidays

Some of the umbrella companies will help you plan period where you don't work, but you need to be careful and keep some money saved

CV - Portfolio - showcasing yourself

Put yourself as 'open to work' on LinkedIn - you don't have to have the frame on your photo profile if you don't want to.

Clearly state from when you are available on LinkedIn, your CV and your portfolio

If you have worked in government make sure to say it, keywords like: GDS, GOV.UK, service standard will be useful.

Do say what phase you have been working on (if you can say from discovery to live it's great) and if you have been part of service assessment, mention it too.

List the government department(s) you have worked for.

If you have worked for the Scottish Government or one of its agencies only, then explain that the Digital Scotland Service Standard, is a variation of the GOV.UK service standard following similar principles.

CV

Many people ask for a CV, so keep one up-to-date, try to be brief.

Portfolio

Many people don't have one so it's not a must, but it can help. Again, try to keep it up to date.

Networking

You don't have to, some people seem to manage without doing too much of it, but it will make it easier to find your next contract. Try to go to meet-ups and conferences, and post on LinkedIn from time to time about the work you do.

If you have a gov.uk email address, join the ukgovernmentdigital.slack.com slack space as this will give you an idea of who is doing what.

Other

In most cases, you will be expected to have your own laptop.

You might not need your own licences for things like Miro, or MS office for example, but it could be good for you to have it anyway.

[Some advice from Lorien for first time contractors.](#)

[Business Models for Freelancing in Tech](#) (podcast - US context but still interesting)

You can join a union

For example [Prospect](#), has a self employed section

Or Utaw: [United Tech and Allied Workers](#)

They can help you when you don't get paid for example.

Being renewed

Many contracts are for 6 months first and then you can get renewed. This is sometimes done at the last minute.

At least a month ahead of the end of your contract, you should tell people you will be available from X date. And contact recruiters. Because you might not be renewed, and seeing that they might lose you, can speed up things from the client.

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