

**From: The Leader of Lambeth Council**

Our Ref: **Leader 2020 03 20**

Your Ref:

**Rt Hon Rishi Sunak**  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
House of Commons  
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Tuesday, 24 March 2020

## **RESILIENCE OF LAMBETH'S CULTURAL SECTOR AND ITS SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS**

Dear Chancellor

We write with concern about the impact Covid-19 will have on our borough's cultural sector and its self-employed workers.

Lambeth is rich with culture and the borough's creative and digital industries provide 22,000 jobs, generating £1.8bn GVA to the economy. The borough is home to 20 Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations, including the National Theatre, BFI, Rambert and the Southbank Centre. Organisations that play a key part in ensuring the diversity and accessibility of London's cultural sector are located throughout our borough, including the Black Cultural Archives, The Old Vic, Young Vic, Extant, Corali, Ovalhouse Theatre and Streatham Space Project. VCS organisations such as Iconic Steps, Creative Sparkworks and Spiral Skills join the afore mentioned organisations, and many more, in partnership led initiatives spearheaded by the council and backed by the GLA. Designed to strengthen the sector and achieve inclusive growth, these initiatives and the very viability of organisations are now under threat.

In order to protect the resilience of the sector, Lambeth Council is calling for further mitigating measures from government.

While measures such as the job retention scheme are welcomed, urgent clarification is needed over the groups of workers covered (e.g. zero hours staff) and much more needs to be done to protect organisations from loss of business. Funders are responding to the crisis with flexibility, but many organisations rely in large part on earned income. For example, over 60% of Southbank Centre's income, and over 70% of The Old Vic's, comes from ticket sales and other commercial activity.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

As funded projects and programmes are halted and commercial income from, for example, the hire of space, the use of services, the running of courses is lost overnight, organisations find themselves at risk of closure. This critical situation has a knock-on effect for the self-employed.

The Creative Industries Federation has addressed the vulnerable position of the self-employed in its letter to you of 22 March 2020 and its public statement of 20 March 2020. The Federation states that a third of the UK's creative workforce is self-employed and that in a snap poll conducted on Twitter last week 50% of freelancers disclosed that 100% of their work had already been cut because of Covid-19. The Federation further asserts that £94.25 per week of Universal Credit does not nearly compensate such income loss and so Lambeth Council joins the call for government to provide a monthly income matching average earnings over the past three years (capped as detailed in the Federation's letter).

As organisations' activities are arrested, we are also concerned about people, many of them under the age of 25, who are being trained and encouraged into the creative industries by organisations within our borough. These young people, including those of school age, will suffer from reduced or no contact with organisations in terms of employment opportunity, self-development and general wellbeing. As Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture & Creative Industries, said last year at the launch of ELEVATE, Lambeth's mission to support diverse talent and open up the creative workplace, 'culture revitalises neighbourhoods and brings people together creating bridges where often there are none'. We urge the government to act now to protect the resilience of the sector and avoid far-reaching socio-economic impacts in our borough.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Jack Hopkins**

Leader of Lambeth Council

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**National Theatre**, Lisa Burger, Chief Executive

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**The Young Vic**, Despina Tsatsas, Executive Director



THE OLD VIC



Photofusion



Rawmaterial

SOUTHBANK  
CENTRE

streatham  
space  
project

Young Vic