



One Year On survey – impact of Covid-19 on London’s creative workers revealed

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Bectu represents over 35,000 creative industries workers, including thousands of freelancers and self-employed workers who have been amongst the worst hit by Covid-19. Prior to the pandemic, the creative industries were growing at twice the rate of the UK economy, contributing £116 billion gross value and accounting for almost 12% of UK exports.

A recent Bectu ‘One Year On’ survey of 3,957 creative industries workers demonstrates the devastating individual and collective impact that Covid-19 continues to have on the creative industries across the UK.

ITV London recently broadcast a special report on these survey results, focusing on the 1,026 London based theatre, venue and live events workers, which found that 53% are not currently working in any industry, 20% have been unable to access either of the support schemes and 54% have lost over half their income.

One Year On survey – key findings

The survey was completed by 3,957 survey respondents from across the creative industries between 19 February and 11 March 2021, of which:

- 34% are not currently working in any industry
- 30% have been made redundant or laid off at least once since the start of the pandemic
- 36% have received payments from the furlough scheme
- 20% have received payments from the SEISS
- 21% have been excluded from government support schemes
- 77% have seen a drop in income (including income from the SEISS or CJRS)

1,026 survey respondents are London-based theatre, venues, and live events workers, of which:

- 53% are not currently working in any industry
- 39% have been made redundant or laid off at least once since the start of the pandemic
- 48% have received payments from the furlough scheme
- 27% have received payments from the SEISS
- 20% have been excluded from government support schemes
- 54% have lost over half their income (including income from the SEISS or CJRS)

Government support for the creative industries

There have long been serious gaps in government support for freelancers and the self-employed, which make up a large proportion of workers in the creative industries. Despite efforts from the devolved administrations to create schemes that addressed the gaps in support, and solutions presented to the Government from unions, mayors, campaigners and business groups, the Chancellor chose to make only limited changes in the recent Spring Budget.

Whilst the extension of the furlough scheme and the opening of the SEISS to the newly self-employed are welcome, the Chancellor failed to address fundamental flaws in the SEISS and is

ending the scheme two months earlier than the furlough scheme. Ultimately, thousands of creative freelancers will be left unsupported, a year since these flaws were first pointed out.

A safe and successful reopening

However, it is not too late to support workers in the creative industries. The government must put in place provisions that ensure a safe and successful reopening of the creative sector, allowing this much loved and lucrative sector to get back on its feet after a time of national crisis.

Bectu is asking the Government to consider the following measures:

- **Supporting workers until the industry fully reopens:** Normal production will take time to resume and it is critical that a cliff edge in support is avoided. The SEISS should be extended in full for at least as long as CJRS, after which the government should consider sector specific extensions for the worst hit industries and a tapered withdrawal of support. Otherwise, there is a risk that support is withdrawn before the sector reopens, leaving thousands more at risk of redundancy.
- **Government backed insurances for theatres and live events:** The Film and TV Production Restart Scheme has been a great success. Theatres, venues and live events require this same backing to minimise the risks of restarting and get back to entertaining millions.
- **Support our touring professionals:** The new EU trade deal has no agreement on work permits or carnet applications, making it all but impossible for our world leading touring professionals to work across the EU. Live events and theatres have already been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic. Their recoveries will be seriously inhibited if the government does not negotiate a free cultural EU work permit and carnet exception for UK touring professionals.
- **Culture Recovery Fund:** It is disappointing that only half the CRF money has been allocated, particularly considering the 21% of workers who have been unsupported. In the absence of changes to the SEISS, this unspent money could be ringfenced for those excluded workers.
- **Incentivising demand:** Social distancing measures will require many venues to operate at a 50% capacity limit when they re-open, which will simply not be financially viable. Even post June 21st, fear of the virus following over a year of social distancing may mean that audiences are slower to return than anticipated. The Government should consider a Seat Out to Help Out scheme to subsidise spaces in our cultural venues and ensure that venues don't lose money by reopening.

Importance of creative industries to society

The pandemic has inflicted great suffering onto one of the UK's most lucrative sectors, hitting it eight times as hard as the whole economy and leaving thousands of workers without jobs and income. Prior to the pandemic, the industry was growing at twice the rate of the UK economy, proving its economic value to society.

The creative industries also make an invaluable contribution to the social fabric of the United Kingdom, entertaining, inspiring, and informing millions at home and abroad.

It is imperative that a sector so crucial to our day to day lives, is given the opportunity to reopen successfully.