**Creative.
Industries.
Federation.**

Creative Freelancers

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The creative industries are the fastest growing part of the economy.[1]

The sector is built on an army of talented and skilled freelancers – from the film director to the games designer, the potter to the sound engineer.

Of the creative workers in the sector, 47% are self-employed[2]**, compared with 15% across the workforce as whole.**[3] There are also significant numbers of freelance creative workers in other sectors.[4]

Hiring freelancers can bring particular expertise to creative enterprises, whether that is by bringing in an art historian to advise on a film script or commissioning a comedian to write a pantomime for the local theatre. Freelancers also allow organisations to be more ambitious with the projects they take: 89% of creative businesses employ fewer than five people.[5]

But it is not only the creative industries who are reliant on freelance talent. The rest of the economy has seen a steep rise in the number of people who are self-employed, with the total number rising from 3.8 million in 2008 to 4.6 million in 2015.[6] Many issues raised by creative freelancers, including access to finance and workspace requirements, are (or are likely to become) issues for the workforce at large.

Despite their importance to the sector, the self-employed in the creative industries feel invisible to policy-makers. Freelancers told us that they had never been consulted on the policies that affect them, and many of the businesses we spoke to had never taken stock of how many self-employed people they work with.

To our knowledge, there has not been a piece of work that looked at the working life, opportunities and policy concerns of the whole creative freelance workforce. This is a significant gap in understanding at a time when it is becoming ever more important to think boldly about the 21st century workforce and how best to improve productivity and growth.

To address this, the Creative Industries Federation surveyed around 700 creative freelancers and spoke to 50 businesses, alongside legal specialists, financial advisors and trade bodies. We set out recommendations to improve the working lives of this vital but undervalued part of the workforce. Doing so will help grow their businesses, the creative industries and the economy.

Some of the recommendations in this report cover policies where freelancers were not considered when that policy was designed, such as higher education policy or the need for freelance visas. Other concerns common across all sub-sectors of the creative industries included accessing legal advice, financial support and workspace.

This report looks at what government can do to support the creative freelance economy. But industry also has a responsibility. Harriet Finney, deputy chief executive of the Creative Industries Federation said: *"This report highlights some poor business practice in the creative industries – including late payment and the prevalence of unpaid work. The Federation will raise these concerns with its members and industry partners, and champion the importance of freelancers to the sector as well as to government."*

Understanding this workforce has never been more important. The emergence of the 'gig economy' – epitomised by companies like Uber and Deliveroo – has put a focus on how people work today. Policies designed in response to the 'gig economy' could unfairly damage the livelihoods of freelancers in the creative economy if the government does not understand who they are or how they work. This report is the start of helping explain this to government and beyond.

Rick Haythornthwaite, chair of the Creative Industries Federation, said:

"This report shines a light on the working conditions and practices of British freelancers today. It also highlights the particular value of freelancers to the creative industries.

"Both government and business need better to understand this hugely important part of the workforce so that policy in this area is both sensible and fair and these workers can contribute most effectively to the UK's highly successful creative sector."

"Freelancers are the undervalued backbone of Britain's thriving creative economy. They have been invisible to policy-makers for too long. 'Creative Freelancers' sets out to change that."

Policy recommendations

We call on government to:

1. Recognise the importance of the creative freelance workforce

   a) Make self-employment, across all sectors, part of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) ministerial brief

   b) Introduce an immigration system that works for creative freelancers

   c) Support a creative careers campaign – a UK-wide advertising campaign that inspires people to enter into the creative industries and dissolves misperceptions about careers within it, including freelance work

   d) Ensure that the way government ranks higher education institutions does not disadvantage those institutions where students become freelancers instead of taking staff jobs after graduation.

2. Support the creative freelance workforce

   a) Support an independent UK-wide virtual hub – a 'business booster network' – which signposts existing business advice, maps local support services, and facilitates peer-to-peer mentoring for creative entrepreneurs

   b) Protect freelancers' creative workspaces against development into residential spaces, by making sure usage cannot be changed without planning permission

   c) Fund the accreditation of online courses aimed at freelancers

   d) The freelance workforce should be considered as part of HM Treasury's review of patient capital (investment with no expectation of turning a quick profit)

   e) Pilot mechanisms to provide sustainable social security for freelancers – for example, short-term relief grants or community supports underwritten by government. Ensure current mechanisms, including universal credit, work for creative freelancers

   f) Provide extra support during transition to Making Tax Digital and quarterly tax returns.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY FREELANCERS?

Freelance work and self-employment in the creative industries takes many forms: from artists to peripatetic teachers, producers to designers. For some workers, freelancing is a choice, with benefits such as greater flexibility in working hours and conditions. However, for the majority of creative freelancers, it is the only way they can do their work, as the shape and type of many creative businesses mean there are not full-time staff positions available. Having freelancers available means businesses can access specialist skills or grow their workforce as and when they need to.

In this report 'freelancers' refer to people who are self-employed, including sole traders.

What is self-employment?

A self-employed person is someone who is normally seen as responsible for the success or failure of their business and decides what work they do and when they do it. In the UK they pay tax through Self Assessment rather than PAYE and do not get sick pay or holiday pay (although they may be eligible for Employment and Support Allowance).

What is a sole trader?

Some people who are self-employed are the sole owners of a business – these are called sole traders. Unlike a limited company, a sole trader does not have to register with Companies House or have a director.

What is the gig economy?

The gig economy is a term used to describe part of the labour market characterised by the prevalence of very short-term contracts or freelance work, as opposed to permanent jobs. Companies such as Deliveroo and Uber are seen as epitomising the gig economy. A common feature of the gig economy is a reliance on digital platforms and apps to connect self-employed workers with work.[7] Another common feature is a high number (thousands) of contracted pieces of work per annum. This is in contrast with the creative freelance economy. Our research suggests that creative freelancers are unlikely to enter into more than 100 contracts a year.
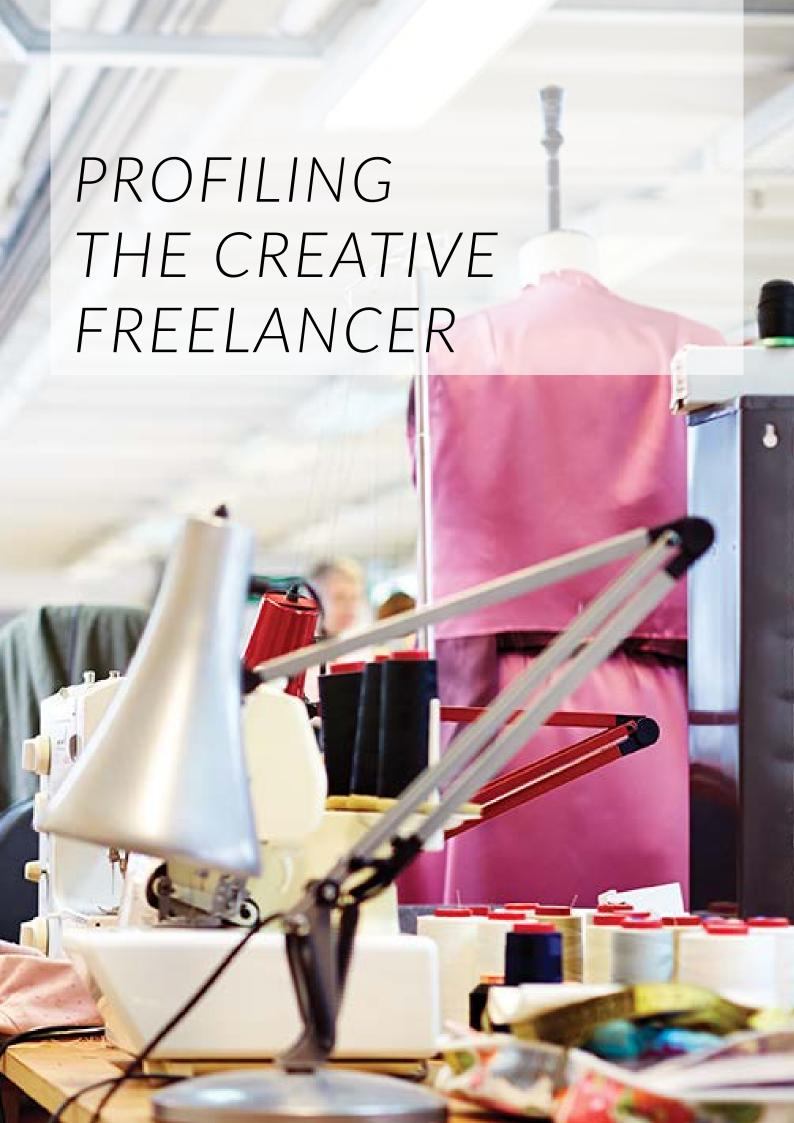
In our survey of almost 700 creative freelancers we asked how they described themselves. Many take on a range of different roles.

The most common words used were:
- **Writer** – 124 respondents (e.g. script, song, blog, journalist)
- **Producer** – 91 respondents (e.g. arts, creative, circus, music)
- **Artist** – 88 respondents (e.g. dance, visual, film, textile, glass, foley, blacksmith, silversmith, ceramic)
- **Consultant** – 76 respondents (e.g. arts engagements, creative education, choreography, fundraising, conservation)
- **Director** – 58 respondents (e.g. theatre, video, film, artistic creative, executive)

Other answers included: aerial performance rigger, jeweller, movement artist, flautist, poet and performance artist, agent, stage set and costume designer, sound engineer, copywriter, stylist, freelance coach.

Drag performer 'Georgia Tasda' in Thursbitch, Valley of the Demons. Image credit: Mike Tyldesley

National Theatre. Image credit: Kerry Harrison

PROFILING THE CREATIVE FREELANCER

PROFILING THE CREATIVE FREELANCER

Why do people in the creative industries become freelancers?

We asked almost 700 freelancers why they chose to work that way and more than half felt that being freelance was 'necessary for their career': being self-employed was the only way they could conduct their business and/or pursue their creative goals.

There were also other reasons people chose to work for themselves.

Here we look at five common reasons for creative workers becoming freelance:
· Too specialist to work for one company full-time
· Wanting creative control
· Family
· Pursuing a creative dream post-retirement
· Redundancy or external pressures

Too specialist to work for one company full time

In some jobs in the creative industries the likelihood of being employed full-time is limited, but organisations require certain skilled workers for shorter periods of time. This is not just the case in professions that require significant technical abilities, such as visual effects. It is also true in areas such as writing or design, where a particular style of work might only be wanted for a short period of time.

Roy Peker
VFX artist
London

"I am a VFX artist specialising mostly in compositing. I am originally from Israel but have lived and worked in London for the past two to three years. My mother is French so I have dual nationality and am able to work and study in the EU which made things very easy for me to move here.

Usually I work on site in several different studios for different lengths of time depending on the project. The period that you work on a studio project could be two weeks, eight months or more – it all depends on timing, luck and the studio's requirements. VFX pipelines (the process or workflow method for each project) differ from studio to studio. In general, it only takes a few days to get used to the next pipeline and match yourself to the rhythm of the studio. I have gathered a list of studios that are in town and keep in touch with studios that I worked with in the past for future work. Sometimes I do work from home on small projects but my preference is to work in an environment where I can get feedback and advice from colleagues.

Usually in the sector you are freelance until you are offered a full-time role. You get used to being freelance and you plan your own time including any holidays. At first it was a bit unpleasant as I moved here for a job with just a one-month contract, which wasn't easy to do, but with enough faith in myself I knew that it would work out, as it did. I got more confident about myself as an artist. I feel much better securing my next job and hope to get more creative jobs in well-known studios."

Davey Moore
Screenwriter and development producer
working in children's television
Manchester

"I have over 20 years experience as a screenwriter in the children's television industry. I've worked on shows including Octonauts, Rastamouse, Dennis and Gnasher, Thomas and Friends, Dick and Dom in da Bungalow and Kids' Choice 2013 Award Winner House of Anubis. As a development producer I co-wrote the pilot episode of animated action-comedy Boyster for Disney XD and co-created Boy and the Dinosaur – the third most viewed show at MIPJunior, the world's showcase for kids programmes, in 2013. All the shows I work on are broadcast in the UK and/or the US.

In terms of my skills, for screenwriting imagination is the raw tool. Through experience I've learned: how to describe action on screen on a page using words; how to tell a story in focused beats; and how to finish an episode in a satisfying way. Development-wise, I bring my experience of writing on long-running shows to help create ideas for multiple series.

Development work doesn't pay as well as writing but I really enjoy working on intellectual property from the beginning. However, if the show doesn't get commissioned (which it frequently doesn't) then I haven't really got anything to show for it. And if it does get commissioned, there still isn't any guarantee of working on the show – usually because the broadcaster wants to put together their own writing team.

Despite the fact CBeebies and CBBC are based in Salford, [many] of their shows are produced by independent production companies in London. So although I work from home I go to London for a meeting about once every three weeks. I almost always pay for my own travel. I am afraid that if I ask for expenses then people will use a London-based writer instead.

Barriers:
· Lack of sick pay
· Illness in case it affects my income protection insurance
· Missing out on work while on holiday
· Difficulties with keeping track of income for HMRC
· Understanding of VAT and how to claim it back."

Rosie Ashforth
Animator
Bristol

"I became a freelancer in 2011 after 10 years of animation contracts, mainly on films. I guess I could have moved to Bristol and set myself up as a freelancer at any point. But that would have been a very scary thing to do. I needed a big job to force me to move.

So when Aardman Animations green-lit the 'Arthur Christmas' film I jumped at the chance to move to Bristol where I could be nearer to my mum and enjoy my hobby of horse riding. Unfortunately Aardman only made one 3D computer graphics (CG) feature film, but after being on that for two years, I had grown roots in Bristol and decided to stay.

In Bristol the only jobs available were short-term freelance job on TV shows and commercials so I decided to become freelance rather than move back to London and get a longer contract. Working on 'Arthur Christmas' helped me get to know more people and companies to reach out. This has seen me commute to Glasgow and London, work from home, and work all over Bristol, where most companies let me take my dog to work. I've worked on commercials, TV shows, games cut scenes, games trailers, theme park rides, internet adverts and VR experiences.

It's not always perfect. For example, I'm about to start a three-and-a-half month contract in London which costs me a lot of money in travel and accommodation as I have to stay away from home four nights a week. But I'll be home at weekends and still able to ride a couple of times a week. I consider my biggest achievement being able to live the life I want to live."

Wanting creative control

Many freelancers choose to be self-employed because it gives them creative control. Most of our respondents reported that being self-employed allows them to pursue what they want to do. Sometimes they also improve their salary whilst doing it.

However, there can be downsides to this type of employment. Some freelancers reported that the disadvantages outweigh the benefits.

Hannah Nicklin
Portfolio worker in the video games sector
London

"I work freelance across different projects because I want to work from home and choose the days and hours that I work. It's the happiest I've been. I'm aware that I get bored very easily, and would struggle with a job that was the same for too long. I am lucky to have found a sector with people willing to employ me on this basis.

This month I have:

1. Spent four days travelling to and presenting a games conference in Antwerp

2. Worked two days per week as a producer and narrative designer on a remote UK-based games project

3. Worked two days per week as a writer/narrative designer on a remote Copenhagen-based games project

4. Written a 3,800 word article about swimming and Abzu for a new magazine

5. Printed and started selling a zine of a collection of six essays I wrote on a French game design collective

6. Done between 10 and 15 hours a week of cycling training and at least one significant race each week

7. Met with two people to give them free advice on projects

8. Promoted and run an evening event in the volunteer London Women's Racing League which I run social media for

9. Been a guest on a games podcast

10. Written a proposal for a conference in June

11. Kept my Patreon (an online paid subscription content programme) backers updated, and processed and posted out around 75 copies of my zine

12. Emails, always emails.

Remote work in video games production and writing offers more stability financially. In terms of time it allows me to not have to ruthlessly overwork myself. For the first time in around a decade I have weekends off because I don't have to fill every hour with unpaid work trying to secure other work, or with trying to fit in enough ill-paid work so that I can afford to live.

Despite this, as a freelancer I face the following barriers:
· No sick pay
· Being taken seriously as a woman.
· No maternity leave
· No pension
· No savings
· Serious issues in 'proving' I should be extended credit or be able to rent properties without PAYE payslips
· No union or standard rates [in my sector]."

Sabine Jones
Legal translator and consultant in the music industry
Bicester

"I've had a successful international career as a translator and interpreter in the creative industries. In the UK, I worked for PRS for Music and as chief executive for the Performing Artists Media Rights Association (which later merged with PPL). Before going freelance, I set up Kobalt Music Group's neighbouring rights division as managing director. But once I'd completed this task I felt it was time for a change.

The music industry in particular has seen an increase in self-employed consultants, often as a result of the mergers and acquisitions which in turn entailed redundancies. As a freelance legal translator and consultant I was hoping to combine my specialist linguistic knowledge with my previous experiences of company expansion. To improve the consultancy side and learn more about entrepreneurship, I undertook a part time eMBA at Henley Business School. Undertaking both means my working week goes beyond Monday to Friday, although I do try to take one day off as a 'personal day'.

My long-term goal is to get the balance right between working from home (peace, quiet and somewhat lonely) and working with a client on their office premises in London (energetic, buzz and social). Creativity is sometimes good when you are alone, but other times you need people to bounce ideas from and cross-fertilise.

As a freelancer, not only have I tripled my turnover in one year, I've had time to do charitable things and given back knowledge to other freelancers. My overall dream is that I create a support network specifically for music industry consultants – similar to a cooperative, without membership fees and on a mutual support basis."

Family

According to the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE), one in seven freelancers is a working mother. Between 2008 and 2016 the number of mothers working as freelancers increased by 79%.[8]

Many working parents are trying to find a way to work while having time for their families.[9] Making money through freelancing can also be important for single parents and carers.

There are, however, significant drawbacks to being freelance for those starting a family. Employees who are pregnant are eligible for statutory maternity pay, which is 90% of average weekly earnings for six weeks, dropping to £140.98 for 33 weeks. If you are self-employed and pay national insurance you may be eligible for maternity allowance at £140.98 for the 39 weeks. IPSE has recommended that this system is simplified and that the government should pay statutory maternity pay on an equivalent basis to freelancers who have been paying National Insurance contributions. IPSE is also calling for a revision of paternity pay.[10]

Bek Cruddace
Illustrator and cartographer
North Hampshire

"I am a designer and illustrator who specialises in hand-drawn, illustrated maps and cartography. I graduated from University College London with an MSc in geographic and geodetic information systems. I worked in academic research and private consultancy for 10 years. I moved into professional independent design after being made redundant in 2009.

Now unemployed and with a young family, I found it very difficult to get back into the workplace. It was impossible to find a job that I wasn't overqualified for and that fitted around family life, so I decided to launch my own design business in 2011. When my husband first suggested I work for myself I thought it was a crazy idea. I had no experience of managing and promoting a business and only one of our three children had started at school. But I realised that if I ever wanted to work

in a professional capacity ever again I would need to be self-employed. For about the first two years I got up before 6am to work for a couple of hours before getting the children up. I worked when I could during the day and evening to meet my client deadlines. Once our youngest started primary school, in 2013, things became easier and now on average I work a 30-hour week.

Since launching my own business my portfolio has grown to combine commissions for the AA and the Londonist, Canal and River Trust, Port Lympne Wildlife Reserve, Tesco Magazine, Adnams Southwold, France Today, ABTA and Discover Britain Magazine with private commissions and my own retail designs. I also sell some of my designs wholesale.

My salary has increased year on year as my business has grown from a modest addition to the household budget to more in line with an average UK salary. Not only do I really enjoy having such a creative job but I have a real sense of achievement in being my own boss which allows me to work flexibly around family life."

Pursuing a creative dream post-retirement

Our survey discovered that there was a particular category of freelancers who were using retirement to build a business based on a creative passion, making some money at the same time.

Carol Layfield

Founder of K-nit and Notonthehighstreet.com partner

Nottingham

K-nit, a British knitwear business, was founded in 2013 by retiree Carol Layfield and her son Mark, then 25, a recent media production graduate.

Carol, who previously worked as both a nurse and knitwear designer, started making fashionable and high-quality beanie hats for her son in her free time. She soon started receiving positive reactions and orders from other friends and family. Excited family discussion quickly led to a well-formulated business vision for K-nit and the business was born.

Today the business, which is run out of Carol's home in Nottingham, sells internationally, both with Notonthehighstreet.com and through a number of global wholesale partnerships. The business is thriving, with turnover growing at well over 50% this year.

Carol said: "I hadn't anticipated running a business in my retirement but I'm doing something I love, and I would be knitting for fun anyway, so it's great to be making a business out of my passion."

Redundancy or external pressures

Nearly one in 10 freelancers who responded to our survey became self-employed when they were made redundant. Other respondents felt forced to become freelance for other reasons, including bad health.

Marc Duke

Marketing consultant

Hertfordshire

"I am a marketing consultant for businesses, mostly tech startups. I have been a freelancer for over 15 years since my role in the marketing department of a technology vendor became redundant in 2002. I cherish being my own boss and the master of my destiny even if there are times when things are a little precarious.

When I lost my job I asked my network for help and received some great suggestions and offers of freelance work. I thought I would freelance until I found a full-time role. However my wife was very ill while expecting our son and so after a few years I took the lifestyle choice to be freelance permanently.

I started out working with brands such as HP, Samsung and Dell and agencies such as Hill and Knowlton, Brands2Life and Lewis. Now my clients are primarily technology startups. I am the community manager of the Tech London Advocate creativetech working group. The most valuable thing you have as a freelancer is your network and I am an avid connector.

Barriers:

- Getting the balance between serving current clients and maintaining a pipeline for future work when projects/contracts come to an end
- I have seen my day rates fall over the last few years."

How do creative freelancers work?

How a creative freelancer works depends on the type of work they do.

Most creative freelancers we spoke to were contracted to do pieces of work. More than half said they take an average of one to 10 contracts each year. Some take these jobs alongside part-time employment, others combine different sorts of freelance work. Teaching alongside practice was a particularly common combination for respondents to our survey.

Others submit finished work to clients in the hope or expectation that they will want to buy it. These freelancers may also take commissions directly from customers. This is particularly common for artists, those working in the craft sector, musicians and journalists.

Working as a freelancer has some practical consequences, such as dealing with irregular cash flow. There has also been some research on the psychological effects. The University of Westminster found that the mental health of musicians and producers was negatively affected by factors including anxiety about where the next piece of work might come from.[11] This is arguably particularly true of those who do not have longer-term contracts.

Number of contracts each year	0	1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–50	51–100	101+
Respondents	40	244	111	46	19	49	15	10

Contracts in the gig economy vs. creative freelancers

A platform that facilitates contracts between (for example) a delivery driver and a customer is likely to 'facilitate' many a day, most lasting less than an hour. If the driver works 260 days in a year (the average number of weekdays in a year), and accepts, say, eight delivery orders per day, they will be party to more than 2,000 contracts per annum.

In contrast, around half of those responding to our survey of creative freelancers worked on between one and nine contracts per year, with few involved in more than 100.

Although the majority of respondents were happy being self-employed, a few said they would prefer to be an employee. One said:

> *"I typically undertake two to three long-term contracts [each year]. In many ways these contracts feel like they should be employment rather than freelance contracts. I believe they are freelance simply to save the contractor extra cost and the need to address my rights. This became a particular issue for me regarding maternity leave."*

Many others felt that working freelance was the right option for them. The following case studies illustrate different ways of working as a creative freelancer – from taking small numbers of longer-term contracts to large numbers of short-term contracts as well as people who do not see themselves as having contracted work at all.[12]

Teaching alongside working as a creative freelancer also emerged as a common combination and we also explore this in detail in the following section.

Five to six long-term contracts each year

Kerry Harker
Curator
Leeds

"Before becoming a freelance curator, I had various senior management roles in the museums and galleries sector, including co-founding The Tetley in Leeds, where I was artistic director until 2015, and as curator of exhibitions at Harewood House Trust. When a fixed-term contract ended, it opened up a window of opportunity to pursue a PhD at the University of Leeds, so I decided to go freelance in order to fit work around research.

As a freelance curator, I recently co-curated a major survey of work by the contemporary photographer Peter Mitchell, at Bradford's Impressions Gallery. This year

I am taking on five to six total contracts for various curatorial projects but three to four projects can overlap at any one time. The length of these vary quite a bit: some are more open-ended research-driven projects; others relate to curating a specific exhibition for a gallery in a known timeframe.

The visual arts sector needs highly-skilled freelancers because internally staff teams have been shrinking within organisations, due to cuts to public funding and subsequent restructures. As a result, organisations aren't always carrying all the expertise and capacity they need right now. One of my current contracts is to investigate an organisation's 30-year archive to arrive at public engagement and programming outputs. They have no internal capacity to do this work at the moment and no permanent staff with the relevant expertise either."

20 short-term contracts each year

Elliot Griggs
Lighting designer
Brighton and London

"I couldn't say what an average working week is like, but it fits one of two types. If I'm 'in production', then I would generally be in the theatre 9am to 10pm every day but Sunday, and later if the show is particularly long. Otherwise, my weeks tend to be extremely spread out, observing rehearsals and having meetings about current or future projects.

For my degree I chose a core subject – maths – which I studied at the University of Warwick. There I discovered the technical theatre society and eventually decided I wanted to become a lighting designer. After graduation, I undertook a course in lighting design at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). Here I learned from visiting lighting designers who proved invaluable as contacts going forward. I also undertook work experience placements at Donmar Warehouse and Sadler's Wells. RADA opened a lot of doors to me which I would have struggled to find on my own. I continued

to work casually as a lighting technician to fund the rest of my course and to be able to afford initial design work, which was typically very low pay.

I started out in tiny theatres above pubs, freezing warehouses, churches and 'theatres' where electrocution was a high possibility. Whilst slow to start, it began to snowball onwards and gradually these small theatres turned into larger ones and spread further out across the UK. Two notable shows would be Pomona, which started at the Orange Tree Theatre [in Richmond] then transferred to the National Theatre and Royal Exchange Manchester, and Fleabag, which started in the tiny upstairs space at the Soho Theatre and became the hit BBC comedy.

Barriers:
· Dealing with contracts which set out pay, dates and [how to] protect my work in terms of copyright, licensing and insurance purposes.
· Concerns around long-term financial planning and illness
· Travel expenses are not often paid."

50 contracts-plus each year

Mark Ashbee
Freelance photographer
Bristol

"No one working week is the same. Last week I was working in Bristol for two days and in Devon for one day. The rest of the time was spent editing, invoicing and giving quotes.

Next week I am preparing for a shoot on the Monday and then travelling to Devon for a four-day advertising shoot. Then editing over the weekend.

I love what I do. Photography is ever-changing, clients are always different and no day is ever the same. With so many contracts, I need to be very organised and try to leave enough time for editing in my schedule. I have three young children and a partner who is often away one or two nights a week. We run a very coordinated diary.

Some clients find this difficult because they are not so organised. They don't really understand that I have other clients and that I can't change a date at short notice. I have stopped taking bookings before projects are finished because completion dates always change. Instead I find a way to fit them in, often at a weekend. Workflow can back up, especially editing. I am contemplating employing someone to help with editing but I would still need to oversee.

Barriers:
· Getting quality work being outside the London bubble, but it is getting better
· Educating clients about usage licence, intellectual property and third party use
· Clients want quality photography but some are still surprised at cost
· Delayed payments."

Does not see herself as having contracted work

Emily Speed
Fine artist
Cheshire

"Following graduation from Wimbledon College of Art in 2006 I have maintained my practice through self-initiated and -developed projects. This includes exhibiting work in a combination of solo and group shows, prizes and awards, artist residencies and part-time lecturing. My approach has been supported by mentoring, financial and professional support from organisations and peers, nominations from curators for opportunities, and by applying for opportunities and funds directly.

In the last 10 years I have shown work in over 30 solo or group exhibitions in the UK and internationally, been shortlisted for or won six awards, completed eight residencies and published six books. My work is held in over 20 public and private collections. In 2014-15 I received a scholarship to the British School at Rome. In 2016 I had my first child and delivered solo exhibitions in the UK, USA and Canada. I have now received a Grants for the Arts award from Arts Council England for the production of a new body of work over the next 18 months.

The single biggest benefit of being a freelance artist is, in theory, autonomy, and therefore control over our own work. However, there are barriers to this freedom, as follows:
· Extremely low income (this has varied between £6,000 and £11,000 over last five years)
· Precarious work patterns
· The rising cost of studio space and materials
· The lack of paid opportunities
· Residencies and funded opportunities that do not pay a living wage
· Time spent on administration, applications, networking and promoting my work is unpaid and detracts from time in the studio to make work
· Increasing childcare and travel costs."

Teaching as a freelancer

Teaching can provide a steady income for creative freelancers, while allowing the person to pursue their creative ambitions. The 'Creative Graduates Creative Futures' study in 2009 showed that a third of creative graduates taught in their early careers and 18% were teaching at the time of the survey.[13]

Two common models of peripatetic teaching are given below:

Creative practitioners in the HE/FE sector

Each year Plymouth College of Art hires up to 150 freelance professional creative practitioners in the work of the college and a further 100 in partnership with Plymouth School of Creative Arts, of which the college is sole sponsor. Freelance engagement ensures curriculum diversity, enhancement and currency, industry connectivity and community engagement. It guarantees the widest-ranging specialist input through diverse roles as part-time permanent staff, visiting lecturers, artists-in-residence, teachers, teaching assistants, exhibitors, external consultants and volunteers. Freelance specialists are also contributors to outreach work in social impact. Art colleges are incubators and hubs for creative talent in highly skilled employment that is nurtured and inspired by the contributions of professional freelancers.

Musicians as freelance examiners

The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, the examining body for music qualifications, engages more than 700 UK music professionals as examiners on a freelance basis to examine around the world. Any music professional with the relevant qualifications and experience may apply to become an examiner if they meet the requisite criteria and undergo the required training and moderation. Examiners are fundamental to the work of ABRSM and it is reliant on them for the delivery of its music exams.

ABRSM's business model does not require examiners to be employed on a full-time basis. A spokesman said: "Experience has taught us that the best examiners tend to have portfolio careers and are still active in their relevant musical specialism."

Christopher Swann

Freelance clarinettist, ABRSM examiner and tutor in clarinet at the Royal Northern College of Music

North west England

"I trained at the Royal Academy of Music and was subsequently successful in securing a co-principal position with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. After 12 years I resigned to pursue a freelance path, largely to expand my musical activities.

In addition to being in demand as an orchestral musician, I have been able to pursue a varied chamber music existence, develop a modest niche as a soloist, become a long-standing member of ABRSM's examining panels as well as being a tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. Delivering masterclasses and conducting/coaching are also part of my working life.

Examining for ABRSM, which is the world's leading music exam provider, is another way of providing skilled musical feedback to all ages and backgrounds. Other activities undertaken by that organisation and involving freelancers brings the musical message to a wider audience, thus helping to raise the profile of instrumental teaching and music-making in general.

The advantages of my freelance existence are not for all. I enjoy the independence of my work and the demands that I have to satisfy to be able to operate in a highly competitive environment. What is now described as a 'portfolio career' applies very strongly to me and to my freelance colleagues. The word 'portfolio' however could easily be replaced by the word 'survival'.

Barriers:
- Time spent travelling to and from work, across the country
- Conflicting offers of work
- Payment for services rendered varies greatly
- Expenses such as travel are sometimes not paid at all by well-known organisations
- Some contractors do not set a respectable basic fee
- Many ask for services to be free
- HMRC seem to want to classify self-employed musicians as having Schedule E status (this is for workers who are not eligible for self-employed status, often because they earn more than 80% of their income from one employer). You often have to make the case to retain your Schedule D (self-employed) status
- There is a growing tendency to deduct tax at source which affects cash flow
- Having to enrol and then immediately leave each pension scheme for short-term work
- Working relationships are somewhat transient and the support of regular workmates as in a contract orchestra is absent
- Psychological pressure because I need to be at the top of my game at all times
- Transport to and from concerts
- Auditions are unpaid – could lose out on paid work opportunities."

A profile of creative freelancers

Overview and observation

The creative freelancers who responded to our survey were on average highly educated, white and non-disabled – reflecting the national make-up of the creative industries.[14]

However, using freelancers should mean companies can hire more diverse workers. For example, a theatre working on a play about the experience of the Asian community in Manchester can hire writers and actors from that community.

The Creative Industries Federation report, Creative Diversity, in 2015, highlighted the business benefits of having a more inclusive workforce and recommended that organisations rigorously consider their freelance hiring practices.[15]

The freelance workforce in detail:

Age

We surveyed creative freelancers of all ages. Although many experiences appeared common across all age brackets, there were some things that concerned freelancers that they explicitly linked to their age. One freelancer told us:

"My father was a self-employed architect/landscape architect after the Second World War until retirement due to ill health in the 1970s. He advised me, 'Don't be self-employed.' I now understand – you need energy and full health to work this way. Not an easy route as you get older, with no sick pay to support you."

George Lee, co-founder of The Age of No Retirement, said:

"This is not so much about 'age', but about how our society is failing to adapt to the new realities of work. As we live longer, more dynamic lives and our working patterns become more fluid, many people still feel uncertain and vulnerable. Feeling safe and secure at work is a need we all share, whatever our age. In a world that is rapidly changing, companies and government need to develop new models to empower people, and support their needs throughout their entire working lives."

Disability

The relationship between disability and freelancing is complex. The lack of support in terms of sick leave, pensions and more may be particularly problematic for people with disabilities.

Rachael Smith, a ceramicist based in Wales and north Devon, said:

"The main barrier [to working to my full potential] is being dyslexic. Initial contact is nearly always written. This immediately puts me on the back foot with companies, grants, funding and contracts.

"Being disabled too makes it even more difficult, I find breaking into the world of exhibitions and galleries is difficult, especially if you are not going out and socialising often due to disability and health, so I tend to feel at a disadvantage, especially when it come to international venues."

However, some disabled freelancers we spoke to made clear that freelancing was the only way they could work because it allowed them control over working hours and to ensure that their needs were met by any working environment they interacted with. Three respondents said they became freelance because of their disability.

In a 2016-2017 survey of the National Theatre's acting workforce, 5% who answered the question had a disability. A significant number of people did not respond. If we assume all non-respondents were not disabled, 2% were disabled. Across the whole of the UK, **16%** of working age adults are disabled.[16]

Education

Freelancers who responded to our survey were far more likely to have a degree than those in creative occupations as a whole. Almost 90% of those surveyed had at least a degree or equivalent.

This is much higher than the national average (32.7%) and is even higher than those in creative occupations across the economy. (In 2015, 62.5% in creative occupations were filled by someone who had at least a degree or equivalent.[17]) A 2014 survey of the creative media workforce, including film, television, video game and radio production, also found a very high and rising level of workers with a degree: 78% in 2014, compared with 65% in 2010.[18]

The survey saw sizeable numbers of responses from alumni of all colleges of the University of the Arts London, Oxford University, the University of Edinburgh including the College of Art and the University of Sussex.

Other institutions included: Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moores and its former incarnation as a polytechnic, University of York, University of London, Scottish College of Textiles, Surrey Institute of Art and Design, London Studio Centre, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, The Coach Training Institute, London College of Printing, Royal Academy of Art, Gloucestershire College of Art, Academy of Live and Recorded Arts, College for the Distributive Trades and Institute of Sonology.

Many courses taken by respondents were highly specialised. These included: BA animation, Dip HE in stage management and technical theatre, BSc clothing design and manufacture, BSc mechanical and manufacturing engineering, post-graduate diploma in publishing and print, NHD in natural history Illustration, HND editorial and advertising photography, CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards) degree in art therapy.

We asked our respondents whether they felt their educational institutions had supported them in their career. Less than a quarter of those who answered the question said yes.[19] In some cases, this is not surprising, as often courses did not directly relate to their careers. Some older respondents said that there were no expectations of such support when they graduated. However, others had ideas for how support from higher and further education could be improved, particularly at the start of a career.

Support given sometimes came in the form of part-time teaching work (see: 'How are freelancers given work', teaching as a freelancer page 18) . Other support mentioned included free space, mentoring and networks, including initiatives to bring graduates together at regular intervals.

The key skills and knowledge not taught but identified as priorities were:

· Business skills especially tax (such as registering with HMRC)
· An understanding of intellectual property law
· Work planning
· Fundraising skills.

Creative freelancers told us:

"They could have provided training in the skills and tools freelancers need to thrive, i.e budgeting, pitching for work, etc".

"I left uni with no clue and little confidence of how to break into the creative industry I wanted to work in. There hadn't been any advice whatsoever on the practicalities of finding work and getting it. Lectures/meetings with people who work in the industry would have been useful. More support for creative graduates – how to network and get contacts, where to look for jobs, how to apply whether it's looking for entry level work or starting up on your own as a freelancer."

Sara Whybrew, director of the Creative Employment Programme at Creative & Cultural Skills, said:

"Educators need to better equip those undertaking applied arts courses with wider skills and knowledge, particularly where progression into freelancing is common. Whilst the need to understand the legal and financial obligations of operating as a freelancer is essential, it is also recognised that developing fundraising skills and identifying appropriate funders that can support individual ambitions, as well as understanding how to build effective partnerships, are important factors in the sustainability of many artists and practitioners."

Ethnicity

Just 8% of freelancers who responded to our survey were from black, asian or minority ethnic (BAME) groups, which is below the level of BAME workers across the creative economy and the UK economy as a whole (11.4%/11.3%).

Most of the creative industries are based in parts of the country that are much more ethnically diverse than the UK overall. For example, one third of the creative industries are based in London where 40% of the workforce is BAME.

Gender

In the last decade, female employment in the UK has increased by 1.4 million to almost 15 million.[20] A recent report produced by NotontheHighStreet.com (the online marketplace showcasing the work of small creative companies) looked at the ways in which creative industries have played a significant role in this rise. Small creative business are more likely to be owned by women than other small businesses, with 27% of small creative businesses female-owned against 21% of all small UK businesses. The vast majority of businesses on the Notonthehighstreet platform itself – 89% – are owned by women.[21]

The majority (68%) of freelancers who answered our survey were female in contrast with those working in the creative economy as a whole (36.1%). Just over 47%

of jobs in the UK as a whole were filled by women.[22] The survey of the whole of the UK's freelance workforce published by IPSE (the self-employed and freelancer association) showed 41% were female.

Businesses noted that the gender of freelancers they used tended to align with perceived 'traditional' gender roles. For example, at the National Theatre the gender split in production and technical jobs (including many engineering roles) is 60% male/40% female. In costume and design, 90% of roles are done by women while 60% of roles in learning are done by women.

Many parts of the sector are making a concerted effort to rebalance gender inequality. Directors UK launched a report last year which called for decisive action to address the fact that women make up less than a quarter of working film directors.[23]

Pay and salary

Creative freelancers work in every part of the creative industries, from advertising through to video games, and at all ages and every level. It is not surprising that salaries vary greatly.

Some respondents were earning under £18,000 a year, others were earning more than £100,000. Some sub-sectors are more lucrative than others. The most common salary bracket for those working in freelance advertising was £30,000 to £50,000. Many working in craft and design or as authors earned less than £18,000.

More than one in 10 of our respondents became freelance for greater earning potential. But there are many who are concerned about what they are able to earn. They told us:

> *"I feel more confident these days about charging a realistic daily/hourly rate. Personally I use the funding guidance from Creative Scotland[24] as the basis for this. However, I think this needs to be talked about more widely – both amongst freelancers and potential employers. A lot of (particularly new) freelancers charge unrealistically low rates when you consider tax, insurance, holiday pay, sick pay, pensions, admin etc. The wide range of rates quoted can sometimes lead to undervaluing of this work by employers."*

> *"Rates of pay [are my greatest concern] – I love my job but the amount of time and energy that I put into a production is not matched by the fee. Only the very large companies or producers pay fairly for the demands, physically and mentally, of this role."*

These problems were exacerbated by a preponderance of unpaid work in the sector where 65% of respondents to our survey had taken unpaid work within the last year. More than 80% of these freelancers said that that doing unpaid work was 'normal' for them.

The prevalence of unpaid work is disappointing as across the sector there have been several initiatives to emphasise the value of creative work and ensure that it is properly recompensed. A survey last year by IPSE and The Freelancer Club, a members' club for freelancers,

found that creative freelancers were on average losing more than £5,000 in revenue per year through taking unpaid assignments.[25] This year The Freelancer Club launched a campaign calling for freelancers to turn down unpaid work.[26]

The Musicians Union has also campaigned against unpaid work and has profiled organisations who have asked performers to play for free by 'naming and shaming' them online, as part of its 'Work not Play' campaign.

Many in the industry accept that the issue is nuanced and potentially difficult to legislate on. But there is support for wider recognition of the importance of paying workers and performers properly if we are to allow creative talent to prosper.

Where do freelancers live and work?

Our survey responses highlighted that physical workspaces and hubs were in high demand, both in and out of cities: more than a quarter of the freelancers who responded wanted a shared space or hub to work in.

Those who worked from home often cited expense as the reason why they worked this way, but said that this isolation made creating a network more difficult and could be lonely.

Without a traditional office structure, informal and formal networks are of particular importance to the creative freelancer. This is in contrast to those working in the 'gig economy' who often have a digital platform that mediates between themselves and the customer.

"[I work] from home... [Workspace] is a huge issue for me, it means I am isolated and suffer from mild mental and emotional challenges on a daily basis. I cannot afford to rent a desk in most co-working spaces in London which usually start from £250 a month. I would very much like to start or find a co-working space specific to the arts industry, and that is affordable for ad hoc and/or part-time use."

Existing creative hubs were often criticised because they did not have good access to wifi, even in the capital.

"[I work in] London...Access to consistent wifi is tricky. I have membership [of a London arts organisation] where I now base the majority of my work. This means an annual subscription, travel costs and food and drink."

"Most places with access to free wifi are rammed."

Out of London the options were more limited, even in major creative clusters:

"What I would REALLY LOVE is some sort of private members club, or a media club or hub or space in Manchester that I could pay to be a member of. And then [I could] use that for meetings, go there to work sometimes for a change of scene or meet other media people in the evenings etc."

Existing hubs did not necessarily offer support to those with extra requirements:

"Now I have a child I am finding it impossible to work. I need a freelance office with childcare attached but this doesn't exist yet in Manchester."

Studio space and performance art space were in particularly short supply. This was raised by many respondents, particularly those working in London where creatives feel 'priced out'. Around a third of respondents to our survey were living in London, a similar number to the creative industries as a whole.[27]

"Rent for studio space in London is incredibly high. Subsidised studio rent would improve the creative community as working from home limits the ability for my business to grow, as ideally I need more space."

"I currently rent a bench in a shared jewellery workshop space but I am moving to a new studio at the end of the month. Specialist jewellery workshops are few and far between but thankfully there is plenty of space in the one I am in. More studios in general, in most cities, could be an improvement as I hear there are massive waiting lists."

"The biggest challenge [in London] is affordable, conducive work space for independent arts professionals in the performing arts."

"Access [to workspace] was very difficult in London – studios are expensive, and most don't want a blacksmith in them. Studios in London constantly close to be replaced by flats, but here in Glasgow I have one which feels much more permanent and is an eighth of the price.

There are different challenges in accessing affordable workspace and business networks depending on whether you live in the countryside or town or city. Here we give examples of different experiences.

Freelancers living rurally

Pinkie Maclure
Stained glass artist and occasional musician
Perthshire

"I'm a stained glass artist and occasional musician. I lived in London for 20 years but moved back to Scotland after rent became too expensive and I couldn't survive in London without giving up music. My partner taught himself to make traditional stained glass but he couldn't afford premises in London. So when I was laid off from my office job, we both moved to the East Neuk of Fife. When property prices went up there we moved to Perthshire, a cheaper place to live.

My workshop is in the old plumber's store behind my house, so I have a lot of freedom. It's great not having to commute. Some days we have to drive to Glasgow to buy materials, as that's the nearest supplier, or to other parts of Scotland to install windows. If we are doing music, we have the freedom to record or tour for a week or two, because we are self-employed and the stained glass business rarely has tight deadlines.

Our stained glass business is now well-established and my partner gets regular work doing repairs, restoration, working for churches etc. People do express surprise that we are here, but our website is very good and that has been crucial. My local arts centre, Birnam Arts, invited me to have a solo exhibition last year and I also had a piece accepted for a UK-wide touring exhibition of 'outsider and self-taught' artists. This gave me the confidence to approach the Henry Boxer Gallery in London last year, who are now representing me. I am now earning a living solely from my gallery work.

Barriers:
- Lack of networking opportunities
- Lack of external stimulation and loneliness
- Terrible public transport
- Local arts organisations seem lacking in energy, ambition or knowledge of more cutting-edge arts
- Lack of young blood and a general feeling of isolation, boredom and disconnection within networks of local artists
- No sick leave
- Lack of a music scene in the local area."

Susie Tate
Dance artist, facilitator, educator and manager
Cumbria

"In spring 2013 I went freelance to develop my work in dance. I received a bursary from Dance UK to develop my interest in building dance and health programmes in rural areas. In the autumn I became involved in a Cumbrian dance programme for people living with dementia, working alongside a neurological physiotherapist. With the support of further funding this programme ran until May 2017. Alongside this project my other work includes: work in schools, youth groups, local pilates class, co-ordinating Hexham Abbey Festival of Music and Arts, ongoing work with three children's hospices, touring work with Birmingham Royal Ballet, education and work with special needs and early years groups.

Dance in health is still in its infancy, even more so in the north east, and in Cumbria only since I have been working in the field since 2013. As a result there are very few other dance artists who are working in the sector to share practice with, to grow work, and to build a network with. Additionally, Cumbria has no leading performing dance company and has only just started teaching dance at the university. No major companies tour here. On the flip side, it is exciting to help shift all this and help to put dance and dance in health on the map up here.

Barriers:
- Public transport – difficult for communities to access my programmes
- Travel time is unpaid – and this amounts to a lot in a rural area
- Travel costs are very high
- Very limited access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in rural areas
- Cost of travelling to London to access CPD is high
- CPD seminar cost higher in rural areas
- No lead organisation to champion work nationwide
- Access to funding
- Having to self-fund compromises development of work as it takes up a lot of time."

Freelancers living in a town

Dan Thompson
Writer and social artist
Worthing and Margate

"Working in small towns brings challenges you don't find in big cities. I now live in Margate, but until moving here four years ago, had always lived in Worthing. When I started working as an artist in 1999, there were no contemporary galleries or creative networks in Worthing. I had to start networking events to bring people together, launch an artists' open house trail, use empty shops as galleries, and get involved in master planning to lobby for the sector I was uncovering. I had to be more than an artist, and give time and energy freely and without pay, to create a place where other artists could thrive.

Moving to Margate, I've found some of the same problems that Worthing had. There's been investment in Turner Contemporary and the built environment, and there are lots of artist-led spaces. However, there's still work to be done. Artists need larger networks, connectors and common ground. These can be things like festivals or trails. I recently brought a-n's 'Assembly' [the artists' networks' programme bringing together artists for workshops, talks and other events] to town: every event sold out in days. We filled those two days with talks, workshops and professional development – but it just showed how there are gaps to fill.

The opportunity here is that the money freelancers generate stays local. Freelancers use local suppliers, local printers, work and meet in local cafes, and, best of all, hire other local freelancers too."

Seymour Lavine
Animator
Loughborough

"My business specialises in 2D animation, screenwriting, character and concept design services. It provides work-for-hire services for the education, health and non-profit sectors. It also deliver animation workshops and training in communities around the UK. Our animation workshops and work experience programme address the problems younger people, disabled people and BAME people experience gaining access to opportunities in the industry.

While enrolled on a research PhD at Loughborough University they offered me office space and investment for a period of two years through their graduate commercialisation studio, The Studio. The Studio offers a combination of business mentoring and training for new businesses or projects.

Peer-to-peer support was actively encouraged as all of the businesses each went through their own process of development. Sharing successes and losses, discussing ideas, plans and problems with the other entrepreneurs was an important part of our growth. The office is open plan, which could be both energising and draining. While editing animation, I sometimes found I needed my quiet time to focus.

Barriers:

· It has been a challenge to find business support or mentoring specific to the creative industries in general, and in the animation sector in particular
· Growing our network within the production finance and distribution areas continues to be our toughest challenge, particularly when [it came to discussing] IP development."

Freelancers living in a city

Tom Tyldesley/Georgia Tasda
PhD student, drag performer and queer event organiser
Edinburgh

"I moved back to Edinburgh from London around a year ago to begin a PhD. Factors affecting my decision were cheaper rents and better overall quality of life the city had to offer. As a comedy drag performer, the Edinburgh Fringe and Edinburgh International Festival were also a big draw, and as a spillover Edinburgh punches well above its weight in terms of cultural amenities for a city of its size. Access to green spaces and being able to cycle around are also very important to me, because I do my best thinking when out in nature or on my bike. Or in bed.

Edinburgh is much smaller than London, and accordingly so is its LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community and collection of queer performers. It is also markedly non-diverse. The positive side of a small scene is that it is much easier to establish oneself on the scene and stand out from the crowd. However, being a small scene I was very wary of treading on the toes of existing performers. I'm trying to see it as an opportunity to bring fresh ideas to the Edinburgh scene, arrange events that give a platform to voices outside the mainstream, and to make my mark. In London, I was a small fish in a big pond. In Edinburgh I can be a big fish in a small pond.

Drag has seen a surge in popularity. In London the benefits of this boom have accrued largely to the established queens and club promoters, who were in a position to capitalise on the upsurge in popularity. In contrast, newcomers are regularly expected to perform for free 'for exposure'.

In contrast, in Edinburgh it is the students who dominate the queer performance sphere. A significant proportion of them leave Edinburgh once they have finished their degree. This means there is a rapid turnover of performers and event organisers, and, as such, a lack of continuity, which hinders the forging of long-term working relationships between artists, venues and audiences. Freelance work is precarious and irregular, and depends largely on the social capital of the individual artists."

Arthur Laidlaw
Artist
London

"There are obvious advantages to working as an artist in London. It is, in some ways, a cultural Mecca – if you have the money to buy tickets, which often price out artists.

Of course, many institutions do their best to offer concession-priced tickets to their shows and, unlike other countries, many of the permanent collections in our museums and galleries are free. However, this is not the main financial burden of an artist living in London. Instead, the mounting costs of studio space, artistic materials, accommodation, and travel continue to marginalise artists. It is only once these costs are accounted for that the artist can think about spending what remaining money she has on actually consuming culture.

This means there is sometimes a shocking disconnect between the central London 'art world' on display to those who can afford to participate in it, and the peripheral communities of artists trying to actually produce art.

My relationship with London has become clearer while searching for a new studio over the past three months. I was one of a group of six artists working in a disused pub in Camberwell; we were abruptly given two weeks notice after asking our landlord to perform some basic plumbing and asbestos checks. In the weeks that followed we cast our net across London in search of a new studio space, finding alternatives in places like Barking, Ealing, and Croydon, often in abandoned office blocks. These new locations frequently involved a price increase, and rarely offered a lease for longer than three months, providing almost no long-term security. My search for a space became increasingly desperate, and so spiralled outwards to Margate, Oxford, Cornwall, Manchester, Glasgow. I have now found a studio four times the size for the same amount of money – in Berlin."

WHY DO CREATIVE BUSINESSES HIRE FREELANCERS?

Image courtesy of VINE Creatives

WHY DO CREATIVE BUSINESSES HIRE FREELANCERS?

We spoke to more than 50 creative businesses about why they used freelancers. Many said that the core team was relatively small and they needed specific skills for certain projects: the average creative company employs just 3.3 people.[28]

> *"We can't afford to have the range of skills we need in our team on a full-time basis, plus they expand our reach and diversity by bringing different skills and experience."*

> *"We don't always have capacity or specialist skills in-house."*

> *"[We need to use freelancers] because when we are commissioned to make a production we nearly always have to bring in extra capacity and talent. Only two of us run the company."*

Others needed freelancers to increase capacity for specific projects.

> *"[We use freelancers] to fill skills gaps and peaks and troughs in workload. Often on a project basis – driven by the tax treatment that HMRC dictate."*

> *"Most of our requirements are short-term/temporary: on practical training projects involving 'real life' production environments, we will crew up as if it were a live production. For visiting lecturers, up-to-date and relevant industry experience is vital to maintaining the integrity and relevance of our film education, so these will usually be engaged on a freelance basis to fit around their work patterns/availability, and to ensure they are free to continue to practise their craft at the same time."*

> *"As a microbusiness and charity, it is essential for us to have freelancers. Our work is seasonal, with very busy periods and very quiet periods, and we would not be able to employ the workforce we need in busy periods all year around. We just don't have the financial resources."*

Others said that using freelancers meant they could access a wider range of creative talent and access up-to-date industry knowledge.

> *"[We work with freelancers] to use specific presenters appropriate to a particular programme; to gather recorded material in distant parts of the UK or beyond; to assist with productions generally."*

> *"It would be unfeasible and creatively stifling to employ writers, dramaturgs and translators on a permanent basis. This also means we can access and cultivate a large pool of diverse creative talent from which to draw. This ultimately facilitates the breadth, variety and diversity that our programme demands in its aim to make theatre for everyone."*

Organisations also reported that working freelance suited those they wished to hire.

> *"Freelancers on the whole seem happy to be contracted rather than employed. Most run several different contracts in parallel and its suits them to be self-employed. Such folk fit in with other part-time contracted rural employment."*

However, some businesses admitted that using freelancers was dictated by finances.

> *"As a startup we have not yet been able to transition our core team to employment contracts (though this is coming over the next 12-18 months)."*

We asked two organisations how many freelancers they used in an average year, and what they needed them for. One was a large arts organisation – the National Theatre – the other a small creative industries organisation – VINE Creatives.

National Theatre, London

Arts Council England asks for information about full-time employees from its National Portfolio Organisations, which include the National Theatre. But the Federation survey encouraged the theatre to do a full audit of its freelance workforce for the first time. This revealed that it uses **2,900 freelancers** in an average 12-month period compared with around 600 staff. This indicates how many important workers are currently excluded from analyses of the sector.

Lisa Burger, executive director of the National Theatre, said:

> *"Freelancers are the lifeblood of our creative output at the NT. They are our playwrights, directors, designers, performers, makers and technicians who bring specialist skills to every stage of the production process from development to distribution. The freelance ecology allows us to work with the broadest possible range of artists and specialists to make innovative, high-quality work – this way of working is vital to our industry precisely because it supports flexibility, creativity and diversity. The relationship between creative freelancers and creative organisations needs to be supported for the UK's world-leading creative industries to continue to thrive."*

Who?

Freelancers fill many positions that are at the core of what the National Theatre does, such as acting and writing. In 2016-17 there were **611** permanent staff but **2,900** contractual, freelance or commissioned staff operating under **3,496** contracts in **70** roles.

Positions filled by freelancers at the theatre included:

- Actor
- Aerial director
- Alteration hand
- Animal handler
- Artistic associate
- Assistant stage manager
- Automation control specialist
- Camera person
- Chaperone
- Choreographer
- Construction technician
- Costume buyer
- Costume designer
- Costume hire assistant
- Costume maker
- Costume props maker
- Costume supervisor
- Decorator
- Deputy stage manager
- Design assistant
- Dialect/language coach
- Digital artist
- Director
- Dramaturg
- Draughtsperson
- Dresser
- Dyer
- Engineer
- Event crew
- Fight director
- Flying effects specialist
- Glass fitter
- Illustrator
- Learning materials writer
- Learning practitioner
- Lighting designer
- Lighting technician
- Model maker
- Movement director
- Musical director
- Musician
- Orchestrator
- Photographer
- Playwright
- Production assistant
- Production carpenter
- Production design assistant
- Production designer
- Production manager
- Props buyer
- Props maker
- Props supervisor
- Puppet designer
- Puppeteer
- Puppetry director
- Rigging technician
- Scenic artist
- Set designer
- Sound and video technician
- Sound designer
- Stage manager
- Stage technician
- Supernumerary
- Translator
- Video designer
- Wigs, hair and make-up designer
- Wigs, hair and make-up technician
- Workshop facilitator

One of the main freelance groups engaged by the National Theatre is acting talent. These artists perform on the NT's three main stages, in outdoor festivals, in the West End and on tour, as well as being involved in private workshops and readings in the New Work Department where work for the NT's stages is developed.

The NT has diversity targets for actors who appear on its main stages.

In 2016-17, it employed 1,428 actors and live performers (actor-musicians, dancers and supernumeraries) across 1,863 contracts.

Gender	Male – 55%	Female – 45%
Age	0-19 – 2%	20-34 – 49%
	35-49 – 36%	50-64 – 11%
	65+ – 2%	
Ethnicity	26% were from BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) backgrounds	

Why?

- The National told us it hires freelancers because:
- Doing so enables the theatre to work with a wide range of artists, which supports breadth and diversity
- Freelancers offer project-specific skills and specialisms that support the quality of the work
- The NT is able to scale its workforce to suit each project.

How?

Freelancers working with the National Theatre were hired in many different ways – from short fixed-term contracts, project-by-project invoicing and commissions, to longer-term residencies.

VINE Creatives

VINE Creatives is a visual communications and brand strategy agency. They work with entrepreneurs and businesses in Africa and within the African diaspora, to position scaleups for further investment, to aid entrepreneurs with growth and to help established businesses to enter new markets.

On average VINE Creatives hire **16 individuals** on a freelance basis per year. The nature of the work means every creative project is different. While some projects require only its core team, larger projects need extra people.

Who?

Within a 12-month period the freelancers used by VINE depends on the nature of the projects they are asked to work on. In the last year, freelance positions have included:

- Sector researchers
- Content writers
- Business development strategist
- Digital media development strategist
- Communication and PR consultant
- Social media manager
- Digital marketing consultant
- WordPress developers
- Website developers
- Photographers
- Makeup artist
- Fashion stylist
- Hair stylist
- Fashion/Photographer models
- Graphic designer
- Presentation layout artworker

Why?

VINE Creatives told us they hire freelancers because:

- Freelancers are highly skilled and do not require any additional training. They often bring further insight into the project at hand
- Projects are not always available to cover the fixed cost of a bigger full-time team. It makes the company more cost-effective with savings passed on to the client
- Hiring freelancers helps them continually expand the VINE Creatives' network of sector and market specialists.

How?

VINE Creatives hire freelancers purely on a project-by-project basis. The contracts are usually very short-term (two to five days) with longer, more complex projects requiring anything from two to four weeks.

FREELANCERS BY INDUSTRY

National Theatre. Image credit: Kerry Harrison

FREELANCERS BY INDUSTRY

There were common themes that emerged from every part of the creative industries when we consulted businesses, trade bodies and the self-employed.

The following all emerged as major barriers to business growth:
· Access to workspace
· Legal advice and support (particularly on intellectual property)
· Access to funding and finance (including advice on funding options/financial planning).

These have been addressed in our policy recommendations.

Here we give examples of concerns from each sector, as well as an overview of how commonly freelancers are used in the industry.

Advertising, marketing and PR

The **advertising, marketing and PR sector** uses freelancers, particularly in the creative process. In 2016, the 131 agencies surveyed in the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) agency census hired a total of 1,727 temps and freelancers.[29]

Although our survey had respondents from right across the country in this sector, London remains the major hub. In the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE) report covering the entire freelance economy, sales, marketing and related associate professionals was one of the six top categories of roles occupied by freelancers in Greater London.[30]

Elle Tylee, head of marketing at M&C Saatchi, said:

> "We use freelancers in creative (copywriters and art directors), design and production. Primarily we use freelancers when we need specialist expertise from a team or individual. Equally, good freelance resource is useful for short periods of time where we are working on projects that are out of scope and impact on our permanent resource."

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the advertising and marketing sector included:

Access to workspace

> "I'd love to be part of a creative hub workspace, but I live in a rural market town."

Legal advice and support

Several respondents from the advertising, marketing and PR sector said that freelancers, and sometimes those that employ them, *"don't understand copyright law."* They said there was a need for cheaper access to legal advice, particularly advice over contracts.

Architecture

Architectural firms hire freelancers although at a lower rate than the rest of the creative industries. In the 2016 business benchmarking survey of RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), 6% of the sector was working freelance. 13% of architectural practices are sole practitioners.[31] It is more common for architects to work in or for a small practice than as freelancers.

Alastair Roberts, chief operating officer at Hawkins\Brown, said:

> "We don't typically use self-employed architects at Hawkins\Brown. Historically, where we do use freelancers it is within our marketing team – for copywriting, graphic design and so on. It is not uncommon in the sector for practices to use contract or freelance staff to scale up resourcing for projects."

Crafts

Crafting Futures, a study of the early careers of **crafts** graduates from UK higher education institutions, found that 37% of crafts graduates had worked freelance since graduating and at the time of the survey 15% were still doing so.[32]

Many working in crafts have 'portfolio careers,' with 50% of crafts graduates in multiple jobs, typically combining employment with self-employment, study or developing their creative practice.

The most common business model for designer-makers is working as a sole trader. Crafts Council figures show that 88% of makers are sole traders.

The craft sector does not just work with designer-makers. Manchester Craft and Design Centre, for example, uses freelancers working in marketing and PR alongside musicians, film makers, web developers and creative business advisors.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the craft sector included:

Access to workspace

"I had to move away from London (which is supposed to be a creative hub) as I couldn't afford to live there and work as an artist. Since my rent has gone down from £800 a month to £100, I have suddenly started to earn an actual wage."

"I make all of my work in a studio in Edinburgh. It was hard to find a studio when initially searching. Business rates and such added costs make the rent of the studio quite high. It is not set up as a charity so other organisations which are set up like that benefit more from grants and additional funding or rates relief."

Legal advice and support

"I don't have enough information [on intellectual property] and think it might be too expensive for me to do so."

Access to funding and finance

"Financial institutions only make the most expensive funding options (overdrafts and credit cards) available to startups and the self-employed. This makes setting up even harder than it should be. New options [for funding], like funding circle [a peer-to-peer small business lending marketplace] set their turnover levels too high which generally excludes sole trader designer-makers where they do not wish to turn their work into mass production and made in China."

"[I need] support for setting up business/ accounting/tax, that can be accessed remotely."

Creative tech and games

The latest Creative Skillset workforce survey found that around 13% of those working in the **digital** sector were freelancers. This was slightly higher – 16% – in the **games** sector. Freelancers in **creative tech** include software engineers, business consultants, publishing consultants and designers.

Brighton Fuse 2 was a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council which looked at freelancers in the creative digital IT economy in the city of Brighton and Hove. This research found that few freelancers are 'forced' into this mode of work – most prefer it to regular employment, and intend to not only continue but to expand their freelance activities.

Many invest their time in side projects alongside their freelance work. Some of these are intended for future monetisation such as products, others are the individual equivalent of R&D, and still others are passion projects, often for artistic or philanthropic purposes. Some simply find the autonomy of freelancing more convenient for managing family life.[33]

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the creative tech and games sector included:

Access to funding and finance

"Access to finance must be made easier. Schemes seem wrongly scoped, and it is too hard to win funds."

"Government funding priorities for the creative industries need to focus on creative content development not just on 'tech solutions'."

Legal advice and support

"[There should be better] access to pro bono legal advice for freelancers, particularly at the start of a career and in moving between PAYE and freelance working."

Design, including fashion

Freelancing is an important part of the **design** sector. The increasing number of firms in the design economy is distinguished by the number of small businesses and freelancers. Levels of self-employment in design are almost twice the UK average. Design Council research shows that 27.1% of designers are self-employed compared with 14.7% of the workforce as a whole.[34]

The design sub-sectors with the highest levels of self-employment are fashion/clothing (51.2%) and graphic (48.1%).

The sub-sectors with the lowest levels of self-employment are product and industrial (8.8%) and digital (13.3%).[35]

In the **fashion** industry there are additional groups of self-employed people. Models are an integral part of the fashion industry and for decades have been employed to showcase designer clothing. In the UK, just like actors, they are self-employed, represented by agencies.[36] In addition, fashion shows and shoots throughout the year will use freelance stylists and make-up artists. Big events such as London Fashion Week' will attract freelance bloggers and 'fashion influencers'.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the design sector included:

Access to workspace

"I built a studio/hut in the garden to use as my workspace... Affordable workspace is an issue for designers and many have to use rooms in their homes to work from, which can be challenging as often we use toxic materials, sprays and glues whilst model-making."

"I work from home as I cannot afford studio space. This is fine for my current needs but lack of space stops me from developing my work further."

Legal advice and support

"My creative work is consistently stolen... [We need] more awareness and sharing across the sector of what this ultimately means for artists in terms of sustaining a career."

"I went on training courses for this when I started as a designer but I do think [understanding of IP] inhibits many freelancers in negotiating work and being clear on terms of working...Often you need to tweak terms for each project you work on. Many freelancers learn the hard way."

Access to funding and finance

"The whole tax system is vast and complex, something that automatically makes it difficult for self-employed and freelance workers to compete and weights the system in favour of large organisations with the money and resources to wade through it all. A simplified tax code would help small business understand their outgoings better."

"Interestingly, the main obstacle to growth is not getting the work or becoming established, but good old-fashioned cashflow."

Film, TV, video, radio, VFX, photography

Freelancing is common across the screen industries.

In a report on the Bristol screen industry, the University of the West of England found that 50% of the 600 people they talked to in the sector were freelance.[37] This mirrors the proportion of creative freelancers in the creative industries as a whole.[38]

In **film**, directors tend to be self-employed. Many other job titles are also freelance. The prevalence of freelancers is an important factor in the industry's concerns over the new apprenticeship levy, which is paid by employers with annual pay bills of more than £3m into an apprenticeship service account. This account is to be used to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment in England with an expectation that this will train core staff. However, comparatively short periods of shooting and the prevalence of freelance talent means that the film industry risks paying into a pot it may not be able to use.

According to Creative Skillset's 2015 employment survey of the UK's creative industries, 89% of all workers in the film production sector are freelancers

In **television**, common freelance job titles include editors, post-production, sound graphic designers and many kinds of production staff.[39]

In **radio**, freelance titles include producers, researchers, studio engineers/managers, composers and production assistants.[40]

Many **photographers** are also freelance, and work a number of jobs throughout the year. Photographers are scattered across the UK geographically but our respondents were mostly concentrated in major cities and towns.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in film, tv, video, radio, VFX and photography included:

Legal advice and support

"Better advice on how to protect independent filmmaker's intellectual property would be useful."

"Bring costs down with free advice"

Training

Training for freelancers in this sector is often subsidised by industry bodies such as Creative Skillset, Radio Independents Group and industry, such as the BBC. Some freelancers told us even more could be done to make training widely accessible.

> *"Time is my biggest issue with undertaking further training. My years are full of projects. I would need to take time out of work to do training in particular areas that I would like to improve. It is difficult to take time out as a freelancer for many reasons...money-wise and also keeping active within the industry."*

> *"I can't afford to train on a lot of things as they are too expensive and also it's not always easy to know how beneficial things are. For example, I would like to develop more animation skills but can't afford the money or time for a full-time course...There is a lack of [short] courses that give you intros/basics to things to see how it could help your business."*

> *"In the past I have used Creative Skillset to help subsidise training courses. More money and ability to access more funding per year would help. TV production companies do nothing for workers training-wise, they just hope you already have the skills."*

Finding work

> *"[I have to deal with] a lot of unpaid work and exploitation and agents monopoly [sic] when it comes to accessing potential employers in the TV and film industry. Educational institutions and creative support networks breaking through that glass wall to introduce and promote freelancers could help."*

> *"I need to create relationships with producers and without an agent it is difficult to identify and contact producers if I am not known to them. Anything that would simplify and aid contact between producers and directors would help."*

Music

For much of the **music** industry – producers, publishers, technicians, musicians, managers, composers, live performers – working freelance is almost the default. In 2011 a major survey showed that more than half of all music industry employees were under 44 and working in small organisations. Of these, 44% were categorised as self-employed.

Oliver Morris from UK Music, which represents the UK's music industry, said:

> *"There are many freelancers working in the music industry. They need to be supported and government must take steps to achieve this. Eligibility for shared parental leave should be altered to reflect self-employed work-life balance. Changes to apprenticeship funding must help not hinder freelancers taking on apprentices. Making progress in these areas is key to supporting a thriving, diverse and equitable creative sector with opportunities for all and improved conditions for music industry freelancers."*

The Musicians' Union said:

> *"The majority of our members work on a freelance basis whether they're teaching, performing, writing or recording. Because much of the industry is structured around a self-employment model for musicians, we tailor our services and benefits to support them in running a small business, which aside from making music is essentially what a freelance musician does."*

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the music industry included:

Access to workspace

> *"Most of my work is performance-based. It is a struggle to find studio space for teaching, recording and rehearsing. Very few spaces exist in my area and noise is an issue in many artists studios."*

> *"I have a workspace behind my house. I moved to a less attractive rural area specifically because it was the only way I could afford my own workspace. It makes networking very difficult, though, and there is a bias against 'rural' artists. This could be improved if the smaller cities and towns could put on more diverse and progressive exhibitions and concerts, which would in turn improve networking possibilities."*

> *Legal advice and support*

> *"[IP is a problem] though PRS, BPI and Musicians' Union do a good job, it seems."*

> *"[We need] accurate information available from the so-called experts over what can be protected and how."*

> *"Getting legal and tax advice to enable you to decide how to set yourself up (sole trader, limited company etc) is quite pricey and this has been my biggest area of expenditure to date."*

Museums, galleries and libraries

Museums and libraries have lower rates of self-employment than other areas of the creative economy but there is still a need for freelance workers in a number of roles.[41]

David Anderson, director general of the National Museum of Wales, said:

> *"Museums depend on freelance specialists across a huge range of disciplines to enable us to deliver our ever-changing programmes, and to bring us expertise in areas where we do not have this in-house. Like many museums, Amgueddfa Cymru has freelance craftspeople, designers and tutors with specific skills to enhance our public programmes. Without creative freelancers, our service to the public would be much thinner and less innovative."*

The **cultural heritage** sector sees very low levels of self-employment since individuals tend to be tied to particular institutions.

Galleries often work with a large number of self-employed from different sectors. Turner Contemporary, for example, works with a minimum of 80 freelancers a year, including artists, education technicians, gallery educators, evaluators, external curators, historians, project coordinators, film-makers, musicians, fabricators, designers and photographers. These are used to install and document exhibitions, lead, evaluate and contribute to projects, and document the gallery's work. They fill skills gaps in the organisation's core team and offer expertise.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the museums, galleries and libraries sector included:

Access to funding and finance

> *"My worries working freelance are pensions, illness and maternity [pay]."*

> *"I now can afford to turn down badly paid work because I have lots of work and am towards the end of my career, but earlier I took everything to survive. I still do 'mates rates' which feels ok some of the time ...My greatest support has come from the Arts Council England broker organisation Arts Connect West Midlands who pay a decent rate and encourage others to do so."*

Visibility

> *"It can seem that freelancers are missed in many events/policy decisions and programmes. I have noticed awards that don't include any reference to freelancers and training events. I think there is some work to do in highlighting the contribution freelancers make to the sector. Pay rates vary quite significantly across the sectors. I have noticed museums can expect a much lower fee/ day rate."*

Performing arts

The project-based nature of productions in the performing arts means that the sub-sector relies on an enormous number of freelancers.

The **theatre** and **dance** sectors use large numbers of freelancers in all parts of theatrical development: from freelance dancers and actors to technical and graphic designers as well as catering and front of house staff.

Around a third of the membership of BECTU, the union for offstage and technical workers in entertainment, is freelance and it is the norm among many creative roles in theatre. More than a quarter of respondents to the Nordicity/Society of London Theatre theatre workforce survey 2017 were freelance offstage workers.[42]

Sadler's Wells worked with 530 freelancers in 2015/16 with job titles including choreographer, DJ, fashion designer, animator, video designer and tango consultant. All guest teachers and musicians at the Phoenix Dance Theatre in Leeds are freelancers, along with most choreographers and designers. The theatre itself has a core team of 25 staff members.

Freelancing is also common among **orchestral musicians**. The four self-governing symphony orchestras in London (London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra) are collectives of freelance musicians who own shares in the orchestra and employ the management to secure work, while engaging extras when required. There are many smaller chamber orchestras and specialist ensembles which engage all their musicians on a freelance basis. Orchestras also work with freelance education specialists, directors, designers, conductors and soloists. In 2016 there were 1,250 musicians holding member status of freelance orchestras, alongside more than 10,000 engagements of extras and deputies.

Minimum pay and conditions for freelance actors, singers, musicians and technicians working in theatre are defined through collective bargaining between employers' associations including the Society of London Theatre, UK Theatre and the Independent Theatre Council and the entertainment unions Equity, Musicians' Union and BECTU. The Association of British Orchestras and Musicians' Union negotiate the freelance orchestral collective agreement.

The symphony orchestras in regional cities, BBC orchestras and the orchestras of the major opera and ballet companies tend to employ the core of their musicians on permanent contracts, engaging additional musicians on a freelance basis as extras and deputies.

Freelancing is also important for the **festival** sector. The vast majority of those working in the festival sector are freelancers – performers, creatives, producers, programmers and project managers. This is because the inevitable seasonal and one-off nature of festivals means there is a lack of full-time, year-round employment.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in the performance arts sector included:

Access to workspace

"I am based in Sheffield where there is no dance agency or support network, no space available for rehearsals etc. I spend a lot of money travelling to Leeds where I am better supported at Yorkshire Dance."

"Studio space is a big problem, often expensive, not available or takes more than an hour to commute to."

Access to funding and finance

"I pestered organisations/worked for free until they hired me. It's incredibly difficult in an oversaturated market, even with a degree from a top dance school. I could only do this as I had savings to support me."

"[The hardest] thing is time awaiting payment on freelance contracts that need constant chasing up. [There] should be a 28-day payment compulsory on invoices. How do people think we can live?"

"An issue that I would like to see raised is better understanding amongst those in the creative industries who contract freelancers of the importance of prompt payment of fees. Late payment can threaten the financial stability of freelancers, particularly those operating as sole traders or very small businesses."

"I have very little knowledge about what I should do about my pension, insurance, holiday pay. Things that are often included in a 'normal' job. I should look into it and decide what are the best options for me, but I work a lot and it is rare that I have time to sit down to properly look into something."

Publishing and authors

Publishers hire freelancers in a number of roles – from photographers, illustrators and designers, to editors, proofreaders and publishers themselves.

Almost all **authors** are freelance and many are paid very little. The European Commission (EC) conducted a study on authors' remuneration in July 2015, which surveyed authors, journalists, translators and illustrators. Average annual incomes for UK authors including advance, royalties and ALCS and PLR payments was about £12,500.

The study found that only half of book authors view their primary activity as their only or main source of income. Writing is often supplemented by work in the education sector.

Particular issues raised by freelancers in publishing or working as authors included:

Legal advice and support

"My work is pirated on dozens of forums all over the internet and downloaded for free, damaging my income and my sales record and making it harder for me to sell future work and for my publisher to sell my work to shops (which rely on Nielsen figures)."

"Pirate book sites are a huge problem for authors on the internet, where 'free' copies of our books are offered without our knowledge or permission. An easy reporting system needs to be set up so that sites which are essentially dealing in stolen goods can be blocked."

Visual arts

For those working in the **visual arts**, the opportunity for creative control offered by working freelance appears to be key. Art schools often offer bespoke advice for graduating students on how to register as self-employed, highlighting how common this route is.

Access to affordable studio space was a key concern for most visual artists in our survey. Some also flagged the importance of co-working spaces for development and innovation in their practice. Most stressed the benefits of artist networks in boosting support and visibility for the sector in local areas.

Access to workspace

"I moved to a less attractive rural area specifically because it was the only way I could afford my own workspace. It makes networking very difficult, though."

"Co-working spaces in Leeds that I'm aware of are far more oriented towards creative industries such as digital, new media, design, marketing etc. There is a need for a new kind of creative building genuinely focused on process and practice within the arts."

Importance of networks

Networks and who you know is incredibly important for visual artists who are seeking commissions or selling work. This can make it difficult for artists from different backgrounds to get into the profession.

"[Finding work is] slow and difficult, I didn't grow up or study here so mostly I rely on my extensive online presence and on word of mouth. It would be great to belong to a collective that is rooted here and can be the missing link for me."

"It's all about who you know and how much you can get your work seen. This is frustrating when you are producing good work that often doesn't get seen by the right people and marketing work has become my biggest job. It's hard to find out the names of the right people to send work to and a tough balance to keep in touch but not pester."

"We have a great and supportive network in Cornwall so I don't have huge problems in finding work although the pay is not always great. I do think it must be quite difficult for people entering the creative industries in the south west to break into the 'circle of work' in order to build on those relationships."
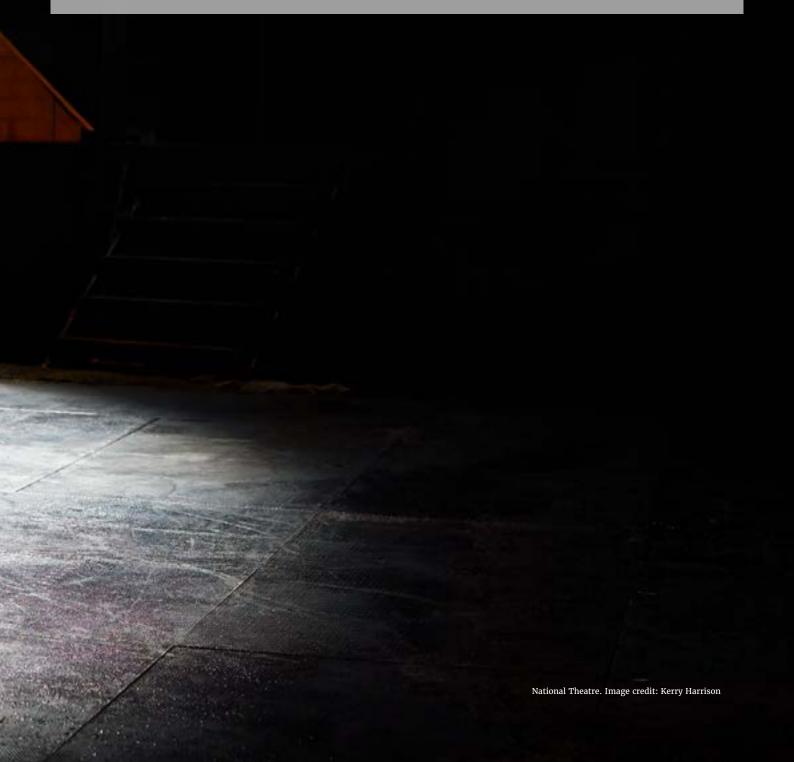
Legal advice and support

"[I'd like] more advice on how to go about finding out when someone has used my work and what I can do about it."

"Artists need to know their rights – good, ethical legal information provided by commissioners and funders is the way forward, as well as artists joining a trade union."

IMPLICATIONS FOR FREELANCERS OF LEAVING THE EU

National Theatre. Image credit: Kerry Harrison

IMPLICATIONS FOR FREELANCERS OF LEAVING THE EU

Several freelancers who responded to our survey raised concerns about the impact on them of Britain leaving the EU. Many questioned whether their concerns, about issues including intellectual property and tariffs on trade, were being addressed. Any economic uncertainty might also affect freelancers before their employed peers if businesses are obliged to cut costs.

There are specific issues for creative businesses concerning changes to freedom of movement and the visa system.

There is currently no visa for creative freelancers, except for those who qualify as 'exceptional talent' or an 'entrepreneur' (Tier 1) visa. 'Exceptional talent' is reserved for a small number of world-beating practitioners, not to address skills shortages, and the 'entrepreneur' visa requires at least £50,000 of investment funds in an entrepreneurial business if those funds are from a UK entrepreneurial seed funding competition endorsed by government, a government department or an FCA-approved venture capital firm. The requirement is £200,000 for those who have funds from other means.

The fact that highly-skilled freelancers have no obvious route into the UK could become a major problem post-Brexit. Currently non-UK EU workers make up 6.1% of the creative industries workforce as a whole. In some of the most productive parts of the sector the proportion of EU workers is far higher, with evidence of 40% or more – including 60% at one architecture firm (RIBA), 40% at a major visual effects firm (UK Screen) and 50% at a major fashion house (Federation).[43] We conducted a workforce survey of Federation members and more than 60% of respondents employed non-British freelancers. More than 70% said they would not be able to fill these jobs with British workers.[44]

Phil Dobree, CEO at Jellyfish Pictures, said:

"Visual effects and animation is a global business and to remain at the forefront of the industry Jellyfish Pictures have to be able to access the very best talent quickly and easily. To lead the way globally means having the best talent. It's simply fantasy to imagine this talent will or can all come from within the UK. Like many sectors we rely on being able to find freelancers and short-term contractors quickly from an international network. If this process is slowed down or delayed we will lose work fast and the industry will very quickly cease to exist in the UK."

Sarah Dear, managing partner at Elmwood UK, said:

"We need and rely on a multicultural workforce including freelancers as we work on global brands. We need people who understand not only the fundamentally different mind-sets and buying behaviours of consumers in different cultures but also the subtlety and nuances of design. Without having this ability and flexibility we will be sunk as a UK business and the likelihood is that to survive we would have to relocate our head office overseas to another hub in Europe or perhaps to our New York studio."

Other concerns that emerged from our survey included how being paid and employed by people in the EU will change, and whether employing freelancers will become over-complicated:

"50% of my income, and around 95% from April, comes from non-UK EU countries. How should I be preparing for Brexit?"

"IP is a concern [following Brexit]. So many of the things that are exported throughout the EU, there are different rules. There's a 15-year rule for EU protection on IP [design rights] and a three-year rule in this country. I think more people live and work in multiple countries nowadays. Tax can be difficult to navigate and I'm sure Brexit is about to cause a heap of questions."

Natalie Richardson
Performing arts producer
Turin and London

"It's not a straightforward job being a freelance producer. It comes with a lot of juggling balls. I generally work daytime Monday to Friday across my portfolio of theatre, dance and music artists from a home office in Turin. My partner and I are both freelancers but we have school and nursery for our daughters, so we manage to balance the pick-ups and childcare equally as best we can. Being only one hour ahead in Italy means I don't have much of a problem with time difference and thanks to internet technologies I can make calls to all the artists easily and at low cost. I also have a very small amount of help from an assistant producer based in London.

I honestly don't yet know how Brexit is going to affect my work and the performing artists I work with. None are British, they are from all over the world including Brazil and the US, although mostly they are European. My main concern is whether we will have practical 'working visa' types of problems after Brexit, whether funders will impose extra conditions or whether it will create additional work for already underfunded companies to be able to work with creative talent from outside the UK. A worry for us will be whether these relationships can continue to flourish if the European partner has to work harder or spend more money to engage UK companies."

Impact of leaving the EU on freelance visual artists[45]

a-n The Artists Information Company is the largest artists' membership organisation in the UK with more than 21,000 members.

In July 2016 it surveyed its members to ascertain the depth of impact of the EU referendum vote on a-n membership. Within two weeks it had more than 1,300 responses and a further 452 email responses from its advisory group. Key findings were:

· 12% of respondents hold a non-UK passport – the majority from EU countries
· The high proportion of UK passport-holding respondents were deeply concerned about the impact that changes to visa, import and export rules could have on their ability to develop a career and sustain a livelihood

· 54% of respondents had travelled to Europe up to six times in the previous 12 months for their practice or professional development – the majority of these were UK passport-holders
· Almost 50% thought restrictions to freedom of movement would have a negative impact on incomes and a reduction in opportunities with many already reporting an increase in the cost of raw materials (by as much as 25%) and the cancellation of projects or commissions, through uncertainty or withdrawn of EU funding
· High concern around the potential loss of EU protective legislation – particularly in relation to discrimination (70% of a-n's membership are women; 13% have a disability or long term health issues)
· Concerns around the impact on arts education and intellectual exchange. 5% of UK respondents had undertaken some further education in the EU.

CONCLUSION and POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

National Theatre. Image credit: Kerry Harrison

CONCLUSION

Creative freelancers are an important part of the creative economy and the British workforce.

However, what they do and how they do it has not been widely understood. This means that policy that affects them is being developed sometimes in potentially damaging ways or in apparent ignorance of their needs.

Work currently underway in and outside government, including the Taylor review of modern employment practices, is examining working life in the 21st century and how best to support people to stay in work. It is obviously preferable to construct systems that enable people to earn a living instead of resorting to unemployment benefit.

The view of freelancers as "people who can't get a proper job" or as people not doing proper jobs still has some currency. This is unfair and unhelpful. There are practical consequences to the freelance workforce being better understood and valued, not just by government but more broadly.

Proper recognition of the value and importance of the freelance workforce should make it easier for freelancers to secure a mortgage or proper rates of pay for what they do. It might encourage HMRC to simplify its tax processes. Given the importance of international freelancers in the UK's creative economy, it should inform Home Office thinking on constructing a new visa system fit for what businesses need. Universities should not be penalised in assessments because they have produced graduates with successful freelance careers instead of full-time jobs.

Creative freelancers are often innovative and entrepreneurial, with many juggling a string of different contracts and work streams in portfolio careers. However, it is clear that many struggle to access good quality affordable advice on issues such as protecting their intellectual property rights. These are issues which can more effectively be addressed at scale through schemes such as the Federation's proposed business booster network. (See policy recommendations page 46)

It is comparatively recently that politicians have begun to acknowledge the creative industries in the same breath as other parts of the British economy so it is not surprising that the role of the creative freelance has been overlooked. Now is the time for that to change. Our fast-growing sector depends on its freelancers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations set out a policy response to the issues most frequently raised by creative freelancers and the organisations they work for. Other issues – from maternity/paternity pay to changes to the rules on how individuals can pay dividends from their limited companies – need addressing across the freelance workforce. Our first recommendation – that the needs of the self-employed should be represented in a BEIS ministerial brief – would fast-track some of this work.

This report looks at what government can do to support the creative freelance economy. But industry also has a responsibility as we acknowledged at the beginning of this report. Harriet Finney, the Federation's deputy chief executive, said: *"This report highlights some poor business practice in the creative industries – including late payment and the prevalence of unpaid work. The Federation will raise these concerns with its members and industry partners, and champion the importance of freelancers to the sector as well as to government."*

1. Recognising the creative freelance workforce

Representation

· Make self-employment, across all sectors, part of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) ministerial brief. This individual would have a cross-departmental responsibility to make sure that new policies – from skills to funding – make sense for the freelance workforce.

Immigration

· Almost half of the creative workforce in our sector are working freelance, and any immigration system must recognise their fundamental importance in filling skills shortages. Government must reform the immigration system to allow creative freelancers long-term visas into the UK beyond the 'exceptional talent' Tier 1 route. The importance of the freelance workforce must also be taken into consideration when reviewing freedom of movement in the EU.

Careers

· Government must support a creative careers campaign which will explain – through the medium of UK-wide advertising – how the creative sector really works and the opportunities within it. The campaign will primarily be targeted at young people, but will also seek to reach those who are considering a change in career in later life. It will aim to inspire more people to pursue a career in the creative industries and combat misperceptions about this line of work. The Creative Industries Federation has the ambition to develop and deliver the campaign, in collaboration with industry partners and a media planning agency.

Higher education

· The Government needs to take a longer-term look at the earning power of creatives, including freelancers, in order to give those applying to university appropriate advice about opportunities in the sector.

· DLHE (destination of leavers from higher education) must take into account all types of freelance work including portfolio careers. The government's new algorithmic approach to data collection is problematic for identifying freelancers. Recognising these careers must be part of the data gathering.

· In order to understand the economic value of creative jobs, government should introduce a longitudinal DLHE study – tracking individuals over five years, then 10 years, after graduation. This would be a better measurement for creative freelancers who may choose to earn less while they build up a portfolio or who are willing to take less pay in the short-term to develop their creative practice. This sort of data should always be presented alongside mid- and senior-career salaries in creative roles and sectors which are typically above the national average.

· The TEF (teaching excellence framework) must use these additional measures to recognise the success of courses which do not necessarily lead directly to full-time employment. TEF ranking should recognise and reflect the importance of the pipeline of creative freelance talent to the UK creative industries and its economy as a whole.

2. Supporting the creative freelance workforce

One-stop shop support (IP, finance, exports)

- Creative freelancers are very keen for more business support, including advice on intellectual property (IP), finance and exports. This support is sometimes available, but it is often not known about or easily accessed. Government should support an independent UK-wide virtual hub – a 'business booster network' – which signposts existing business advice, maps local support services, and facilitates peer-to-peer mentoring aimed at creative enterprises and entrepreneurs. This policy recommendation was first outlined in the Federation's response to government's industrial strategy green paper.

Protecting creative workspaces

- Government should ensure no premises currently used as creative workspace (including not-for-profit creative workspace, and former industrial space for artists) should be changed into residential units without scrutiny from local planning authorities. This means modifying the 2013 'Permitted Development Rights', under the 'General Permitted Development Order' which granted permission to developers to change office space to residential without planning permission.

Ensuring high quality training

- Many government interventions on skills, such as the apprenticeship levy, target larger businesses. In order to help develop freelancers and microbusinesses, government should invest in accrediting online courses for freelancers, including in business skills. This would improve productivity and raise the standard of training.

Finance and funding

- The government recognises that there is limited provision of patient capital (investment with no expectation of turning a quick profit) and soft loans (loan with below market rates of interest). They are currently reviewing the ways in which long-term finance is available for innovative firms looking to scale up.[46] But this lack of provision also affects the creative sector. This review should expand to look at how it is affecting this part of the economy, including freelancers. High interest rates and short loan terms both came up as barriers for business expansion in our survey.

- Some freelancers may experience periods where they suddenly have a drop in workload, or something happens which makes them unable to work. Some would be able to use the soft-loans mentioned above to tide them over through these periods. If the government wants to discourage those experiencing more severe problems from taking unemployment benefit, they should consider new mechanisms for providing social security for freelancers – against ill health or under-employment in particular. For example, short-term relief grants or community supports that are underwritten by government could be considered in order to make sure that this 21st century workforce is protected.

- Self-employed people's access to Universal Credit (UC) is subject to them being 'gainfully self-employed'. To access gainful self-employment, all self-employed would-be UC claimants have a 'gateway interview' to establish that the work is regular, organised, developed and making a profit as the claimant's main job. The interviews are carried out by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) work coaches who have mixed caseloads of many different categories of claimant. They may not understand the structures of the creative industries or of associated occupations.[47] Government must take urgent action to ensure that UC is appropriate to support freelancers. At a minimum, more specific training and guidance should be given to the JCP work coaches to help them understand the challenges faced by the freelance community. Consideration should be given to applying different criteria to those involved in certain categories of work – including in relation to unpaid work.

Tax returns

- Government must assess the additional burden on freelancers of Making Tax Digital (MTD) – its newly-launched, modernised version of the tax system – during the move to quarterly tax returns. This should include accountancy and time costs. After assessment, either additional support should be provided or – if the system is too great a burden – tax returns for freelancers should revert to being annual.

Concern about Making Tax Digital in response to our survey:

"I am hugely concerned about the cost and time of the proposed changes to the tax returns to four times a year. This will massively increase accountancy costs, mean buying new software and seriously eat into writing time which could endanger the ability to meet contractual deadlines. It is likely also to increase errors on the tax form, as people will be doing them in a hurry at a time when they are under work pressure rather than as now, being able to choose a convenient time to set aside within a period of several months. It could particularly difficult if an author is away speaking at an overseas festival."

ENDNOTES

1 Method: We chose industries on the basis of those with SIC07 codes with a GVA of over £50bn in 2008. There is overlap between the GVA of the creative industries and other sectors. Note: there is some difference between the total industry GVA used by DCMS and by ONS (ABML) in the 2015 figures, due to amendments from provisional calculations used by DCMS. The 2015 GVA used by DCMS is based on the output measure of GVA, due to data availability in July 2016. These figures are therefore different from ABML (GVA at basic prices) as available now. If you compare the UK total with the 2015 ABML GVA figure, there is a 0.5% difference, with the latest data showing a 18% increase between 2010-2015, compared to 17.4% using the 2015 data we published last year. We expect the trends to be similar when re-evaluated by DCMS later this year. ABML data accessed from – https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgrossvalueaddedincomeapproach – table 6. DCMS data accessed from – https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2016.

2 ONS data available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/feb2017

3 DCMS data available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564568/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_Employment_Occupations.xlsx

4 23% of workers in creative occupations in other sectors work freelance. DCMS data available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564568/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_Employment_Occupations.xlsx

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