

# Arts Council England

## Response to the Covid-19 crisis: Requests and proposals from artists and arts organisations

### PART 2

On Friday 20 March 2020, I took part in an online meeting convened by Arts Council England with an External Reference Group to comment on draft proposals for supporting the arts sector in the face of the coronavirus (Covid-19) health crisis. I previously used Twitter to invite people to tell me what difficulties they faced and/or any solutions they proposed. As there was far more than I could mention at the meeting, I promised that I would collate the information and forward it to ACE. Having done that, I put it on one of my blogs so that everyone could access it.

There were also some personal messages and emails and I didn't want to make them public without permission. It's taken a bit longer to get that (and not all those messages are included here) but here are some further responses. Thanks to Black Country Living Museum, Black Country Touring, Creative Black Country, Culture Central and Multistory, Jonathan Petherbridge, Lady Kit, Chris Brown and Susan Jones for their contributions.

As I said before, if you have anything further to share, do use the comments box below or email me directly through the contacts page. I'll do my best to keep this conversation going within the limits of other pressures in my working and personal life. My thanks again to everyone who responded to my call out

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24 March 2020  
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François Matarasso

@arestlessart

I've been asked to join an online meeting with @ace\_national later today to talk about its support for the sector during the #coronavirus crisis. I know some things but please let me know about difficulties you would like to see raised and especially your solutions

## Replies

### 1. Black Country Living Museum, Black Country Touring, Creative Black Country, Culture Central and Multistory

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Freelancers, not just artists are being affected, many people behind the scenes such as technicians, interpreters etc incomes have been wiped. Some efforts are being made to digitise activity will no way replace the lost income for many self-employed. Many will need to start again

The wellbeing of staff/individuals need to be managed, people who live on their own need to be protected. There is a lot of anxiety.

Grateful for messaging coming from ACE, could ACE also look at positive message to counteract the negative messages.

How are we responding:

We are having conversations about supporting the sector including Culture Central. As a result we will be asking BC about what support is needed and share this with the decision makers such as ACE.

CBC is adapting one the of the work strands to encourage digital commissions and BCT are also considering adapting some of their work. Multi story are carrying on working with vulnerable people who are offline through phone call. BCLM are also having conversations. You might have seen the simple act of BCLM on twitter, the simple act of sharing the fish and chips which would have gone to waste.

It's heartening to see so much love and solidarity out there and folks helping each other out. Thank you

### 2. Jonathan Petherbridge (London Bubble)

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Sorry if this is a bit Bubble-centric, but maybe that's helpful. We're not an NPO but are part of the arts ecology. For nearly 50 years we've been testing and developing new practice - currently we're part of the Learning About Culture Randomised Control Trial (part led by ACE) and contribute to the working group looking at evidence gathering.

The new ACE strategy will align with our objectives - if we're still around. And that would be my first point. Can ACE support organisations beyond their portfolio to help them, and their freelancers, get through the next 4/6 months?

Also, we recently submitted a small application for an intergenerational theatre project which we've been developing with participants over the past 2 years. This week we've been re-modelling how to take this project online in the new context - and I'm excited by the idea, as are the participants. In light of the current situation our practice has to change - and creative community practice has a role to play in maintaining connections and meaning. I'd make a plea for ACE to help artists and organisation to adapt work to the new context.

### 3. Lady Kit

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Hia, I'm Kitt- I'm a socially engaged maker based in Newcastle. I'm so pleased you're speaking with ACE today. It's great to know that people involved in community/ participatory/ social art-practice-creativity are being represented!

My immediate concerns for practitioners and participants are:

Communications: ensuring multiple methods of communication are being used to keep everyone up to date on what is happening and ways to safely stay social and creative. ACE Offering support with communications in projects that are on hold (physical mail out costs, shared use of Zoom accounts etc, advice and tools ).

Finance: ACE offering lots of micro grants £500-2,00 for individual practitioners to undertake R&D (so they can come out of this period with new/ stronger skills/ ideas) / keep going with non face to face work on longer term projects which may be currently funded through weekly workshops etc (Highlight to ACE that development of research, best practice and large scale projects often start off as/ in/ thru weekly participatory workshops etc.)

Offering hardship grants / info about other orgs which offer these

Health: offering support, tools /resources for dealing with emotional and physical consequences for practitioners and participants . I think the emotional fall out from this situation will particularly effect social practitioners and participants. As artists will inevitably be involved in emotional well being of participants and will probably have to manage some of this - probably, often whilst no longer being paid and while dealing with their own emotional wellbeing.

Longer term I'm concerned about the implications for social practice from the current focus on digital creativity. Digital is great, but its not a replacement for the other human, social- ness stuff. There are ways to be safely socially creative which don't focus on the digital- I've already seen some great examples- postal art projects, walking projects, nature art, door to door performances which people can enjoy from inside their house. Wishing you health and creativity and (safe!) social-ness.

### 4. Chris Brown (g39)

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Hope I'm not too late to feed into your ACE meeting. It was clarified today that the business rates relief package is extended to museums, theatres and galleries. While these organisations will badly need that freed up cash for their continued operation, I'm proposing to pledge the saving that my organisation (g39) makes via this rates relief to artists. Our saving will only be £2.5k, but that could support a handful of artists in the short term. If EVERY organisation pledged to do that collectively (even a %age of their saving, not necessarily 100%), the support available to artists would be considerable.

That's the Big Idea, too early to say what the detail might be (but there are already hardship fund models underway, as you'll know).

## 5. Susan Jones

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Secondary analysis of existing data with new research around the livelihoods of visual artists demonstrates that:

### **Visual artists are valuable contributors to the arts economy**

Taking the entire visual arts constituency (data from CCS, 2018) and cross-referencing to annual average incomes from art, art related and non art sources (TBR, 2018) shows visual artists earn **£689m** per year.

### **Levels of self-employment are high which makes their livelihoods particularly precarious**

77% of visual artists are self-employed, this higher than the creative industries as a whole where self-employment is 43% (CCS, 2012, Visual Arts Blueprint)

### **Around two-fifths of visual artists income arises from art practices**

It is safe to assume that **£253.7m** (39%) of these earnings come from pursuit of art practices including prizes and awards, commissions, sales, fees for residencies and community-based work (TBR, 2018 Livelihoods of visual artists, Arts Council England; CCS, 2018, Workforce analysis 2018)

### **Contributions to visual artists' incomes from publicly-offered work are small**

It is shown that only **£22.18m** (9%) of this art-related work (including teaching and other employment) is openly advertised as opportunities from both public and private sectors (Jones, S. 2017, Artists work in 2016, a-n The Artists Information Company).

### **Levels of direct funding to artists are small**

Just **£1.21m** was awarded to 135 visual arts practitioners including artists, producers and curators shared in a twelve-month ACE DYCP period (Jones, S. 2019, The chance to dream: why fund individual artists, a-n The Artists Information Company\*)

### **The value of 'non-advertised' art-based work provided to artists could be over £51m**

Although no data has been located on the levels of artists' incomes arising from public (or private) sector non-advertised or invitational visual arts work including that offered through gallery recommendation routes, cross reference to creative industries data suggests that some 70% of work is passed on through the 'club culture'. (McRobbie, A. 2002, Clubs to Companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up worlds'. Cultural Studies, 16(4))

**Intervention to ensure artists' future livelihoods requires a two-fold approach**

The Arts Council should seek to increase income to artists to compensate for loss of their 'non-art' income (61%). This achieved through a substantial uplift in direct funding for artists' R&D and indirect funding via revenue support to NPOs and CPP (and other project funding to organisations who employ artists), ensuring that fees, budgets and terms (including for 'non-advertised but publicly-funded work) meet industry standards.

In parallel the Arts Council and visual artists' advocacy organisations should actively advocate to government for legislate for and provide adequate financial support for self-employed and freelancers including visual artists now and beyond the Coronavirus emergency period.