



Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP
Secretary of State
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
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16th March 2021

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you regarding a recent Bectu survey of 3,957 creative industries workers, one year on since the start of the pandemic. The results of the survey demonstrate the devastating individual and collective impact that Covid-19 has had on the creative industries across the UK.

As well as sharing the key findings of the survey, I would also like to take this opportunity to make some suggestions as to how the government can ensure that the reopening of cultural venues is a success. As you know, cultural events and venues will not reopen overnight, and it is critical that workers are supported until such a time as the industry is reopened. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this soon.

One Year On survey – key findings

The survey was completed by 3,957 respondents (not exclusively Bectu members) between 19 February and 11 March 2021. Those completing the survey work in the film and TV industries, broadcasting, live events, cinemas, and cultural venues (including theatres).

Across all respondents, key findings included:

- 34% are not currently working, either in the creative industries or another industry
- 30% have been made redundant or laid off at least once since March 2020
- 36% have received payments from the furlough scheme
- 20% have received payments from the SEISS
- 21% of those who needed support have not been able to access the SEISS or CJRS
- 77% have seen a drop in income

ITV London are broadcasting a special report (to be aired today) on the survey results for 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.

Supporting creative industries workers

While it is a relief that 56% of survey respondents have been supported by the government, this doesn't excuse the continued exclusion of thousands in the creative industries. The

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Chancellor could have put this right at the Spring Budget, and while the furlough extension and inclusion of some new starters in the SEISS is welcome, the fundamental flaws remain unchanged.

Despite efforts from the devolved administrations to plug the gaps and the solutions repeatedly proposed by unions, business groups, mayors and campaigners, it is difficult not to conclude that the exclusion has been a political choice.

It is not too late to make a different choice. As well as ending the exclusion, it is important that the government puts in a place provisions to ensure a safe and successful reopening for the creative industries. I am asking you 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. The live events and theatre industries have already been decimated by the pandemic, and their recoveries will be 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.

The creative industries make an incalculable contribution to the social fabric of the UK, as well as audiences around the world. Prior to the pandemic, they were also making a significant contribution to the economy, growing at twice the rate of the UK economy, contributing £116 billion gross value and accounting for almost 12% of UK exports. Covid-19 has brought devastation to such a lucrative sector, hitting it eight times as hard as the whole economy, and leaving of workers out of work and unsupported.

Our survey results demonstrate how the impact of Covid-19 remains devastating one year from the start of the pandemic. I ask you to consider our findings and the suggestions we have made to enable the cultural industries and the individual workers affected to find a way out of this time of national crisis.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the survey findings and our proposals to ensure the reopening of our cultural venues is a great success.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philippa Childs". The script is cursive and fluid.

Philippa Childs
Head of Bectu, a sector of Prospect Union

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