



Open letter from Artists' Union England

Coronavirus and Artists

To:

Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak

Secretary of State for DCMS, Oliver Dowden

House of Commons

London, SW1 0AA

22nd January 2021

From:

Zita Holbourne and Martin Sundram, Joint National Chairs

Artists' Union England (AUE)

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The coronavirus pandemic has had devastating impacts on artists and the entire art and culture sector during 2020 and these effects continue into the present year. The cultural industries not only make a significant contribution to the economy but are essential for the well-being and quality of life of the whole nation and will need to play a vital part in any recovery in the country.

Artists' Union England is the collective voice of artists living and working in England, who work across disciplines including visual art, applied arts, socially engaged art, moving image, sound, and performance.

We are calling on the government to act urgently to address the impacts of the pandemic on our members and those working in the wider cultural sector, and to prioritise the following key measures:

- The introduction of measures to support all self-employed artists including those who have not so far qualified for any government measures – those who work part time self-employed and part time for an employer and those newly self-employed.
- Taking urgent action to address the situation of rent costs for studio space, which artists rely on to practice their livelihoods, but cannot access during lockdowns and higher tier restrictions but are still obliged to pay rent for.
- Taking steps to address the disproportionate impacts on equality issues of the pandemic, which has led to a reduction of Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers in the sector, a situation which has exacerbated pre-existing institutional discrimination. The pandemic has disproportionately impacted women, who form the majority of our membership, and who are more likely, alongside Black, Asian and minority ethnic artists, to be low paid when in employment, and more likely to be working precariously.
- Creating economic initiatives to address the impacts on the whole sector and to aid recovery going forward, during and after the pandemic.

Yours Sincerely

Zita Holbourne & Martin Sundram

Joint National Chairs of AUE

cc. Frances O'Grady, General Secretary, TUC

Doug Nicholls, General Secretary, GFTU

Keir Starmer, Leader of the Labour Party,

Jo Stevens, Shadow Culture Secretary

Paul Fleming, General Secretary, Equity

Horace Trubridge, General Secretary, Musicians Union

Mike Clancy, General Secretary, Prospect