



Zita Holbourne & Martin Sundram

Joint National Chairs

Artists' Union England (AUE)

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30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Chancellor of the Exchequer

HM Treasury

1 Horse Guards Road

London

SW1A 2HQ

Dear Chancellor

We are writing to you on behalf of the Artists' Union England, which represents our members working in the fields of Visual Art, Applied Arts, Socially Engaged Art, Moving Image Sound and Performance, almost all of whom are self-employed, and have been hard-hit by the impact of Coronavirus on those working in the cultural sector. The majority of our members are women.

While there has been a broad promise of some funding to arts organisations themselves, where our members are often employed or commissioned to show work or undertake educational activities, in common with other cultural workers who are essentially self-employed or on short-term contracts, our members struggle to maintain their professional practice with little or no access to financial assistance.

Our members have often fallen between the cracks of the support measures so far on offer, some having generally failed to qualify for any help beyond Universal Credit. Many artists have portfolio careers and are obliged to top-up the limited income derived directly from their work with other, usually precarious, employment, and often struggled to meet the qualifying criteria for self-employed support while it was on offer. Those who did qualify now face further uncertainty.

At the start of the pandemic all future work opportunities planned (for example commissions, exhibition opportunities and teaching assignments) were cancelled with immediate effect for the majority of our members. While paid opportunities have been curtailed, artists are faced with ongoing costs of maintaining studios and other professional expenses with zero income, as well as experiencing the same immediate and future uncertainties as the wider cultural sector. Our members are now struggling to make ends meet, living in serious poverty and some are literally destitute.

We did write to you on behalf of our members on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> of April and 16<sup>th</sup> of April and were disappointed to have to advise them that we have not received a response to any of our correspondence to date.

We are writing to you again, since your latest announcements this month, September, do not benefit the majority of our members at this time, because the current offer that from November until the end of January, many self-employed workers can claim back 20% of their average monthly trading profits, capped at a total of £1,875 is 'woefully inadequate', as asserted by director of policy at the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE), Andy Chamberlain. The government's response "misses out around 1.5 million people who have been given too little support through the crisis."

Six months into the pandemic our members and other people like them who are working on a self-employed basis in the arts and culture sector, are amongst the hardest hit with little or no support.

We require a creative approach to this dilemma to ensure that the visual arts continue to thrive in the UK, and our members and others freelancers working in our culture sector will not have to leave their chosen profession, for which they have trained and worked over many years. We are requesting that provision is made to support this group of workers in the immediate future, as the situation has now reached a crisis point.

We would be grateful if you were to acknowledge receipt of this letter and our previous correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Zita Holbourne and Martin Sundram

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