

29th October 2020 Public Launch of AUE Good Practice Charter

AUE member Ekua Bayunu chaired the meeting, welcoming participants and speakers to the public launch of the AUE Good Practice Charter for Artists.

Dominic Bascombe of Equity, regional organiser for the North East and Yorkshire.

Dominic spoke about his experience of organising as a trade unionist both in Equity and the NUJ, and the importance of strong relationships, connections and links between trade unions and employers. Dominic referenced the legal agreements between employers that focus on every aspect of a workers employment. He noted the importance of giving workers confidence in agreements through the strength of the relationship with the trade union and the employer. Workers acknowledged that their trade union had their back, was able to make a difference, stand up for them and achieve effective goals. The GPC recognises these key points as well as issues effecting members in the sector, setting a standard for employers to understand what will be excepted. It is an important starting point and gives confidence, it shows what a trade union is. Dominic stressed it is important to build links across trade unions, for members and employers.

Theresa Easton AUE Northern Regional Organiser

Theresa introduced the GPC, a set of six principles organisations sign up to in order to improve the lives of artists. The GPC is rooted in conversations with members who want to work with 'good' organisations and is one of the principle aims of the trade union, "regulating the arts sector". These conversations resonated with discussions with other trade unionists, including Beth Farhat Northern Regional TUC Secretary who talked about the need to have minimum terms and conditions. Theresa talked about taking part in the TUC Organising Academy training and other examples of work pledges from Mayors around the country. A working group made of AUE members developed the charter which a broad range of organisations can sign up to. The GPC will be ratified by members at the next AGM and the working group is open to all members who want to get involved. Organisations work towards the GPC using information provided in the briefing papers.

Jamie Driscoll – Mayor North of Tyne Combined Authority.

Jamie was impressed with artists setting up a trade union and talked about how the nature of work is changing, with more freelancers and self-employment. Trade unions are at the core of Jamie's work and he has regular quarterly meetings with Regional Secretaries and Organisers from trade unions. Jamie noted where trade unions are in place, workers have better health, are more productive, businesses can be more innovative which makes stronger economies. Trade unions are not adversarial. Jamie talked about the work with the National Education Union (NEU) and the development of a teachers supply co-operative. The business planning was funded through the North of Tyne. Jamie introduced the [North of Tyne Good Work Pledge](#) (GWP) which has five pillars and is similar to **AUE Good Practice Charter for Artists**. The Mayor's office consulted with trade unions and businesses organisations such as the [Federation of Small Businesses](#). The GWP received support from the Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and employers, with some early adopters. Jamie noted good employers are undermined by bad and exploitative employers. The GWP forms the basis of bigger piece of work with anchor institutions, such as Universities', health service and local authorities.

The first stage is to get employers signed up and then embed in local procurement. Contractors who want a public sector contract, will be asked to sign up to the GWP or something similar.

Claire Murphy-Morgan Monkfish Productions

Claire introduced Monkfish Productions, a small organisation based in Newcastle, working across Tyne & Wear in the community relying on the expertise of artists, who are a valuable work force. Claire came across the GPC at an open meeting for tenants of [Orbis Community](#) hosted by AUE with an introduction to the GPC and the union. Claire stated she could see the value of the GPC and saw it as an exciting opportunity to align Monkfish Productions core principles and values with the charter on how to work with artists; for example good pay, practice and working conditions. Claire saw the GPC as part of the organisations development, something to measure the development with and an aspiration going forward. Claire met with AUE representatives at an initial meeting to discuss how to support artists and adopt the charter. Claire will encourage artists to join a trade union, particularly in the current environment where artists are struggling and will encourage other organisations to sign up to the Charter.

The meeting broke into 6 small groups and discussed aspects of the charter. Feedback is summed up under three headings and include contributions from the chat.

Arts Organisations

- Individual artists could refer to the GPC in funding applications to Arts Council England (ACE)
- Developing Your Creative Practice (DYCP) fund could be used by an artist transitioning, eg someone moving from a music background to visual arts. The GPC gives a real clear understanding of the sector and what are the terms someone new to sector should be working under.
- The GPC can be used to diversify the workforce and address at equality.
- People working in large organisations can use the GPC to help give artists a voice, they can facilitate and advocate for artists.
- Development tool for small organisations.
- [a-n](#) endorses the Good Practice Charter.
- [Creative and Culture Skills](#) representative Melanie Shee: Talked about Sector Support Best Practice Guides/Training Partnership Managers on the ground to support organisations to implement this great new Charter.

AUE – Trade union

- Clarification on the role of trade unions and the difference between arts organisations and a trade unions.
- Engaging younger artists. Linda Graham, [Scottish Artists Union](#) “SAU has a graduate membership (at a reduced fee) to encourage younger artists and graduates to become activists”
- The charter will always be under review, looking for feedback from organisations and artists.
- How do we ensure organisations implement the charter?
- AUE will have a public list of who has signed up
- How can the GPC be distributed with the metro mayors – how can it be amplified?
- How is it going to be regulated and ‘enforced’ – members need to flag issues up with the union?
- GPC is malleable addressing whole sector and diverse workforce.

Artists

- Artists can refer employers to it as a way of negotiating (in a similar way to the Rates of pay doc).
- Share GPC via social media.
- Download from website.
- Talked about artists self-exploitation. Organisations can be transparent about their payment and funding opening a different conversation.
- False consciousness: we need to educate members and artists. It is generally accepted that we are expected to work for free and go through the rights of passage. Older and more experienced artists should share their knowledge and experience. Art is work.
- GPC can be used to educate ourselves and artists.
- AUE member Joel Levack shared <https://placementpovertypledge.com>

[Emma Beverly Director East Street Arts](#)

Talked about the GPC being helpful as East Street Arts (ESA) reimagines itself looking ahead, the charter is a road map with themes and focus points to review work. Contracts are being reviewed, updating budgets so rates of pay can be met and training staff on GPC and trade unions, how staff work with artists and how trade unions are valuable. Also under review, freelance engagements, exploring where a role is freelance or fixed term contract. Training on diversity & equality, self-led (staff reading group) and formalised, and opening this up to artists in the ESA network. ESA have transformed their recruitment process recently making interviews accessible, providing questions before hand, speaking to interviewees before the interview. On social responsibility ESA has increased access for artists training, making sure artists are paid on panels. ESA have changed their Human Resource providers who are specialist in Mental Health. Adapting handbooks so staff and artists have access – policies & procedures, who MH first aider is. Experience of working with Trade Unions, no formal relationships, used to working with BECTU & Equity, pleased with new relationship with AUE, want to promote charter and be a good advocate for the charter. Recent experience of pandemic, support artists to have power and control over working lives. Issues around contracts and lock down – cancelled contracts for ESA studio tenants, got legal support and artists got paid. Noted contracts are important so you know what you are entitled to. This led to a group of commissioners in Leeds to come together to rethink the commissioning process. Looking at a person based commissioning rather than a product based relationship. Working with Counterculture – changing terms of commissioning contracts, Leeds organisations adopt best

practice. Workshops for artists how to break down legal jargon, making it more accessible, training for orgs & staff. New agreements are based on two parties coming together, videos and audio designed contracts. Sector support organisation 'Guild' artists lead sector – two artists commissioned to look at campaigning work and any gaps, can ESA bring in advocacy work, is there a campaign to get involved in?

Sophie Gibson summed up and thanked participants and speakers. Asked organisations to sign up to the charter and sign up to the AUE mailing list to find out about the work of the union and events coming up. Follow on social media. Check out website.