PiPA Home Working Guidance for Charter Partners

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In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) developments PiPA recently published its *Call for Support* (here) for performing arts organisations and the government to consider the medium term needs and risks posed to parents and carers. We all need to work together to protect the performing arts industry from the wider effects of the pandemic, as well as support the physical and mental wellbeing of our invaluable workforce.

As performing arts venues are now closing, we have developed this guidance document with some practical strategies for PiPA's Charter Partners to support their workforce throughout this unprecedented time.

Risks and stress factors to parents and carers working in the performing arts:

- **Parents:** Those with children might struggle financially when schools and nurseries are closing (as they have in other European cities) especially if they haven't got a social network around to help mitigate the additional childcare required to continue work, or avoid extra costs for care. Additionally, being able to respond to last minute engagements or changes to schedules will become more difficult.

- **Carers:** Those caring for ill, disabled or elderly family and friends will be concerned that they might transmit the virus to their loved ones. Being exposed to the virus by travelling to work on public transport or being surrounded by groups of people may increase their risk of bringing the virus back to those they care for. This includes family members with asthma, heart diseases or those over the age of 60.

- **Precarious work**: Those on show contracts, zero hours and freelancers currently experience high anxieties around work and income security. Not knowing if they will be able to pay regular household expenses such as food and bills, including next month's rent, is a major fear for those who might lose income due to show closures and job cancellations.

Supportive Working Practices:

More than ever supportive working practices such as flexible working will be key to ensuring that businesses can adapt in these uncertain times, as well as to prevent those workers who are already most vulnerable losing out on more.

Communication
- In uncertain times communication is key. Many people report high levels of anxiety. Managers should discuss with team members their concerns around Coronavirus developments and ideal responses to new situations (for example self-isolation). Any

changes to working structures, including remote working, will require adjustment periods and regular check-ins.

- Freelancers and those on show and zero hours contracts are facing potential risks to work continuation and income security. Ongoing communication about potential decisions can help put plans into place for this vulnerable part of the workforce to prepare for difficult times ahead.

- The fast developments around the Coronavirus, including workplace closures and self-isolation, also have an impact on mental health. Regular touch in points, and social interactions (albeit virtual), can help manage anxiety and the feeling of being emotionally isolated.

Remote Working

Home working will be key for many businesses to continue to operate and enable staff to continue working despite potential closures, self-isolation and other risks. When done effectively it has been proven to increase engagement and productivity, so this is an opportunity - albeit an unexpected or unwelcome one - to trial effective and compelling working practices that can benefit both employers and staff.

Here are a few tips for successful implementation:

- The current situation is changing rapidly and we acknowledge that organisations need to act fast, permitting self-isolation and enabling staff to work from home, even using their personal devices and freely available online meeting tools to ensure continuation. The very minimum requirements to enable remote working are:
  - internet connection
  - online meeting facility such as Skype or Zoom
  - access to company emails and documents/files

- In an ideal situation it would be good practice to provide the necessary tech to support effective home working. This would ideally include:
  - Laptops
  - Camera
  - Headset
  - Strong and stable internet connection (or contribution towards)
  - High level internet and data security
  - Online meeting facility (e.g Skype, Zoom, Whereby).
  - External access to company emails and documents (e.g AnyDesk, G Suite)
  - Company project planning tools (e.g Basecamp, Asana, Microsoft Teams)

- Ongoing and effective communication between remote workers and managers, including the conditions under which staff perform best and their concerns about their

workflow will enable success. Allowing for a set up and adjustment period, as well as integrating regular check ins throughout are advised.

- One of the most common frustrations employees tend to experience with remote working is feeling isolated, and missing the team dynamics. Frequent interaction, including online team meetings, as well as social engagements such as virtual lunches or coffee breaks can help mitigate the feeling of isolation.

- Further Considerations:
  - Create remote working guidance (example below) to help set boundaries, manage expectations and support effective implementation.

  - Discuss ideal remote working set ups with staff, as employers continue to have part responsibility for employees' work environments even outside the office.

  - Check your employer's liability insurance policy to make sure it covers homeworking.

Existing examples of remote working at Charter Partners:
(Case Studies are available on request. For further information please contact the PiPA Programme Manager Matt: pipacharter@gmail.com)

- *National Theatre Wales*: As a theatre company with no building, NTW has successfully integrated remote working into its working practices, including in some circumstances for their technical team.
- *Mercury Theatre:* Since their capital project, the majority of the Mercury team had to move toward remote and flexible working to manage the temporary loss of their building.
- *The PiPA team* works mostly remotely. We share documents through the G Suite and communicate regularly via *Skype,* hold meetings via *Zoom* (as it also allows us to participate via phone calls), and most recently enabled remote access to our events through *Whereby*.

If you would like further support with remote access we can put you in touch with PiPA's Remote Access facilitator. We are also planning to host virtual drop in sessions for Charter Partners. For more information or to register your interest please contact our Charter Manager Matt: pipacharter@gmail.com

Review of Policies and Resources

- Now is a crucial time to review and clearly communicate sick pay and leave policies, including Carers Leave/ Time off for Dependants, Parental Leave and Compassionate Leave. Ideally these policies would be enhanced, extended and/or paid for to become viable options for staff with caring responsibilities to use effectively.

- Freelancers and those on show and zero hour contracts have little security when shows are cancelled or if the virus affects them or their immediate family. Review and

communicate any policies and resources, such as the *PiPA Pot,* that are potentially available to support this unprotected part of the workforce.

External Support for Performing Arts Professionals:

- **Actors' Children's Trust:** Financial support for actors who are parents www.actorschildren.org

- **Actors' Benevolent Fund**: For actors and stage managers due to illness, injury or old age: www.actorsbenevolentfund.co.uk/

- **Dance Professionals Fund:** Financial support for dance professionals during hardship: www.dancefund.org.uk

- **Help Musicians:** Support for musicians www.helpmusicians.org.uk

- **Directors' Charitable Foundation:** Welfare Fund for directors in severe financial difficulties: https://www.directorscf.org/welfare

- **Mental Health Foundation**: Guidance on looking after your mental health during the outbreak: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

- **Artsmind:** For performers and creative practitioners in need: https://www.artsminds.co.uk/

- **Theatre helpline:** UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre (SOLT) Theatre Helpline is a free 24-hour phone and email service supporting theatre professionals with any issue affecting their health and wellbeing. It is open to anyone working in theatre, whether in-house or freelance. Call 0800 915 4617 or email advice@theatrehelpline.org

Further Industry Guidance

- Equity Guidelines: www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/march

- Bectu Advice for Members: https://bectu.org.uk/article/covid-19-advice-for-members-working-in-theatre-live-events-and-the-arts/

- Musicians Union: www.musiciansunion.org.uk/coronavirus

- UK Theatre: https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/news/

- Department for Work and Pension: Coronavirus support for employees, benefit claimants and businesses

- Arts Council England statement: HERE

- Arts Council Wales statement: HERE

- Creative Scotland information: HERE

<u>Covid-19 - First Aid Kit: Homeworking Checklist for Employers</u>

Please note that this checklist is designed to enable you to move staff at short notice into home working arrangements. For longer-term or permanent home-working, please refer to the guidance published by ACAS or contact PiPA:

1. Does your staff member have a suitable area at home to work?

2. Make sure your staff have at least phone, IT and adequate internet connection for remote working. Make sure some IT support is in place, including information on what will be provided by who, when and how.

3. Check that your organisation's insurance covers business equipment in the homeworker's home and a claim from a third party.

4. Health and safety: most work done at home is low-risk desk-based work and you are only responsible for any equipment you supply. But for activities involving more risk, you may need to carry out a risk assessment at your employee's home. More information on this is available from the Health and Safety Executive.

5. Agree with your employee regular check in points and how their performance will be managed and monitored.

6. Agree ways of keeping in touch. This could be through:
   - Phone/ Skype/ email.
   - Planned meetings at the main office/ base, when or if possible.
   - Planned meetings at the homeworker's home.
   - Cooperation with colleagues.

7. Agree any arrangements for claiming expenses: what can be claimed, how, when and what is taxable.

8. Put arrangements in writing and/or issue a homeworking policy.