

Creators' Rights Alliance
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The Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London
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By email only

29th October 2020

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Creators' Rights Alliance (CRA) which is a collective that exists to promote, protect and further the interests of creators through advocacy and campaigning work. We speak on behalf of 17 organisations and trade unions (see appendix for membership list) representing just under 350,000 creators on issues affecting creative professionals – from authors, artists and illustrators to translators, performers, musicians and journalists – on policy issues as diverse as fairer contract terms and working conditions to copyright and intellectual property issues.

As the UK enters a second wave of COVID-19 restrictions there are serious concerns amongst our members as to the long-term impact on the creative industries and on creators, particularly in regard to the long-term viability of the industry. As a result of national and localised lockdowns, and the ensuing restrictions on indoor venues, many creative professionals in the live performance sector have been unable to carry out their work and have lost income. Similarly, there has been a substantial impact on other creators who rely on live performances for work such as playwrights, composers, journalists, photographers, illustrators and technical operators who have seen a freeze in commissions covering sporting, cultural, musical and theatrical events. Science writers are seeing the pandemic coverage push out non-medical stories and a reduction in commissions and media training requests. Scheduled events and promotional campaigns for 2021 are starting to be cancelled because of the continuation of restrictions and social distancing measures. Members in live entertainment want a safe return to work this is, however, currently not realistic due to social distancing measures making many venues and productions economically unviable.

The CRA welcomes the government's commitment to supporting workers at risk of redundancy with the new Job Support Scheme (JSS). A significant proportion of creators rely on secondary sources of income to support their creative work which can be in the education sector, hospitality industry, publishing or the museum and heritage sector. Many of these sectors have relied on government scheme to prevent redundancies.

We welcome the extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The creative sector relies heavily on self-employed freelance workers, over 20% of all self-employed people in the UK work in the cultural and creative industries. Many have used the SEISS to support them and their families during these unprecedented times. However, CRA members have been inundated with calls from creators who have been unable to access

any form of government support, resulting in some creators having no income for at least six months now. Some members have not been able to claim fair or reasonable support from the SEISS because of gaps in their work due to caring responsibilities or maternity/paternity leave or because of legitimate but substantial expenses (such as one-off equipment costs incurred). Newly self-employed people and those with both PAYE and self-employed work will continue to miss out on support.

There is serious concern amongst members as to the new version of the SEISS being set to only cover 40% of average monthly trading profits. Self-employed creators are concerned as to how they can survive the next few months on just 40% of their pre pandemic profit, particularly those who work within industries that are unlikely to reopen at full capacity such as live performances. It will take self-employed creators longer than PAYE staff to rebuild their work and their resources the CRA, therefore, believes that the SEISS should be extended at a high enough rate to mitigate this. The government must ensure parity between employees and the self-employed by providing the same level of support by increasing the existing level of support provided by the SEISS and expanding the eligibility criteria.

Many of those who have been unable to access the SEISS or JSS have been reliant upon Universal Credit (UC). The suspension of the Minimum Income Floor of UC has been a lifeline for many self-employed creators who have seen their incomes fall substantially since the start of the pandemic. The re-imposition of Minimum Income Floor during this crisis period in the industry will force creators into hardship, particularly in the run up to the holiday period. The vast majority of creative workplaces are not due to now re-open until Spring 2021 at the earliest and we urge the government to extend the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor until the creative sector is able to open fully.

Unfortunately, re-opening theatres, film, television sets, galleries and venues will not be enough to protect jobs. Many creators have significant overhead costs, renting out studios and investing in equipment to carry out their work and the cancellation of projects make it difficult to recoup these costs. The reality of the phased return of performances in the months ahead is that work opportunities will remain severely limited for tens of thousands of self-employed creators. There are concerns over the long-term impact of the pandemic and creators have seen a significant decrease in commissions even after the economy has reopened due to a reduction in funds and a backlog of unproduced work. Recent research from Oxford Economics projects¹ suggested that as a result of the crisis the creative industries are facing a loss of £74 billion in turnover in 2020 and will be impacted at least twice as hard as the rest of the economy. In all, 406,000 jobs are expected to be lost this year - 119,000 of them permanent employees, and 287,000 freelancers.

If we want to protect and promote the UK's world-beating creative industries, the government must step up and offer sector specific support, not just for cultural and creative institutions but for the workers who sustain the industry. We welcome the government's announcement of £1.57 billion investment to protect Britain's world-class cultural and arts institutions and await further information on the exact support allocated for freelancers and self-employed creators from the fund beyond the Arts Council England grants, which not everyone is eligible for. Despite the many long-term challenges facing creators there are immediate steps the government can take to support creators through the pandemic. Such as ensuring that self-employed workers who have fallen through the gaps of government assistance finally receive some support. Or by establishing a mechanism for recouping costs incurred during the production of cancelled projects.

¹ <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/recent-releases/The-Projected-Economic-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-the-UK-Creative-Industries>

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We also add our voice to calls by authors and writers groups for an increase in funding for the [Public Lending Right](#) which is a scheme that ensures that funds reach a wide range of authors, beyond top-sellers. Given the government's success in supporting the hospitality sector with the recent Eat Out to Help Out scheme we are adding our voice to the calls for the implementation of a new scheme to facilitate the reopening of music venues under social distancing and get live performers safely back to work, providing a much needed lifeline for the arts sector.

If you or your officials would like any further information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on creative professionals, then please do not hesitate to get in touch and we will be able to provide relevant briefings, case studies and data. CRA members would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or one of your ministers to further detail the impact of the pandemic on creators and the creative sector.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Sweeney
Chair of CRA board

Signed by:

