

The impact of COVID-19 on the DCMS sectors: PiPA submission

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Coronavirus: Women more likely to leave sector due to pandemic, PiPA warns

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Written evidence submitted by Parents and Carers in Performing Arts (PiPA)

1 Parents and Carers in Performing Arts (PiPA) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the DCMS Committee on the impact of Covid-19 on the performing arts sector. Since 2016 we have worked with performing arts venues and production companies across theatre, opera, music and dance, to develop and support the implementation of employment and working practices which are inclusive of parents and carers, whether employees or freelance. PiPA's extensive research has shown the extent to which parents and carers, particularly women, freelancers and those facing other forms of social exclusion, are unable to pursue a career in the performing arts. Our aim, and that of our industry partners, is that all workers (whether in creative, onstage, backstage or offstage roles) should be able to sustain a fulfilling career and continue to make a positive contribution to the performing arts, regardless of caring responsibilities. Our work with organisations is informed and supported by extensive research with parents and carers themselves. (See Appendix 2 for further information.)

2 This submission considers the impact of the Covid-19 crisis specifically on the parent and carer workforce in the performing arts, which we define as theatre, opera, live music and dance. PiPA supports the submissions and recommendations from bodies taking a more general view of the industry, in particular those from UK Theatre/SOLT, Equity, MU and BECTU . This submission draws on evidence from PiPA's published research; from current communications with our Charter Partner organisations (see Appendix I for a list of current Charter Partners); from the Actors' Children's Trust; and from an online survey of parents and carers that work in the performing arts, circulated to our mailing list between 14 and 16 June.

4 Key points are:

- Crisis has underscored how vulnerable families are: over half of survey respondents fear that they will have to leave the industry because they cannot risk income
- Risk that women in particular will be lost to the industry
- Single parents are disproportionately affected
- Parents and carers facing other kinds of social exclusions and/or without social capital are most vulnerable and at risk of leaving the industry

What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?

4.1 Parents and carers that work in the sector

Since mid-March 2020, all performing arts organisations have been forced to close. Work which was planned for later in the year has been suspended or cancelled. The impact on parents and carers that work in the industry, and by extension on their families, has been immediate and profound.

73 parents and carers employed in the performing arts responded to an online survey of the PiPA mailing list between 14 and 16 June 2020. The majority were parents (eight identified themselves as carers, either solely or in addition to having resident children), 50 with a child or children under the age of 12. 74% were women. 48% were self-employed, and 64% employed (some respondents are both). 65% work primarily in theatre; 30% in opera or live music; 8% in dance.

Quotes in this submission, unless otherwise credited, are anonymous responses to the survey.

Almost all respondents talked about their work disappearing overnight and the immediate and significant effect on their family finances. It was clear how dependent workers in the industry are on the furlough scheme and on SEISS, and how much they depend on such support continuing for as long as the industry is not able to employ them.

25 respondents had been furloughed

20 had received payments via SEISS

Seven were now on Universal Credit

13 had received no support at all

11 had received charitable support

I am furloughed from my 50% job but have been unable to claim for my freelance work due to it making up less than 50% of my normal income. My partner is also a freelance musician and has been unable to claim for any of his income so we have been living on approximately one fifth of our normal household income

I am furloughed currently and seriously concerned that my job may not exist without the support of a survival package for the Arts.

My employer has recently started the process of mass redundancy's and told any staff that remain will have to take a pay cut for the foreseeable future. This has filled my family with great uncertainty about the future.

I lost the theatre job that I was rehearsing and all the education work that I usually have between acting jobs. The same is true for my husband.

Complete loss of household income.

The immediate impact on the families of workers in the industry is summarised by Robert Ashby, Executive Director, Actors' Children's Trust:

“ACT has already committed more than £320,000 in crisis funding for actors who are parents. Many of those who received SEISS only got £1,500 or less – to cover 3 months – and one parent received the almost insulting sum of £21.40. There are several groups especially disadvantaged: actors in private rented accommodation, with no rent holiday alongside no income; recent mothers who had no chance of taking enough acting work during pregnancy and maternity to qualify for SEISS; single parent actors with the same children's costs but half the support of two-parent households; young actors who seem to have been the first to lose their secondary jobs (retail, hospitality) unlike many older actors who have PAYE 'other jobs' and are furloughed. Even for higher earning actor-parents, those who made net profits of just over £50,000 in the assessment year have been left with no SEISS, no access to state support. ACT's grants are only a small sticking plaster on a deep and livid wound that will take a long time to heal. Children of parents in the performing arts are now facing profound disadvantage.”

4.2 Performing arts organisations: immediate responses

All PiPA Charter Partner organisations have closed, and most have furloughed the majority of their staff. The immediate response to the crisis was to put people first, by developing innovative and responsive policies, working practices and resources to support their workforce at the same time as their wider communities.

New Policies and Practices – Supporting parents and carers and the wider workforce: In this period of uncertainty, PiPA Charter Partners are acknowledging the need to work differently and guide their staff through this change, taking into account the increased challenges home-working parents and carers now face, in trying to combine work demands with ongoing care for their children and other loved ones in need. For example,

the RSC relaxed their Time off for Dependents policy and ensured the RSC nursery remains open to children with key worker parents (including those from outside the organisation). Derby Theatre scheduled online catch-ups and wellbeing sessions for line managers, teams and their full staff. Tangled Feet developed an emergency policy to support their workforce, along with adapting digital resources and online shows for their audiences. Mercury Theatre amongst others, is harnessing the benefits of remote access to keep their workforce connected from virtual full staff meetings to dial-in tech support from their IT Manager.

Supporting Freelancers, short term contract workers and zero hours workers – The performing arts industry is heavily dependent on the skill and contribution of a freelance workforce, who will be one of the biggest hit cohorts during this pandemic. Middle Child Theatre have set up a GofundMe page to support 20 artists financially, whilst many, including English National Opera, Mercury Theatre, Rambert, Theatr Clwyd, Scottish Opera and Stellar Quines are among those organisations who have honoured freelance contracts. In April, the RSC paid all of their zero hour workers based on their average weekly hours over the previous three months, paying all staff, acting companies, stage managers and creative teams for the work they would have completed in this time and honouring all freelance agreements as if they had been worked. English Touring Theatre gave a call-out to offer advice to touring companies and shows. Mercury Theatre posted a blog on how everyone can support freelancers, as well as creating their own hardship fund for staff and freelancers, and working with their local authority to offer secondments. The RSC are continuing rehearsals for Projekt Europa via Zoom, and National Theatre Scotland are hosting virtual castings for upcoming seasons, whilst also creating virtual opportunities, including ‘Scenes from Survival’ which will create commissioned work from a place of isolation and act as a fundraiser for a hardship fund.

But without the possibility of re-opening in the near future or a sector specific extension of SEISS and furlough, many, if not most, will be unable to continue the support, and are having to start planning for redundancies and restructuring. There are real concerns, widely reported, that many performing arts organisations will not be able to continue in business at all.

How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector’s needs?

5.1 Furlough continues to be a valued intervention but the performing arts industry faces difficulties if employers are required to contribute to the scheme while theatres and

venues still have no income, or severely reduced income due to social distancing requirements.

It's literally saved my job for the short term. I'm desperately afraid for what will happen in the longer term.

The furlough scheme provided security at the beginning but the changes due to start next month make it little use to my employer as there is no idea when the business may be able to open let alone get anywhere near covering its costs

5.2 Responses to the survey of the PiPA mailing list also illustrated the problems faced by those who fall through the gaps in provision. 12 respondents had received no support at all. A particular problem, mentioned by several, was the impact of any earlier period of maternity leave.

I was paid an average of my monthly earnings over past 3 years. Unfortunately, I had two babies in those 3 years so on mat leave for half of it

Self-employed parents who took time out from work to care for their children still stand to lose out under the SEISS, in which entitlement to support is based on taxable profits in the three-year period 2016/17 to 2018/19. PiPA supports the call by Maternity Action for a fair approach to the calculation of taxable profits, disregarding any periods of time out to care for children during this three-year period.

5.3 Self-employed workers in the industry often have to work through a limited company in order to secure contracts in the sector. They pay themselves a minimal regular salary, in order to regulate income and support a family in the face of fluctuating work. Dividend payments that ensure the timely and appropriate release of available income make up the majority of these individuals' income but are not counted in SEISS calculations. This is causing hardship for many families.

My work income so low that I can't access SEISS and am a director of own company where I'm still doing some consulting so can't furlough myself.

What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

6.1 Loss of talent from the industry is a clear risk: uncertainty and insecurity will drive people to seek employment elsewhere. Evidence from our survey of parents and carers shows how precarious the future feels. Overnight, parents and carers feel unsafe and more

vulnerable. Many have already been forced to look for permanent work outside the sector and almost half say they are considering leaving the sector.

We asked “Might the problems caused by Covid-19 mean you are considering abandoning your career in the performing arts in the long term?”

30 (43%) said yes, they were considering abandoning their career

24 (34%) “don’t know”

16 (23%) were not considering it

I am looking for alternative careers as theatre feels too unstable with a young family.

It’s been a fright that we both rely on an industry that, for many of the performers/venues and companies, hasn’t received adequate support to allow it to survive whilst forced to close. It was the first to be shut and will be the last to open with many restrictions that will last into the next year. I am very worried for our home and financial future if the arts aren’t given adequate help.

At 51 having spent my entire career in the performing arts my options are limited, but I’m looking to retrain so I might have alternative prospects for employment.

6.2 PiPA’s research evidence supports that of many others, that those who leave the industry will disproportionately be mothers and female carers, and those without social capital to fall back on. Respondents to our survey also highlighted this risk.

I think it important to mention that I come from a working class background, as does my partner and we don’t have any other source of income – i.e. savings or any potential help from family. ... I believe that working class people are underrepresented in every facet of the industry. Certainly in my experience in casting and working with people in other creative roles (non performance roles). Covid-19 will have a huge impact on everyone in the performing arts but the only people able to ride storm will be people in a privileged position who have another income source. The impact of this in the long term could be that there are less working-class voices and therefore less working class narratives.

We endorse the written submission by Dr Dave O’Brien, Chancellor’s Fellow, Cultural and Creative Industries, University of Edinburgh, which provides an excellent summary of the industry’s issues around equality and diversity.

6.3 PiPA is particularly concerned about the long-term impact on women, who are already more likely to be freelance and earning less; and are now more likely to be taking on the majority of childcare and home schooling. There is a real risk of further exacerbating the gender gap in the industry if parents are forced to choose between home schooling their

children or working should children remain off school and unable to access breakfast and afterschool clubs for an extended period of time.

I have not qualified for the government self-employed furlough scheme due to previous PAYE work that I no longer do and maternity leave falling in the years they are looking at, and not my most recent tax return. While my partner has had a large pay out but lost almost no work. This makes me feel penalised as a woman and for taking stable employment in the past to support my family.

Very helpful – got £2.5k but really worried about long term implications of living outside London and having to commute to work in London whilst kids home-school with no childcare

PiPA supports the calls by the TUC to:

Protect women's incomes during the Covid-19 crisis via a more limited form of the job retention scheme beyond October to support parents who are unable to return to work because of childcare responsibilities

Give staff the right to work as flexibly as possible from their first day in the job.

Prevent a large-scale collapse of the childcare sector

Give all workers, regardless of their employment status, a day one right to 10 days paid parental leave.

Ensure employers know they will be breaking the law if they select women for redundancy because of caring responsibilities

6.4 Few venues expect live performances to be possible before early 2021, and therefore will have no ticket, catering or venue income. If there is to be work to return to, funding must be put in place to support performing arts organisations until such time as they can earn their own income again. Without an emergency support package organisations will no longer be able to sustain their buildings and workforce to bridge the gap between October 2020 and future reopening.

It is not only the current months which have been impacted, unlike other industries, we continue to remain in a state of uncertainty about the future, which as parents is crippling to plan for our children, family and our livelihood. I have worked in the industry for 20 years, my partner for 15 and the reduction of wages throughout being pregnant, combined with the loss of the major portion of my partner's income, means unsettling times ahead.

For this reason, the furlough scheme needs to be tailored to the performing arts industry. Without ticket income, it will not be possible to contribute on a percentage basis

as the Chancellor proposes. Redundancies will be the result. The majority of PiPA partners report that they are having to plan for this.

6.5 Freelancers will need ongoing support. We welcome extension of SEISS scheme but are concerned that the newly announced grant should not be “second and final” for those in the performing arts.

After the Self-employed support scheme ends in August life is going to be extremely challenging. We are remaining proactive but it is unlikely we can continue to build a new business from scratch (to replace most of two incomes) by the end of August. The cut off represents a cliff edge, at which point we will be left exclusively with the income from our new business. There is no suggestion that our other, historic, income sources will have returned by then.

SEISS must be extended for those in the theatre industry. Those who have received nothing must get a basic entitlement or at the very least look at the tax returns of previous years but included contributions of employed work also.

The majority in this industry is self-employed and so ongoing support and protections are vital.

What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?

7.1 The furlough scheme and SEISS schemes have been a lifeline, for individuals, their families, and for performing arts organisations.

7.2 The response and support from sector bodies such as Arts Council England and Charities including Help Musicians UK, Dance Professionals Fund and Actors’ Children’s Trust has been swift, flexible and very welcome. BECTU, MU and Equity are working hard to protect workers rights in the face mass redundancies and UK Theatre/ SOLT have played a leading role in offering valuable resources, bringing employers together, ensuring the theatre sector remains connected through freely available webinars.

7.3 The response generally, for those who fulfilled the criteria, has been quick and generous.

7.4 But the needs of parents and carers, and especially of women, were not quickly and, in some cases, have not yet been, considered.

People on parental leave of any form were not eligible to be furloughed to begin with, though this has been addressed. However, women on maternity leave who are not due to

return to work until after 10th June will not qualify for furlough due to the cut off date and therefore face a greater risk of redundancy

Maternity or parental leave during the qualification period for SEISS reduced the qualifying income and excluded many altogether

Freelancers or those on short term contracts were left in great uncertainty for too long and a great number left unable to qualify for SEISS as short term PAYE contracts are the norm and therefore more than 50% of their income is taxed through the PAYE system and are not entitled to either SEISS or CJRS.

Cassie Raine, Joint Executive Director, Parents and Carers in Performing Arts

June 2020

Appendix I – list of Charter Partners

Balbir Singh Dance Company, National Theatre

Bristol Old Vic, National Theatre Scotland

Chichester Festival Theatre, Northern Ballet

Derby Theatre, Old Vic Theatre

Lyric Hammersmith, Opera North

National Theatre Wales, Rambert Dance Company

Nottingham Playhouse, Royal Opera House

Scottish Ballet, Royal Lyceum Edinburgh

Stellar Quines, Royal Shakespeare Company

Theatr Clwyd, Sadler's Wells

Theatre Royal Wakefield, Scottish Opera

Young Vic, Shakespeare's Globe

Birmingham Rep, Sheffield Theatres

Donmar Warehouse, Tangled Feet

English National Ballet, Theatr Clwyd

English Touring Theatre, Theatre Royal Wakefield

Hull Truck Theatre Company, Tutti Frutti

Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, Welsh National Opera

Mercury Theatre,

Middle Child Theatre,

Appendix II

Parents and carers in the performing arts – a diversity challenge

Over the past decade huge strides have been taken to make the performing arts more accessible to all and to attract diverse audiences. How the industry employs people matters greatly to this progress, because greater diversity on stage, among performers and creatives, means that more diverse stories are told, that audiences see themselves and their lives represented, reflected and interrogated. Reaching and engaging more diverse audiences means the performing arts can be owned by all of us, and opens the door to future talent from all walks of life in our four nations.

But low pay, job insecurity and anti-social hours has meant that the sector was – even before the current crisis – losing talent, which could threaten its diversity, relevance and resilience. The over-supply of candidates for creative and onstage roles hides the barriers to participation faced by those without reserves of social capital. Backstage, front of house and administration struggle to attract and retain the key skills which are necessary to enable the show to go on at all.

Parents and carers in the performing arts before the crisis

PiPA research adds weight to the priority placed by the Arts Council on investing in diversity and inclusion. We have consistently found that trained, experienced and committed professionals leave the industry because, in particular, it is so hard to maintain a career as a parent or carer. The industry's London-centricity combines with its low wages to make it almost impossible to continue working without significant social capital in the shape of a well-paid partner or local family support. On becoming parents, women across the industry are more likely than men to give up the security of employment in exchange for the flexibility of freelance work.

Best Practice Report 2017, undertaken in partnership with The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, investigated the barriers facing parents and carers working in the theatre industry, identified their needs and reviewed existing supportive practices that could be shared, developed and trialled between participating theatre organisations across the UK. The research revealed that the burden of caring responsibilities is more likely to fall to women. 76% of all parents had to turn down paid work due to caring responsibilities and 85% of freelancers, the majority of whom are women.

[This research] reveals the extent to which people with caring responsibilities rely upon social advantages to mitigate those responsibilities. ... If caring responsibilities represent a challenge to the relatively privileged, they are likely to represent an insurmountable barrier to those facing other social exclusions.

Dr. Tom Cornford, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Lead Researcher, PiPA Best Practice Research Project 2017

Balancing Act 2019, in collaboration with the Department of Organisational Psychology at Birkbeck University, PiPA investigated the link between caring responsibilities and career progression in the performing arts. This work identified that the median annual earnings for carers and parents employed in the performing arts was £20,000 (£3,000 less than those without caring responsibilities); and £15,000 for carers and parents working freelance. Eight out of ten women with caring responsibilities indicated that they worked either part-time or freelance, whereas the employment structure for men remained unchanged whether they had caring responsibilities or not.

Backstage workforce survey 2020 revealed significant challenges for backstage workers – particularly for women and those with caring responsibilities – and risks for employers, arising from the high demands of job roles, unique working conditions and a lack of structured support. 58% women are freelance compared to 28% men and overall parents and carers are more likely, regardless of gender, to work freelance.

Good employment practice before the crisis

Since 2017, performing arts organisations working with PiPA created the PiPA Charter Programme, a set of guiding principles and toolkits for all professional performing arts organisations that enables the development of supportive working practices which are inclusive and accessible for those with caring responsibilities. It empowers organisations to identify unique working practices and opportunities that are appropriate and sustainable within the specific remit of each organisation.

PiPA's 2016 Best Practice Charter research found no evidence of flexible working practices or family friendly working practices in the sector. The below list of initiatives that have been introduced between 2016 to present day are testament to the extraordinary innovation and progress made by a sector striving to become as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Examples of new practices introduced by Charter Partners to support their parent and carer workforce, include:

The National Theatre trial of a five day rehearsal week, limiting the amount of time performers are called on Saturday's;

Hull Truck reduced their core working hours across the organisation as result of a PiPA consultation revealed those with caring responsibilities were struggling to meet work and care commitments;

Family friendly rehearsals taking place at organisations including Theatr Clwyd, English touring Theatre and Shakespeare's Globe. These may vary in structure but broadly involve no evening or weekend rehearsals, starting around 11am to allow for people to drop children at school and end round 5pm with half an hour for lunch;

Family friendly technical rehearsals at Hull Truck, taking place predominantly during the day (the long and late hours of tech weeks having been identified by PiPA as a pinch point for carers and parents on and off-stage);

Maternity and paternity support for freelancers;

Job shares for roles previously considered unsuitable for job shares such as stage managers, Executive and Heads of Departments job shares.