



Changing the world
of work for good

Northern Culture APPG Inquiry

**Written evidence submission by TUC
Northern, TUC North West and TUC
Yorkshire and Humber**

Section 1. Introduction

The TUC exists to make the working world a better place for everyone. It represents the 5.5m members of 48 trade unions in all sectors of the UK economy.

This pan-Northern submission has been developed by TUC Northern, TUC North West and TUC Yorkshire and Humber in consultation with the TUC cultural working groups (TUC Yorkshire and Humber Creative and Leisure Industries Committee / TUC Northern Cultural Working Group) and union representatives from across these three regions.

The TUC welcomes the opportunity to be involved within the inquiry, and hopes the ideas and priorities expressed within this paper will be reflected within the inquiry recommendations.

Section 2. Written evidence

Question 2. How do we boost skills, create equal opportunities for all, promote diversity and support ambitions to empower future generations?

Education

Improving access to creative education is key to meeting the current and future skills needs of, and achieving equality within, the cultural sector.

All children, regardless of their socio-economic background, must have the opportunity to study creative subjects as part of their core education. Yet, with the removal of arts subjects from the EBacc, Ofsted's focus on STEM subjects, and the increase of academies, we are seeing access to creative subjects decline significantly.

The Cultural Learning Alliance reports that between 2010 and 2018 the number of arts teachers within England's secondary schools fell by 22 per cent, and the number of arts teaching hours fell by 23 per cent. Additionally, over the last two years both these measures have decreased by a further seven per cent, while the number of children being taught has increased.¹

And this reduction is not limited to the arts. The alliance also reports that since 2010, Design and Technology, Drama and Music, have all seen significant reductions in teachers and teaching hours.

With regard to music teaching specifically, cost is the greatest barrier to learning. The Musicians Union report that children from families with an overall income of less than £28k are half as likely to learn an instrument compared to those from families with an overall income of more than £48k.² This is despite similar interest from both groups of children. The union also reports that 40 per cent of those from lower income families say their household budget does not allow for music lessons.

These findings clearly demonstrate that children from a lower socio-economic background do not have equal access to music education.

Government must ensure a genuine broad and balanced curriculum as an entitlement for every pupil, and art, drama, music, languages and other creative/humanities subjects must be given equal weight to STEM subjects. In the absence of action from central government, this broadening must be encouraged and incentivised on a regional basis.

It is not just primary and secondary education which are key to supporting a thriving cultural sector. Higher, further, and adult education are also crucial, and all of these have significant financial barriers to entry.

¹ Cultural Learning Alliance (2019). "[Arts teaching hours and workforce 2019](#)"

² Musicians Union (2019). "[Music Education in England Report | The MU](#)"

In the context of higher education, the current proposal by the government to reduce high-cost subject funding for performing and creative arts and media studies by 50 per cent raises serious concerns for the future of the sector.

The proposed cuts will reduce the availability of affordable and accessible education and see those from all protected characteristics, especially lower-socio economic backgrounds, further disadvantaged when it comes to pursuing a career within the creative sector.

Government must not overlook the contribution creative professionals make to the UK economy and protect higher education budgets for creative subjects.

In relation to adult education, we know from experience that there are significant barriers to learning beyond cost, which the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and Union Learning Reps have successfully addressed in order to boost take-up, especially among the hardest-to-reach groups.

Union Learning Reps help workers to overcome initial barriers to engagement, support them to achieve the necessary skills required before embarking on a qualification, and sustain adult learners throughout to ensure they complete and attain the qualification.

However, with the closure of the ULF, we are unsure as to what the union learning offer will look like in the future. And while we can be sure Union Learning Reps will still play a vital role in improving access to and the take up of new and existing entitlements, the impact of the loss of the fund on members from cultural unions, for many of whom it was a lifeline, cannot be underestimated. Without the fund, skills gaps within the sector will undoubtedly grow.

The gaps left by the closure of the fund must be filled within the cultural sector.

Careers advice

A significant barrier preventing young people from taking up a career within the cultural sector is the mainstream view that a creative career is not a viable one. Additionally, many young people are not aware of the wide variety of roles available within the sector. Therefore, access to an effective career's advice and guidance service which champions and normalises cultural careers is paramount to encouraging younger generations into the sector.

These types of services can help young people to realise the wide variety of creative roles available and help them to access local opportunities.

The cultural sector must be given parity with other sectors within careers advice and guidance services. And these services must be accessible and offer high quality information about what good work is (i.e. fair pay, a safe working environment, decent treatment, guaranteed hours and the opportunity to be represented by a union – the concept of good work is discussed in more detail in the response to question 6.).

The [Creative Careers Programme](#), delivered by Creative & Cultural Skills, ScreenSkills and the Creative Industries Federation, is a positive example of how these needs can be met.

Apprenticeships

Trade Unions have long campaigned on the positive impact good quality apprenticeships have within all sectors. Yet, they are largely absent from the cultural sector.

Apprenticeships within 'Arts, Media and Publishing' accounted for just 0.4 per cent of all apprenticeship starts in 2019/20.³ And this is not due to the impact of the pandemic. The cultural sector consistently has the second lowest number of apprenticeship starts each year.

However, the cultural sector faces many issues which apprenticeships are known to address. These include low numbers of entry level positions and skills shortages, specifically relating to digital skills.⁴ In fact, according to Creative & Cultural Skills, 57.7 per cent of businesses within the Arts Council England (ACE) footprint agreed that apprenticeships would become increasingly important in addressing future skills shortages.

As well as focussing on the quantity of apprenticeships, attention must be given to the quality. Whilst a good apprenticeship is an excellent means of developing a career, participating in a poor-quality placement is likely to damage the workers confidence and career prospects.

Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that apprenticeships are not just available but are accessible. There is a large amount of evidence showing that certain groups - including women, BAME groups, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disabled people – do not get fair access to the best apprenticeships.

Local political administrations are in a key position to incentivise cultural apprenticeships and encourage cultural employers to offer them. They are also in a key position to engage with cultural employers to ensure every apprenticeship has purpose, is paid fairly, with high-quality learning and training elements and access to trade unions. The [TUC Apprenticeship Charter](#) is a useful tool in facilitating this engagement.

Funding pre-requisites for National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

Another key route into the cultural sector for young people is via extracurricular activities. However, many of these opportunities are not accessible to children from poorer backgrounds. While this may be for financial, geographical, or cultural reasons, accessibility can be improved through outreach work.

Public funding for culture must be conditional upon receiving organisations, particularly National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), committing to delivering effective outreach work within the local community (state and local aid is discussed further in the answer to question 6 below).

Local authority spending

Wherever possible local public investment in the arts should be spent locally, benefit local workers and local communities and provide for local needs and wants.

³ Parliament. House of Commons (2021). "[Apprenticeship Statistics](#)"

⁴ Creative & Cultural Skills (2018). "[Building a Creative Nation: Current and future skills needs](#)"

Local authorities should include grant conditions that promote regional casting and local rehearsals in live performance and recorded media. Local workers should be employed in the construction, development and maintenance of the cultural infrastructure and local artists should be employed in publicly funded theatres and concert halls.

Equality

Barriers to participation in culture on grounds of class, low income, age, disability, gender, race, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, caring responsibilities or other personal characteristics must be broken down.

To improve equality of access, public investment should be used to make ticket prices to live performances affordable, there must be continued 'free' access to libraries and museums, and there must be affordable, convenient and reliable public transport to encourage participation.

To increase equality of opportunity, the growing economic exclusion of poor and middle-income earners from the cultural industries and from participatory arts projects must be reversed.

With regard to discrimination, injustice has been powerfully highlighted by the Black Lives Matter and Me Too movements. Creators and the media should reflect a society where people do not face discrimination under any of the protected characteristics stated in the Equality Act 2010.

And there is a significant amount of work to do around gender equality. For example, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) reports that within screenwriting only 16 per cent of working film writers in the UK are female, and only 14 per cent of prime-time TV is female-written.⁵ And this inequality is not limited to writers, many other key creative roles in screen production are also held predominantly by men.

More must be done to encourage the broadest possible range of creative voices, venues and forms. The TUC supports union initiatives such as [BECTU's Theatre Diversity Action Plan](#), [WGGB's Equality Writes campaign](#), [Equity's Play Fair campaign](#) and the [Stage Sight campaign](#).

Broadband

The pandemic has caused many creative professionals to develop online ways of remote working or connecting with audiences. Consequently, internet connectivity has become more important than ever. However, many have struggled with broadband connectivity and quality issues, specifically within rural areas.

Prioritising Superfast and Ultrafast broadband across the Northern region would provide valuable support to people working within the cultural sector.

⁵ The Writers' Guild of Great Britain & Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (2018). "[Gender Inequality and Screen Writers](#)"

Question 6. How do we level-up investment to help restore and rebuild cultural institutions?

Public funding for arts and culture in the Northern region must be equitable. When Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) direct funding to major 'national' cultural organisations is combined with Arts Council England (ACE) funding, Londoners receive £69 per head compared with £4.58 per head elsewhere in England. This disparity must be redressed without cuts to London-based arts organisations. Arts provision in rural areas needs to be increased.

Public funding

It is imperative that state aid (i.e. ACE and DCMS) and local funding (i.e. Local Authorities, Combined Authorities and LEPs) lead to improvements in the quality of work within, and access to, the cultural sector.

These public bodies should use their powers to create good work within the cultural and creative sector. Good work gives all workers:

- fair and decent pay
- a safe and healthy workplace
- guaranteed hours
- fair treatment and respect
- access to learning and progression
- the opportunity to be represented by a union and have a strong independent voice on what matters within the workplace.⁶

In relation to fair and decent pay, all public funding must be conditional on the supported organisations becoming accredited Living Wage employers and formally recognising the appropriate trades unions, entering into collective bargaining in good faith, adhering to applicable trade union agreements, and fully complying with health and safety legislation.

Additionally, funded arts and cultural projects should differentiate between amateur, and professional roles and ensure professionals are always properly remunerated.

Employment charters are an extremely useful tool in driving up the quality of work and offer an effective solution to addressing poor and insecure work. Examples of relevant charters and models of best practice include:

- [A Good Practice Charter For Artists - Artists' Union England](#)
- [Freelance-Charter - NUJ](#)

The need for action around poor working conditions within the cultural sector has been intensified by the pandemic. Members are reporting that due to a decrease in the work

⁶ TUC (2017). "[The Great Jobs Agenda](#)"

available, many creatives are working for pay well below what is deemed fair and decent and, in some cases, even working for free.

Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure publicly funded organisations are paying workers a fair rate of pay as per the pay rates set out by the relevant cultural union. And there is undoubtedly potential for an improvement in the regulation of ACE and DCMS funds to increase transparency and accountability and ensure decent jobs are being delivered.

The government must facilitate these initiatives in order to deliver on its commitment to level up the country. And local political administrations should sign up to the relevant TUC Cultural Manifesto (e.g. [TUC Yorkshire and Humber Cultural Manifesto](#)).

With regard to the loss of EU funding, we welcome the government's commitment to maintain funding levels through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

As a minimum, the government should commit to continuing the current total allocation, ensure that any change in formula does not result in a real term reduction in money to any area and adopt a social partnership approach to administering and monitoring the Fund.

Criteria for the allocation of funding for local culture should focus on good work (as discussed above) - with demonstrable workforce impacts around employment standards, pay, wellbeing, skills and workers' voice.

Greater financial support for individuals

Covid-19 has severely damaged the cultural sector and live performance in particular. Too many creative industries workers were not eligible for government help during 2020.

While our members welcome the Cultural Recovery Fund and recognise the support this is providing for cultural organisations and institutions, there are concerns about the fund's failure to support individuals within the sector. So, although the fund may help to keep buildings and venues open in the short term, this survival can only be temporary if nothing is done to support the people who work, perform or exhibit within them.

These workers need support so that they can continue to write, record, rehearse and practice during the pandemic, and return to their profession once it is over. If these creatives are not supported to preserve their work, there is a risk that it will disappear altogether. And any reduction in the number of people working within the sector will adversely affect achieving equality and ending discrimination.

The next round of the Cultural Recovery Fund must be opened up to freelancers in England as it is in Scotland and Wales and economic initiatives must be put in place to support individuals within the sector.

Freelancers, whatever their trading status, would benefit from a basic income guarantee. The TUC supports Equity's Four Pillars for Recovery covering workforce protection, safe opening, protecting cultural infrastructure and equality [Equity's Four Pillars for Recovery](#).

Local arts, heritage, and culture strategies

Each local authority should maintain and regularly update a comprehensive arts, heritage and culture strategy. This should actively support live performance including the night time economy, live venues, festivals and street performers.

Arts and culture must also be at the heart of regeneration. Evidence shows that ACE and Local Enterprise Partnership funding is more readily available in areas where there is local authority investment and a clear strategy for the sector.

A comprehensive strategy is crucial to securing funding external to local authority resources. In the context of the Northern Powerhouse and devolution proposals, regional co-operation between local authorities in developing arts, heritage and culture strategies remains essential.

Increase local authority spending

In the Northern region, levels of local authority investment in the cultural sector vary hugely.

Local authorities should work towards the goal of investing at least 50p per resident per week in the sector (<https://tinyurl.com/50p-for-culture>).

Additionally, local authorities and LEPs should seek new and creative ways of supporting arts and culture. This could be through collaborative working, shared funding, specialised business and project support, innovation and experimentation.

Central government must support local authorities to do this. The government's approach to public investment in the arts is inconsistent if not contradictory. While maintaining that investment in arts, culture and heritage is important the Westminster government has threatened such investment through cuts to local authority funding and the implementation of the EBacc.

Central government must increase public investment in a thriving regional creative and leisure industries sector and protect and enhance arts education. This investment and support should be focussed on the creative and digital sectors across government departments.