Sustainable Cultural Futures

COVID-19 and Resetting Cultural Policy

Policy approaches to tackle precarity in freelance cultural work

How are campaign organisations, labour unions and policymakers approaching the precarity in cultural freelancing in the UK?

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Contents

1. The project 3
2. Introduction 4
   2.1. Research aims 4
3. Research context 5
4. Research approach 6
5. Interview findings 8
   5.1. Challenges 8
      5.1.1. Societal conditions 9
      5.1.2. Labour market conditions 11
      5.1.3. Sectoral conditions 14
   5.2. Freelancers' participation in policymaking 16
   5.3. Complex ecological approach 18
      5.3.1. Collaborative approach 18
      5.3.2. Comprehensive approach 23
   5.4. Potential policy directions 25
      5.4.1. Funding increase 25
      5.4.2. Alternative funding frameworks 26
      5.4.3. Fiscal policy intervention 27
      5.4.4. Universal basic income and social security measures 28
      5.4.5. Better pay and working conditions 29
      5.4.6. More regulations 31
      5.4.7. Representing freelancers in cultural policy 32
      5.4.8. Policy lab 33
      5.4.9. Importance of APPGs 35
      5.4.10. Higher education 36
6. Further questions 37
7. Acknowledgements 38
8. About the authors 39
9. Appendices 41
   9.1 Appendix 1: Workers, employees and self-employed 41
   9.2 Appendix 2: From codes to themes 44

1. The project

Project title:

Sustainable Cultural Futures: COVID-19 and Resetting Cultural Policy (SCF)

Period:

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Project themes:

- Theme 1: Values of Culture and the Purposes of Cultural Policy (2022)
- Theme 2: Institutions of Cultural Work (2023)
- Theme 3: Digitalised Cultural Consumption (2024)

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同志社大学 Doshisha University

2. Introduction

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been renewed concern about the precarity of cultural workers, especially cultural freelancers. Since 2020, many reports by academic and industry commentators have been published spotlighting the suffering endured by freelancers following the pandemic. The issue has also featured in several UK Parliamentary debates. However, there has been little progress in pinpointing and implementing concrete policy solutions to tackle the issue. With this research, we seek to contribute to bridging this policy gap in the UK.

To this end, we interviewed 17 representatives from four groups of stakeholders across the cultural sector, namely campaigners/campaign group representatives, trade union representatives, policymakers, and researchers in cultural labour and the creative industries. We asked them to talk about their prioritised policy solutions. Based on this data, this report identifies and thematises potential policy solutions to combat precarity as well as existing challenges that prevent its timely resolution.

2.1. Research aims

With this research, we aim to:

1. **Identify potential policy approaches** to tackle the precarity in freelance cultural work;
2. **Give a better voice** to the key stakeholder groups, especially campaigners/campaign groups and small trade unions;
3. **Thematise common features of preferred measures and approaches** as expressed by the key stakeholder groups.

3. Research context

The cultural sectors have a higher proportion of self-employed individuals compared to the rest of the workforce. Specifically, around 32% of people working across the UK's creative industries are self-employed, while the figure for the entire UK workforce was estimated at around 16%.[1] Additionally, some cultural sectors have even higher self-employment rates. For example, individuals involved in film and video production (54%), or the performing arts (88%) have particularly high shares of self-employment.[2,3] **This prevalence of self-employment across cultural sectors has important implications for understanding the precarious predicament of many cultural workers.**

In the UK, the level of protection a worker enjoys depends on their employment status. Those in traditional full-time roles have an 'employee' status and a full range of employment rights such as minimum wage, parental leave, pension, holiday, and sick pay. In some cases, these can also include other 'perks' such as health insurance (on top of the NHS) and bonus schemes.[4] Within the current legislative framework, **self-employed 'do not have the rights and responsibilities of an employee'**.[5] Therefore, the abovementioned employment protections do not apply to them. Neither do self-employed have the rights and responsibilities of 'workers' – dependant contractors such as some platform/gig economy workers (e.g., Uber drivers). It is because a **self-employed individual is regarded as 'their own employer; they work on their own terms and provide themselves with their own pension and holiday pay'**; therefore are subject to lower tax rates than those in standard employment.[6] In short, the UK government is clear that **'Employment law does not cover self-employed people in most cases because they are their own boss'** (see Appendix 1 in 9.1. for a comprehensive list of employment rights of workers, employees and self-employed in the UK context).[7] Self-employed, however, is a rather broad category incorporating contractors, business owners (e.g., sole traders and one-person limited companies) and freelancers on short- and fixed-term contracts. Hence, **while all freelancers are self-employed, not all self-employed are freelancers.**

1 Easton, E., & Beckett, B. (2021). *Freelancers in the Creative Industries*. Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre. pec.ac.uk/policy-briefings/freelancers-in-the-creative-industries

2 Creative Industries Council. (2021). *TV & Film Employment*. thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures

3 CIPEC. (2021). *One Size Can't Fit All: A Fortnight of Research and Policy on…. Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre*. pec.ac.uk/news/one-size-cant-fit-all-a-fortnight-of-research-and-policy-on-creative-freelancers

4 Taylor, M., Marsh, G., Nicol, D., & Broadbent, P. (2017). *Good Work: The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices*.

5 GOV.UK. (2023). Employment status. gov.uk/employment-status

6 Taylor, M., Marsh, G., Nicol, D., & Broadbent, P. (2017). *Good Work: The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices*.

7 GOV.UK. (2023). *Employment status.*

4. Research approach

In total, we conducted 17 online interviews spread across four groups of stakeholders (see Table 1):

1. **Individual campaigners, campaign groups and membership organisations;**
2. **Trade unions;**
3. **Policymakers;**
4. **Researchers in cultural labour and creative industries.**

These semi-structured interviews undertaken between May and September 2023, sought to explore stakeholders' views on a range of potential policy measures to tackle precarity in freelance cultural work as well as identify their preferred policy approaches.

Table 1. Interviews

Stakeholder category	Number of interviews	Interview codes
Campaign groups/campaigners	7	C1
		C2
		C3
		C4
		C5
		C6
		C7
Trade Unions	3	U1
		U2
		U3
Policymakers	5	P1
		P2
		P3
		P4
		P5
Researchers	2	R1
		R2

4. Research approach (continued)

We applied thematic analysis to identify emerging commonalities in the accounts of the interviewees.[8] Coding followed a blended approach[9] combining inductive and deductive elements. Starting coding inductively first ensured 'closeness' to the data[10] and allowed codes to emerge from the bottom up as no codebook was developed a priori. The deductive element, on the other hand, ensured that the coding and analysis process stayed within the boundaries of our research aims and questions. Therefore, the first round of coding remained 'informant-centric' and generated descriptive codes. In contrast, the second round was 'researcher-centric', generating around 30 sub-themes that were more analytical in nature and reflective of patterns in the data in relation to the research aims (Appendix 2 in 9.2. demonstrates how sub-themes and themes were derived from the codes).

As a result, we identified four overarching themes:

1. Challenges
2. Freelancers' participation in policymaking
3. Complex ecological approach
4. Potential policy directions

We explore these in more detail in Section 5

[8] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

[9] Graebner, M. E., Martin, J. A., & Roundy, P. T. (2012). Qualitative data: Cooking without a recipe. *Strategic Organization,* 10(3), 276–284.

[10] Linneberg, M. S., & Korsgaard, S. (2019). Coding qualitative data: a synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative Research Journal,* 19(3), 259–270.

5. Interview findings

Although no clear consensus on specific policies has emerged from the interview data, we still were able to draw some broader findings beneficial for this cause. First, our data have allowed us to map several existing challenges reinforcing the precarity of freelance cultural work (see 5.1.). Second, we pinpoint some significant commonalities regarding broader policy approaches or strategies (see 5.2. and 5.3.) prioritised by our interviewees. Finally, we list more specific policy directions discussed by our interviewees (see 5.4.).

5.1. Challenges

We have identified a myriad of challenges that contribute to and perpetuate the precarity of freelance cultural work (see Figure 1). Generally, these challenges fall under three categories:

1. **Societal conditions;**
2. **Labour market conditions;** and
3. **Sectoral conditions.**

Figure 1. Factors contributing to the precarity of freelance cultural work

5.1.1. Societal conditions

Many of the interviewees suggested that one of the root causes of freelancer precarity across cultural sectors is the **lack of value** our society and government attribute to culture and the arts: *'One of the fundamental problems, I think, in the UK is that we don't value our culture and creativity' (R2).* The general issue of value, in turn, feeds into a range of other related issues such as the lack of influence and power of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the arm's length bodies, as well as gradual de-valuation and de-prioritisation of cultural and artistic education. Within this undervalued ecology, self-employed artists and cultural workers are the least valued players. Some believe that cultural freelance work will remain precarious until the value issue is resolved: *'We have lost an essential sense of value of what an artist brings to society. And until that changes, I think the future does not look great for freelancers' (C2).*

The lack of value attributed to culture and the arts naturally makes it *'an easy target for [funding] cuts' (C1).* This feeds into the second challenge reported by the interviewees – the **underfunded ecology** of the cultural sector, which reportedly perpetuates the exploitation and precarity of cultural workers.

> *At a local government level, we've seen a reduction of about a billion pounds over the 12 years of money that was formerly put into local arts and culture activity. And which therefore provided jobs for our members across the whole country. And then at the same time, obviously at a national level, there were also significant cuts to the budget of the Department for Culture, and the ecology of arm's length bodies (U1).*

> *The amount of funding that people can apply for now is really depleted, especially for any new music, new work. Actually, plays as well. The cuts are really going to make a huge difference here. So, I think* ***you'll see more exploitation rather than less, because there's so much less funding*** *(C2).*

Within this underfunded ecology, the 'trickle-down' principle of supporting individuals puts them in the worst position.

> *So, we will fund organisations, and we do fund individuals directly as well. But then, that money will then trickle down to the freelancers and cultural workers who we also support. Something in that model is not quite working and that became particularly evident with the pandemic (P1).*

External shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis, and so on put additional strain on the already underfunded and vulnerable ecology spotlighting the sector's precarious nature further.

> ***Our cultural organisations are working in this excruciatingly difficult economic climate at the moment […]. They're dealing with the issues of Brexit and the issues of COVID and the issues of cost of living and the issues of energy costs and audience hesitancy and it being a really, really difficult climate. But they're still being asked to produce, through their funding agreements, a huge amount of work. […] freelancers are absolutely getting a really raw deal in many cases, but we need to recognise […] that we have to be able to be funding people differently in order for them to be building the kind of care and the kind of gold standard of sustainable practice of freelancers that we'd want them to see (C6).***

External shocks, like a pandemic, can open a critical juncture for cultural policy – a short period of significant change when new actors and policy ideas emerge and important decisions are made, engendering consequential effects on the future development of cultural policy.[11] Indeed, our data clearly shows that COVID-19 has foregrounded the issue of precarity, in turn leading to the emergence of vigorous campaigning and discussions among different stakeholders on the subject (see 5.1.3.). However, we also see that the pandemic and other external shocks can interrupt and slow down policy flow. Finally, concerning external shocks, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) stood out as an emerging challenge already causing job losses and therefore contributing to the issue of precarity: *'We're already seeing, for example, AI being used instead of audio artists. We organise people who use their voice and one of their methods of work, and if a computer replaces that work, obviously that means fewer jobs' (U1).*

[11] Lee, H.-K., Ling-Fung Chau, K., & Terui, T. (2022). The Covid-19 crisis and 'critical juncture' in cultural policy: A comparative analysis of cultural policy responses in South Korea, Japan and China. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 28(2),145–165. www.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2021.1938561

5.1.2. Labour market conditions

In terms of labour market conditions, some interviewees mentioned the **oversupply of artists and cultural workers** as a contributing factor to their precarity: *'There was always an element of precarity because of the excess of supply over demand' (P4).* Simply, too many people want to do cultural work regardless of the financial and other insecurities it entails, making cultural workers vulnerable to exploitation. For many, pleasure and other intrinsic rewards from cultural work outweigh financial rewards, which makes artists somewhat complicit in perpetuating precarity.

> *Because if they just relied upon money, they would go off and do something else, wouldn't they? So that's one aspect of precarity that you're not going resolve by having better business practices or another code of practice or whatever. You've got to get to grips with the fact that money is not the most important thing for artists. If you ask them, they will always ask for the minimum and they won't ask for the R&D funding that they really need (R1).*

Several key stakeholders – especially trade unions, campaigners/campaign groups and policymakers – seek to resolve the issue of precarity. For instance, large trade unions in the sector proved to be effective at negotiating better pay and conditions, reducing precarity among its members and wider workforce in certain sectors. However, our data pointed to various **limitations of the trade union model**. Visual arts stood out as a particularly challenging case due to the highly diverse and hybrid nature of work and careers in the sector.

> *It [the union model] doesn't work for the diversity of activities that go on in visual arts, bearing in mind that work contracts are not the major part of how artists create a livelihood. Maybe only £6,000 out of £16,000 a year comes from artwork. Other parts of it might come from teaching. They might come from direct sales. They might come from art-related activities. They might be a grant. They might be a whatever. Artists have a broad income potential portfolio [...] (R1).*

5.1.2. Labour market conditions (continued)

Plus, the highly individualised nature of work complicates things further, as this campaigner highlights: *'There's been a long conversation about whether there could be something which is like a trade union, but it is a problem, because, actually, most visual artists are working solo' (C3).* This connects to challenges associated with the unionisation of self-employed workers who often lack opportunities to come together and unite, as a union leader in the visual arts sector explained:

> ***The majority of our members are self-employed or on short-term contracts, and not actually based at an employer, we don't have that opportunity to organise them the same way lots of other trade unions would. Where you've got a whole factory, a whole shop, a whole office, where you can have an elected rep locally and build the union from within (U2).***

Weak unionisation of the self-employed naturally results in the lack of bargaining and lobbying power and does not help increase pay rates and improve working conditions.

Furthermore, the precarious nature of freelance work – income insecurity, in particular – has emerged as a noteworthy factor which hinders the unionisation of self-employed workers who often: *'don't feel as though they can usefully commit their income to being part of a union, if their income is also quite project-based and variable' (C4).* A leader of a young union explained: *'A trade union is only as strong as the members within it' (U2)*. However, precarious workers seem to make up a weak base for trade unions to advance, at least in certain sectors.

> ***One of the challenges we have is that our membership, whilst it's growing steadily slowly, our members do leave and re-join. And that's because of the precarity of their work. If they haven't got money coming in, then they feel like they can't afford to be paying a fee to be a member of a union. They probably have to cancel lots of things just to survive and get by (U2).***

5.1.2. Labour market conditions (continued)

On the individual level, there seems to be a simple lack of awareness about the existence of unions as well as a lack of clarity on which union would be a better fit, hindering unionisation across cultural sectors further.

> *Lots of people's creative practice sits across lots of different unions. So, I think there is, in the first instance, a decision to be made as to which union you join or which unions you join. I think the diversity of the work itself means that people sit under lots of different categories, so that makes for a lack of clarity for those individuals. Which one represents them best (C4).*

Finally, (as evident from Section 3) the **self-employed status** of freelancers presents another significant challenge for freelance cultural workers who enjoy a very limited set of employment rights and protections compared to workers and employees (see 9.2.) and experience difficulties benefiting from social security schemes such as Universal Credit.[12] Also, we found that this feeds into other issues such as for example a lack of career structure and career progression:

> *Artists who are freelance lack legal status and the basic structural protections enjoyed by employees: i.e. no holiday entitlement, pension contributions, no maternity and sick leave. No annual performance/salary reviews no internal job promotion opportunity has the effect of keeping them at the same level for much of their working lives (R1).*

[12] See Ashton H. (2023). *'Not here to help'*. A report for Equity.

5.1.3. Sectoral conditions

In addition to unions (discussed in 5.1.2.), campaign groups and individual campaigners are other key stakeholder groups that are actively engaged in combating the precarity of freelance cultural work. For example, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, campaigning allowed grassroots to voice their concerns as well as lead change from the bottom up.

> ***Lots of people campaigned in COVID, and brilliantly. And we have lots of colleagues that set up particular individual structures that were able to work really quickly to aggregate data and information and pull together different experiences and voices and make them heard (C6).***

During this time several new players emerged and entered the policy debate. While campaigning can be exceptionally impactful, our data also brings attention to issues around the **(un)sustainability of campaigning**. Even campaign groups that managed to source a range of funding streams and benefit from a small team of paid staff rely extensively on the volunteer input of their members.

Campaigning is usually performed voluntarily and alongside one's artistic practice, making it difficult to sustain long-term. Lack of capacity and resources have also been mentioned: *'For us as a lobbying group and for us as freelancers trying to have a voice, I think those challenges are capacity and burnout and lack of funding' (C1).* When it comes to voluntary efforts of individual campaigners, they often get sidetracked in favour of paid work: *'So whilst I'm a campaigner and an activist, if paid work comes through it has to be my priority' (U2).* Hence, campaigning efforts are prone to running out of steam, which is exactly what we have witnessed once the acute stages of the pandemic passed. On one hand, the short-lived cycle of many campaigns is normal. On the other hand, valuable campaign efforts tackling an array of pervasive concerns ranging from precarity to discrimination can also disappear due to the unsupportive nature of the surrounding ecology.

> ***So, a lot of organisations and campaigns just folded because there's only three or four of them running it. None of them are getting paid. And it takes up too much time. And even great campaigns like [name of organisation], which is the anti-racism organisation, a really important and brilliantly run organisation, had to close at the beginning of this year because they'd run out of funds (C1).***

5.1.3. Sectoral conditions (continued)

Of course, it is not only down to the lack of funds and time of the campaigners, but also down to their skills and expertise in campaigning. For example, a seasoned campaigner pointed out *'a lack of match between intent and practice' (C4)* as a noteworthy limitation behind many campaigning initiatives.

Another sectoral condition, which if not causing the precarity of freelance workers, certainly hampers its timely resolution, is the **silo mentality** both within and across different stakeholder groups, meaning that there is limited cooperation and understanding between stakeholders.

> ***So, the unions are quite disjointed. There's not a lot of joined-up thinking between the unions. We find a lot of the time their campaigning [...], which is brilliant, I am all for the unions, but sometimes they end up stepping on the toes of each other because there's not a lot of joined-up thinking. So [name of union] can launch an amazing campaign, but that might devalue a campaign that [name of union] was about to launch (C1).***

A similar dynamic has also been reported across and within policymaking bodies where departments are functionally divided, leaving insufficient communication channels. This stood out as a significant issue feeding into the need for the development of a complex ecological approach to resolve the precarity of freelance cultural work (see 5.3.); one built on sufficient communication, cooperation and integration of the stakeholders involved, including freelancer workers themselves.

Finally, **freelancers' heterogeneity** adds complexity to the task of resolving precarity.

> ***The freelance sector is extremely fragmented and diverse.** [...] It's really hard to talk about freelancers as a homogenous space and design policy around that because actually, you're talking about people with very different experiences, who all need something that is slightly different. [...] **So I don't think there is a lever that you can pull that says that very diverse selection of people that have very different operating contexts and very different kinds of jobs...** It's really hard to say, oh, it can be improved by this (C6).*

Even within the boundaries of a single sector, the lived reality and therefore needs of one freelancer may be significantly different from the next. Aggregating freelancers across all sectors makes effective policymaking even more challenging. As one interviewee puts it, there is *'no one model for a freelancer' (C2).*

5.2. Freelancers' participation in policymaking

Surprisingly, many of our interviewees struggled to identify *specific* policy measures to tackle the precarity in cultural freelancing. Yet, some spoke at length about the importance of making freelancers' voices heard within policy- and decision-making arenas.

> *We don't really have a list of priorities for those measures. I think* ***any announcement about a policy we welcome, as long as it's been created with freelancers in the room.*** *We can't just have policies announced because somebody in a suit in a building thinks it's right for freelancers.* ***The voice of freelancers has to be heard.*** *And we understand that that's difficult, but that has to happen in order for a policy to be effective for those freelancers who are working. So we're in favour of any proposal, as long as it involves freelancers in the conversation, because too many policies and proposals have been created and developed without freelancers. So we have to bein that room (C1).*

The argument usually is that since freelance work and self-employment are much more widespread across the cultural sectors (see Section 3), freelancers should have more say in how their respective sectors are governed. Some have suggested that the current lack of involvement of freelancers in policymaking reinforces the government's general lack of awareness regarding the realities of being self-employed cultural workers, leading to misguided policy measures or a lack of measures altogether. The government's response to COVID-19, which is focused on institutions and organisations, is exemplary of this dynamic.

Therefore, **we believe an important first step in tackling the issue of precarity in cultural labour is giving freelance cultural workers a stronger voice and agency within policymaking**, which is in line with the *Taylor Review of Modern Working Practice* report's proposal for a 'stronger voice for the self-employed' more widely.[13] However, despite the consensus among our interviewees around the importance of making freelancers' voices heard in the policy arena, **it is less clear how this can be achieved**.

[13] Taylor, M., Marsh, G., Nicol, D., & Broadbent, P. (2017). *Good Work: The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices*. (p. 77).

5.2. Freelancers' participation in policymaking (continued)

Some of our interviewees turned to campaigning in their pursuit of a better voice for freelance cultural workers, including this campaigner recalling the impetus behind the formation of their campaign group: *'I think what we were trying to achieve was a voice, a voice for the freelance artist' (C2).* However, considering the issues around the sustainability of campaigning (see section 5.1.3.), **we call for instilling more sustainable and institutionalised mechanisms of involving freelancers into policymaking**, ideally less dependent on the volunteer input of freelancers. To this end, **the establishment of the Freelance Commissioner** – a specific policy measure supported by many of our interviewees (see section 5.4.7. for the discussion on the Freelance Commissioner) – seems like a valuable measure to implement.

5.3. Complex ecological approach

The need to involve freelance cultural workers more in policymaking (see 5.2.) sits within a broader need for a **complex ecological approach**. First, such an approach needs to be deeply **collaborative** involving the full range of stakeholders involved, so not limited to freelance cultural workers. Second, it needs to be **comprehensive**, supported by multi-level coordination across an 'ecological framework' converging a range of policy domains including cultural, social, labour[14] and more.

5.3.1. Collaborative approach

We find that the precarity of cultural work is **a very complex issue which cannot be resolved without the involvement of and collaboration between all stakeholders.** In short, *'everybody has to play a part' (P5).*

> ***There are different levers that we need to be using** […]. There's the role that our unions play in regulation, particularly around pay conditions in that space. There's a role that arts funders can play in holding those organisations to account for better practices. There are roles that those industries can play themselves in terms of adhering to good practice (C6).*

Our data reminds us that stakeholders face various constraints that prevent their ability to resolve the precarity issue independently. This includes different policy bodies, which on the one hand are constrained by their official remits, as this policymaker suggests:

> *One of the important things to remember about [title of the organisation] is that we're not a lobbying body and we're not a regulatory body. There are two areas that we can't really stray into, and that does limit our ability to take very clear, specific actions. So, for example, we couldn't punish or fine an organisation that wasn't doing what we wanted them to do. […] I just think **it's really important to recognise our role and how many factors are beyond our control, and the situations and contexts that we're working in.** But […] that doesn't mean we're not innovating, we're not trying new things, we're not pushing to do what we can (P1).*

[14] Murray, C., & Gollmitzer, M. (2012). Escaping the precarity trap: A call for creative labour policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy,* 18(4), 419–438. doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2011.591490

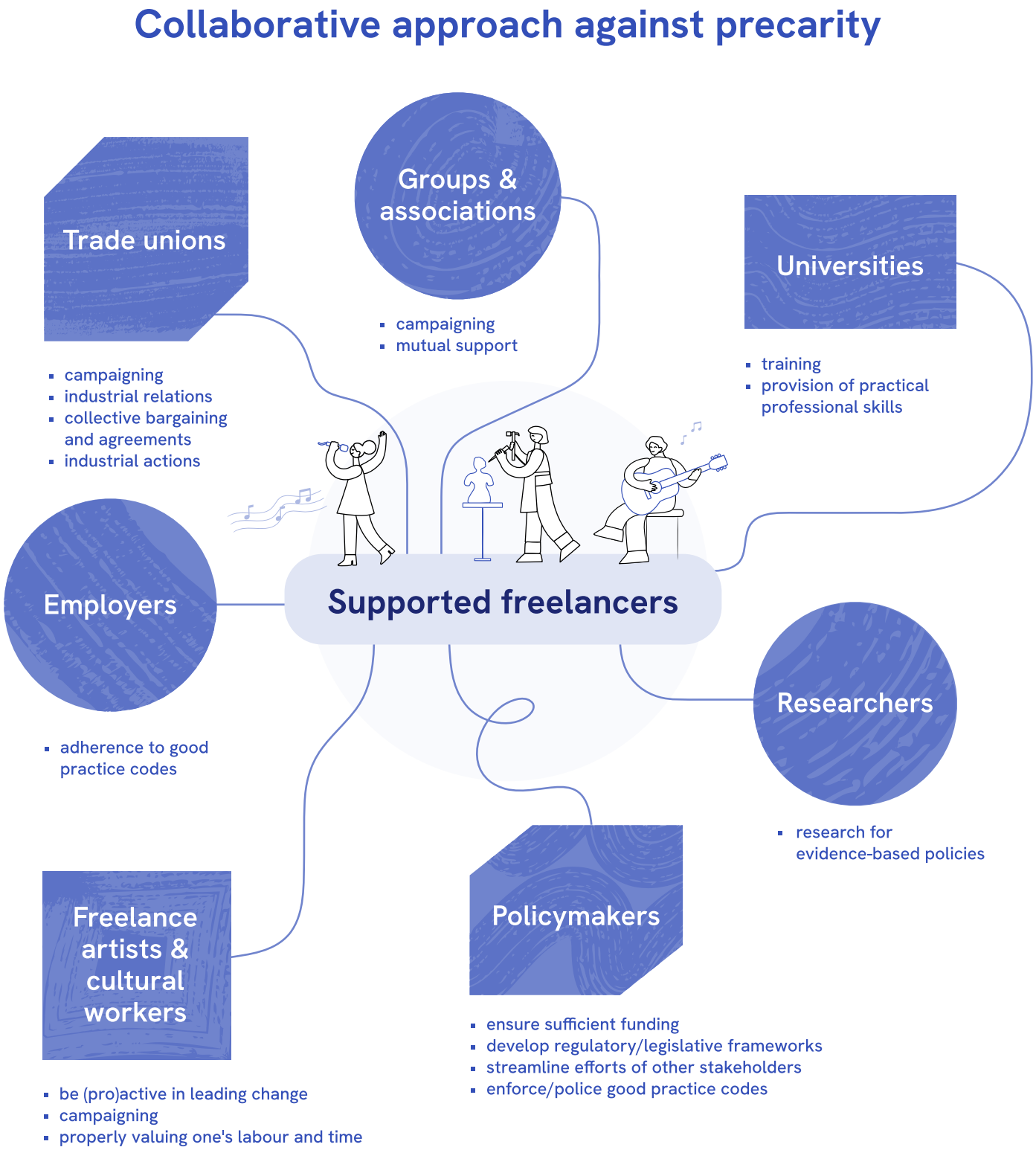
5.3.1. Collaborative approach (continued)

On the other hand, however, policy bodies also seem to be constrained by their positions within the wider policy hierarchies, with some interviewees noting that policy bodies responsible for culture and the arts have particularly weak (or weakening) standing in these hierarchies. This includes arm's length bodies: *'compared with 20 years ago, the relationship between government and its arm's length bodies is not healthy in the way that it once was' (P4).* The DCMS was also described as *not* a particularly powerful department *(P4, C5)*. The weakening power of these bodies naturally results in tighter budgets for culture and the arts.

Ideally, stakeholders need to work together to complement each other's remits, efforts and capabilities. That is, **when it comes to combating precarity, everyone has a niche role to play, starting with freelancers themselves, who need to keep fending for themselves to ensure their own survival**: *'The industry's own survival depends on it being able to keep people in the industry to manage their lives better and to allow pathways and pipelines to develop and to sustain' (P4).* Notably, several policymakers we interviewed explicitly emphasised the need for cultural workers to step up and lead change from the bottom up: *'I think almost the sector ought to decide who it wants to lead on this. […] who steps up to organise that?[…] Somebody's got to put their head above the parapet and say, actually, I'm going to be the leader on this' (P3).* While cultural freelancers we interviewed conveyed undeniable determination to contribute to resolving the situation, some have warned against leaving freelancers and grassroots initiatives such as campaign groups and associations solely responsible for solving the issue at hand: *'We're being told there's a problem, but we're being asked to fix it. And that's exhausting. […] I'm happy to be part of the conversation and I'm happy to help, but the onus can't be on organisations like us' (C1).*

The rest of this section is dedicated to reporting on expectations from interviewed stakeholders on **who should do what** to resolve the issue. First, in terms of **who** part of the equation, looking across our data set, we put forward a list of stakeholder groups (see Figure 2), which need to unite and work together against precarity.

Figure 2. Collaborative approach against precarity: Key stakeholder groups and their functions



5.3.1. Collaborative approach (continued)

Although no clear consensus has been reached among interviewees concerning **what** different stakeholders need to do exactly, some ideas regarding specific groups (also summarised in Figure 2 above) emerged. Unsurprisingly, **a key expectation for policymakers and the government is to ensure sufficient funding for the sector**, which according to many is currently not being met (as discussed in 5.1.1.). For more specific potential policy directions on funding, see Section 5.4.1. and 5.4.2. **Another key function of policymakers is to regulate** (see 5.4.6.): *'I think there is a role for government in regulating because thinking that the market will just sort it out when, currently, it feels like the government policy is weighted towards supporting the market, and that is devaluing and creating problems for the freelancers' (R2).*

With many interviewees highlighting the importance of research and policy trials, as well as the need for evidence-based policy solutions to the precarity issue, **both universityand non-academic researchers have an important role to play**. The need for more research was often motivated by the need for a more holistic understanding: *'I'd say more research, always one for more research. […] I think understanding the picture as a whole would be valuable' (P3).* Notably, **another potential and significant role for researchers** is becoming apparent – **to convene communication between the involved stakeholders**.

Trade unions are expected to lead in ensuring fair pay and a just code of practice across the sectors through collective bargaining and industrial agreements. On their part, **employers** (e.g., cultural organisations and venues) **across the sector are to respect the conditions of employment** (e.g., pay and working hours) **outlined by these industrial agreements** and generally remain not only ethical but also mindful in their conduct to avoid any mismatch in understanding as this campaigner highlights: *'And there are things like the way that unions will set a minimum standard of pay and the sector interprets that as a maximum standard. That's a mismatch of understanding' (C6).* Furthermore, in certain sectors where unionisation is weak (see 5.1.2.) such as, for example, the visual arts, ethical behaviour on behalf of employers becomes even more crucial.

5.3.1. Collaborative approach (continued)

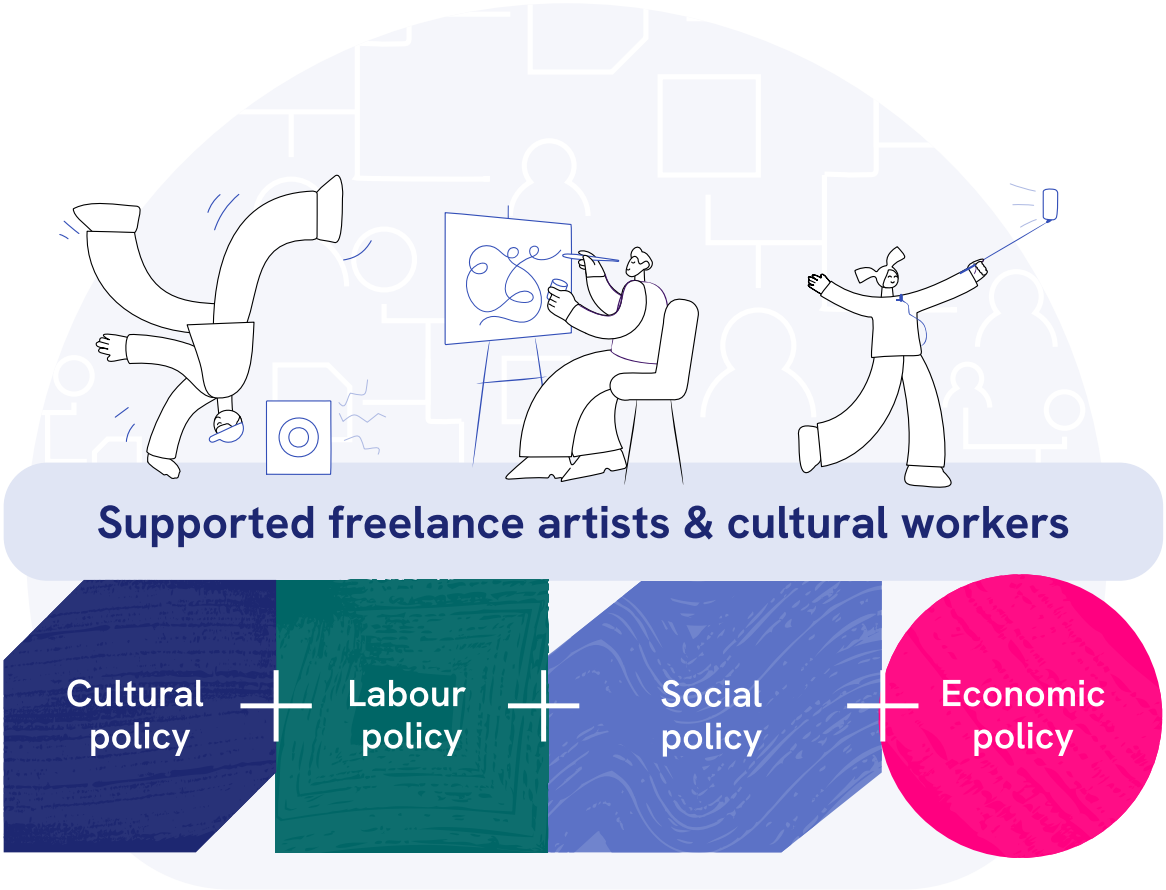
Having identified silo mentality as one of the key challenges, which delays the resolution of the precarity issue (see section 5.1.3.), **the need for a collaborative approach is undeniable.** Only through collaboration stakeholders can reduce the aforementioned *'mismatch of understanding' (C6)* and ensure a meaningfully composite approach to the complex issue. However, a key challenge when it comes to fostering the collaborative approach is to identify and develop mechanisms for facilitating communication among the stakeholders (see 5.4.7.–5.4.9. for specific policy directions).

> *There just has to be better communication, and tolerant communication between [name of policy body] and unions. And vice versa. […] Actually, having some kind of […] understanding of what everybody's rules and responsibilities in relation to […] supporting creative freelancers is really important. […] So, trying to help the sector understand how far certain institutions can go, and certain bodies can go in making change in relation to creative freelance workings is a good thing (C7).*

5.3.2. Comprehensive approach

Clearly, the issue of precarity is too complex to be resolved through cultural policy alone. Therefore, this report highlights the need for a comprehensive or combined policy approach joining multiple policy domains. Here, we build on the idea of a 'holistic policy framework', which argues that **effective policy measures for cultural labour should incorporate multi-level coordination – between different levels of government – across a much broader 'ecological framework' converging social, labour and cultural policies.**[15] However, because fiscal policy measures (e.g., Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief) and the broader need to increase public funding for culture and the arts (see 5.4.) emerged as potential policy directions from our data, we also include the economic policy domain in the framework (see Figure 3), highlighting that the issue of precarity requires broader economic considerations.

Figure 3. Holistic policy framework



Holistic policy framework against precarity of freelance artists & cultural workers

Adapted from Murray & Gollmitzer (2012)

[15] Murray, C., & Gollmitzer, M. (2012). Escaping the precarity trap: A call for creative labour policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 18(4), 419–438. doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2011.591490

Notably, within the social policy domain, some of our interviewees underscored the significance of education policy specifically. Some have suggested that the decline in cultural curriculum within compulsory education negatively impacts the diversity within the sector: *'I would add in education. Access to education because [...] it's going to be a very long time before we can seriously tackle it in a meaningful way. And in the meantime, we are reducing diversity [...]' (R2).* Others have highlighted the issue with siloes between cultural and education policy domains: *'You've got two different departments that do not talk to each other. That's the systemic issue, [...] that the government is so siloed' (C5).*

Reflecting the identified challenge of silo mentality (see 5.1.3.), the removal of siloes between different policy domains was frequently discussed during the interviews. Yet, in addition to the facilitation of dialogue, better understanding and collaboration across different policy areas and bodies, the need for more joined-up thinking was discussed from another angle. Channelling somewhat instrumentalist logic, some interviewees spoke about the need to converge policy goals and social impacts of different policy domains/areas to be able to improve the working conditions of freelance cultural workers. While many mentioned economic benefits generated by cultural workers, considerable emphasis was also placed on various social as well as environmental impacts.

> ***We need to move [...] to something which is working with communities, with other agencies, and coming out of the siloes that we've all been operating in for so long. And that even goes to thinking about how place is developed in terms of local [...] economy, et cetera, et cetera, because of the climate agenda and how we want to kind of change the ways that we live more generally (C3).***

First, interconnecting cultural policy agenda with various social agendas (i.e., education, health and wellbeing) and environmental policy was understood as a way of pulling resources as well as opportunities for cultural workers to capitalise on. Second, converging policy agendas were seen as a way of elevating the value and standing of cultural workers in our society, in turn, improving their economic situation.

> ***There is a lot of economic impact to the cultural and creative industries. We know that. [...] But it's also about all the other stuff that it brings which is harder to quantify and actually harder to talk about. [...] It isn't tangible, always. There are tangible benefits that we can talk about. Again, health and well-being is one that we are particularly engaged with. But it's about recognising all of the different aspects of culture, and the role that artists and practitioners play within that. I think CRF [the Culture Recovery Fund] is a really good example of how that has been recognised.*** *(P1)*

5.4. Potential policy directions

Despite the lack of clear consensus on preferred policy directions, a range of ideas were floated by our interviewees, which ranged from calls for more public funding (see 5.4.1.) to smaller changes applied to higher education (5.4.10.). In this section, we list some of these *more specific* policy ideas prioritised by our interviewees.

5.4.1. Funding increase

When it comes to more specific policy directions and reflecting the challenge of the underfunded ecology our **interviewees were generally keen for the public funding going towards culture and the arts to be increased:** *'Fund the arts to a level which is [...] sustainable and allows organisations to provide artists with fair work opportunities' (U3).* Some argued that the funding needed to be raised to the level of the European average:

> *The government should move back to a position where it's funding arts and culture to* ***a level of the average of what's happening across Europe.*** *So, [...] for us, to move towards that objective would be about 6 billion a year additional, in terms of national UK-wide state funding (U1).*

Nonetheless, many were convinced that – even though they would welcome it – more funding is not coming, at least any time soon, including this policymaker: ***'More public funding, great idea. As I say, good luck with that'*** *(P4).*

5.4.2. Alternative funding frameworks

Considering the scepticism regarding the prospects of a funding increase, **many interviewees discussed alternative frameworks for distributing the currently available funding.** Here, some criticised the laborious nature of the process of applying for funding, implying that it needs to be simplified to become more accessible and democratic: *'The process of applying for funding can be quite difficult and quite stressful. […] We don't think that should be the core route to get funding for arts' (U2).* Some have suggested that **making the selection process more transparent** is needed: *'The way that they [funding bodies] do the selection panels, what funding gets approved and what doesn't. That could be far more transparent and probably a lot more democratic as well' (U3).*

On the contrary, others considered the possibility of departing from an application and criteria-driven approach in favour of a more random, lottery-based approach to funding distribution. Notably, some contemplated **reassessing the currently widespread model of short-term project-based funding and experimenting with longer-term funding models** for individual artists lasting between five and ten years: *'I would go back to […] being able to provide […] over five years, […] a cushion of £5,000, £10,000 a year. That would make all the difference' (P5).* However, there are concerns regarding sourcing enough resources to make such a scheme widely accessible.

> ***Of course, the issue with those kinds of programmes is unless you have a lot of money, they become horribly competitive. And I think if you want to introduce something like that, you need to introduce it as a mechanism that will benefit all, if not the majority. Because otherwise it's like a bit of a club, and it's a horrible thing for people who are not in that club (P5).***

5.4.3. Fiscal policy intervention

Several interviewees highlighted the potential of fiscal policies, namely 'cultural tax reliefs' inclusive of Theatre Tax Relief, Orchestra Tax Relief and Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief,[16] as a way for the cultural sector to accumulate more resources. By lowering production costs, cultural tax reliefs are expected to encourage cultural organisations to produce more work:

> *The exhibition tax relief was a way of actually encouraging organisations to have more impact in the world. So, you're developing more content, more exhibitions, because you can claim back tax relief against those exhibitions. […] And the exhibition tax relief was a thing which enabled us to expand our program during the pandemic, and post-pandemic, as we came out of the pandemic, to reach and work with those communities and places that actually really needed it (C3).*

On one hand, more production on behalf of cultural organisations is expected to translate into more social impact. On the other, it can also create more (trickle-down) work opportunities for individual cultural workers. One interviewee went a step further and called for a form of cultural tax relief for individual cultural practice:

> *There are many ways they [tax reliefs for individual practice] can be devised around commissioning, an artist being able to get relief on a commission or a sale of an artwork. Or the sale of a play to a theatre group. So, there are ways to identify opportunities for individuals that would benefit them in the long run (C5).*

[16] GOV.UK. (2023). *Policy paper: Technical clarifications of the rules for cultural tax reliefs.* gov.uk/government/publications

5.4.4. Universal basic income and social security measures

A need for better social security was frequently highlighted.

> *Yes, [social security is] really important. Including childcare and pension provision as well as the things that you've mentioned [sick pay, paid leave]. Because* ***our members end up with no security, no backup, no support whatsoever when they're out of work or for their financial security in the future.*** *Or in the case of a crisis like the pandemic or personal (U2).*

Notably, some prioritised improving the social security of artists and cultural workers more narrowly (e.g., pension schemes for artists, mental health support for artists etc.), while others called for better provision for all (e.g., UBI). For instance, **universal basic income (UBI) was frequently discussed in our interviews**. However, there was no consensus on this policy direction. A few interviewees mentioned UBI as a potential solution to precarity, including this campaigner: *'I think it's certainly something that comes up regularly in sector consultations here, is we need to have UBI' (C7).* Some called for narrower schemes of basic income for artists specifically: *'I'd just say, UBI, a version of UBI that sits within venues, instead of nationally' (C4).* Whereas others argued that only universal schemes such as UBI for all citizens could be sustained in the long run: *'More structural changes to the way that social security is generally laid out for most or the entirety of the population have, I think, a greater chance of being sustained in the long run' (U3).* Many, however, firmly disregarded UBI as simply unfeasible: ***'Universal basic income, it's a great idea, gets kicked around all the time. Can't see it happening. So, I would put that in the utopian realm'*** *(P4).*

Instead of pushing for UBI, some of our interviewees proposed focusing on **improving existing social security mechanisms such as the Universal Credit** – a scheme supporting the unemployed and those on low income: *'One of the other things that we do quite a lot of work on is looking at Universal Credit, which is obviously the government's major social security delivery mechanism. And ensuring that it's better suited to support our members when they need it' (U1).*

5.4.5. Better pay and working conditions

The oversupply of cultural workers (discussed in 5.1.2.) significantly challenges maintaining fair pay and decent working conditions across the board.

> *The excess of supply over demand in that field will always be a problem […], the temptation to keep cost very low, and therefore to take advantage of that excess of supply […] you can't expect people not to do that. So, apart from very few people, most people who are in the performing industry don't earn very much. And it's quite hard to shift that. But the unions do their best (P4).*

Despite the limitations of the union model (discussed in 5.1.2.), according to our interview data trade unions continue to be a key player in improving the pay and working conditions of many cultural workers. Larger unions are confident in their ability to negotiate equitable remuneration for their members and see little value in lobbying the government to increase statutory remuneration rates.

> *Some unions who don't feel that they have as much bargaining power within the industry are more prone to those sorts of arguments around statutory remuneration. Although, of course, we would argue that they should seek to build the union's power in the sector. Rather than taking a short-term-ist view, they should instead seek to accumulate more members and negotiate collective agreements and therefore put themselves in a position where they can negotiate equitable remuneration. (U1).*

However, the unions with smaller membership pools and therefore less bargaining power see more value in getting the government involved.

> ***The government could have better rules around what is expected of employers.** So, some of those things would apply whether it was about art workers who are self-employed or not. So things like living wage, minimum rates of pay. Protection for workers of their contracts. Sick pay, special leave with pay for emergencies (U2).*

More specifically, some called for **the government to lead by example as well as enforce good practice codes with its bodies and across funded organisations:** *'I think there are mechanisms that funders can put into place across the board' (C5).* Others suggested that **the government could oversee, support, and streamline the existing efforts of other stakeholders**.

5.4.5. Better pay and working conditions (continued)

> *I know that they've talked about investing in different ways that they [policymakers] can* ***support information, advice and guidance to freelancers*** *so that there's a better channel of understanding of what it means to be a freelancer […] and how you can navigate and move through that system and what resource you might have if someone's nicked your IP and not paid you for it or ways of supporting (C6).*

Here, Scotland's **Fair Work framework emerged as a potential policy direction**. Fair Work is 'the Scottish Government's flagship policy for driving high quality and fair work, and workforce diversity across the labour market in Scotland by applying fair work criteria to grants' (and other relevant public contracts).[17] Through this approach, the Scottish government supports employers who adopt fair working practices such as paying at least the real living wage, providing appropriate channels for effective workers' voices, investing in workforce development, and more. Some have argued that encouraging employers to adhere to fair working practices in this way, has led to some positive changes in employment relations in Scotland, including across the country's cultural sectors:

> *The responsibility there lies on the employer to be a fair work employer, so anybody that they work with, whether or contract or salary, or whatever, has a certain set of rights. […] I think that in Scotland we've seen a groundswell from a number of freelancers making more demands on organisations so that the terms of their employment are better and again help to address some of the issues of precarity (P5).*

[17] Scottish Government. (2023). *Fair Work First Guidance*. gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance

5.4.6. More regulations

There is a strong expectation for **policymakers and the government to lead in developing and modernising relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks** concerning a range of issues including, but not limited to, the national minimum wage and social security measures for freelance cultural workers and Intellectual Property (IP) legislation. The lingering issue of employment status particularly stood out, with several interviewees stressing the need to revisit government frameworks for employment status, which in their current state undermine the social security of many cultural workers:

> ***Freelancers often slip in a net between different definitions of whether they're a worker, whether they're employed, whether they're self-employed.*** *These definitions just aren't designed for this type of atypical work, where they're doing both, where they're both employed and self-employed (R2).*

In addition to various long-time concerns, policymakers are also expected to keep themselves up-to-speed with emerging issues such as the rise of AI, for example, and ensure the timely introduction of appropriate regulatory frameworks and legislation.

> *At the moment there's no real* ***regulation for how that technology can be used,*** *and obviously it draws on data from our members, their voice data etc., etc., and potentially could lead to quite devastating job losses. We're already seeing, for example, AI being used instead of audio artists. the second side of what we're doing is ensuring that the government puts in place the* ***proper regulatory framework to ensure that our members' intellectual property can't be used. Or that they're properly renumerated.*** *Or that their contracts are based on* ***a firm legislative footing around the use of artificial intelligence,*** *etc. (U1).*

5.4.7. Representing freelancers in cultural policy

Reflecting the challenge of silo mentality (introduced in 5.1.3.), our data indicates **positive attitudes across all stakeholder groups towards the introduction of a Freelancer Commissioner** – an independent public body/role within the government representing freelancers. The Commissioner's responsibilities could include: **convening regular roundtables** with different sectors (including the creative industries), with representatives from membership organisations, and freelancers themselves; **championing the vital role freelance, self-employed and atypical workers** play across cultural sectors; and **identifying policy solutions to systemic challenges atypical workers face.**[18]

Despite a generally positive outlook on the idea of introducing a Freelancer Commissioner, a range of concerns were raised regarding this policy direction. For example, some raised a question of scope: *'There's a question of scope. Are the issues for creative sector freelancers the same as for non-creative sector freelancers?' (P3)* Others have indicated that the question of scope remains valid even when focusing on the so-called cultural sectors alone: *'I think it would be a very good idea, but I think the biggest problem is that there is no one model for a freelancer' (C2).* As the campaigner explained: *'We are all different and we're all under different pressures. We all have different problems in our working models, depending on whether we're a lighting designer, a singer, a violinist, a director. […] To represent freelancers, you can only do it in the broadest sense […]' (C2).* **Freelancers' heterogeneity** (discussed in 5.1.3.) **seems to bring into question the ultimate effectiveness of a Freelancer Commissioner as a potential policy direction.** Some of our interviewees also raised concerns about the independence of this role:

> ***However, we would be concerned about the independence and authority of either position. Because if they're government-led, government-focused, are they necessarily going to have our interest at heart? And if you're talking about a commissioner, what level of independence are they going to have? How partial, impartial are they going to be and to whom, would be the questions** (U2).*

[18] Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society. (2023). *Freelancer Commissioner*. alcs.co.uk/about-alcs/campaigning/freelancer-commissioner/

5.4.7. Representing freelancers in cultural policy (continued)

Others questioned the power and impact such a body/role would have, disputing its value as a potential policy direction: *'For me, it's a really sensible policy, but it doesn't solve the problem. So what we're asking for is a person who will help solve the problem […], rather than a policy solution within itself. So, it seems to me like it's a mechanism, but it's not a policy position if that makes sense' (C6).* Meanwhile, an interviewee points out potential duplication of work between unions and the Freelancer Commissioner:

> ***So, from our perspective, it seems like an odd duplication of work and one that doesn't really have any levers to ensure that anything that is agreed by the council or discussed there is actually adopted. They don't have any formal power or, indeed, any industrial power. […] from our perspective that work primarily needs to be channelled through trade unions, who have leverage and are recognised within the political and legislative framework (U1).***

5.4.8. Policy lab

One of the interviewees mentioned **Policy Lab** as a good practice example of getting artists involved in policymaking:

> ***Policy Lab is based within the government, and they come up with exercises, workshops. And mainly it's being focussed on using design as a practice to explore different agendas in housing or levelling up. But now we're working with Policy Lab […]. So, they actually oversee funded projects, commissioning artists to work in different departments. […] really utilising the voice of artists to be able to explore new ideas. And to be the critical voice as well (C5).***

Policy Lab is a multidisciplinary team working across the UK government since 2014 with a mission to 'radically improve policymaking through design, innovation and people-centred approaches'.[19] In addition to developing the skills and knowledge within civil services and inspiring new thinking through various experiments and writing, Policy Lab works on delivering new practical policy solutions. In 2023, funded by AHRC, Policy Lab commissioned three artists to spend time in three different policy bodies to work on a range of policy issues.[20]

[19] GOV.UK blogs. (2023). *About Policy Lab*. Policy Lab. openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/about/

[20] GOV.UK blogs. (2023). *MANIFEST: What we have learnt so far from artists working in policy*. Policy Lab. openpolicy.blog.gov.uk

5.4.8. Policy lab (continued)

While the impact of this project is yet to be determined, **Policy Lab stands out as an inspiration model for sustainably involving artists (and art) in policymaking.** As such, in the case of resolving cultural freelancer precarity, the Policy Lab's approach has a dual advantage. First, it could bring cultural workers' first-hand experience of precarity into the policymaking process, helping policymakers better understand the nature and the extent of the issue at hand. In fact, a policymaker acknowledged that having a daughter working in the music sector gave her a unique perspective and enhanced her understanding of the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic had on cultural workers:

> *I have a daughter who is a professional singer. An opera singer. […] Seeing it through her eyes and watching what was happening to people in her industry, which is a very highly specialised […]. That gave me another perspective on it. That there was a broad impact and then there were these narrower impacts that were particular to different sectors (P4).*

Second, involving artists in policy- and decision-making could also harness their creative potential, in turn contributing to bridging the so-called 'creative policy gap' between policymakers and cultural workers mentioned by Borén and Young, who argue that:

> *'Various forms of experimental artistic intervention may offer one method of developing such 'new conceptual spaces' within which policymakers and the diverse range of creative producers could interact in ways which allow for the reshaping of their potentially restrictive mundane professional attitudes and practices in a manner which would be more inclusive of varied forms of creativity.'* [21]

[21] Borén, T., & Young, C. (2013). Getting Creative with the 'Creative City'? Towards New Perspectives on Creativity in Urban *Policy International Journal of Urban and Regional* Research, 37, 1799-1815. doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01132.x

5.4.9. Importance of APPGs

All-Party Parliamentary Groups[22] (APPGs) such as the Performers' Alliance – an APPG jointly run by Equity, the Musicians' Union and the Writers' Guild – **emerged as another potential mechanism to tackle the silo mentality** that believe deserves more attention.

> *There are the APPGs which can be very effective. Some of them more effective than others but… **And there are many APPGs for… probably one for each one of the art forms,** to be honest. Music, dance, opera, visual arts. […] Most APPGs will use a similar structure to the committees even though they don't have the formal status. And they will choose topics, undergo enquiries, and publish reports. **And some of those can be really important. So, the APPGs can also do a lot** (P3).*

APPGs were mentioned by both policymakers and campaigners as **spaces that facilitated cooperation and dialogue within and across different stakeholder groups** particularly, policymakers, campaigners, and researchers. One campaign representative, for instance, explained that involvement in an APPG helped them communicate the needs of individual cultural workers to policymakers: *'We work very closely with them [several other campaign groups] in an all-party parliamentary group. So, again that activated us to set up the infrastructure with ministers to be able to articulate the needs of individuals' (C5).*
In addition to public debates in the Lords and Commons, for example, related conversations also happen: *'more quietly, as it were, behind the scenes with All-Party Parliamentary Groups' (P4).*

As mentioned above, **there is a need for an influential convening entity capable of mediating and maintaining conversations among the stakeholders.** As one interviewee explained the communication between stakeholders often feels *'a bit oppositional': 'People come in and they shout about the funding body, because the funding body isn't doing what they want. The funding body goes into retreat. I feel there's something about convening in a grownup fashion everyone with an interest' (P5).* However, a potential model for such an entity is yet to be drawn up.

[22] Informal cross-party groups with no official status within Parliament run by and for Member of the Commons and Lords who share a common interest in a particular policy area, region or country.

5.4.10. Higher education

Finally, some interviewees called for changes in higher education. **Universities have a role to play** in cultivating cultural workers from diverse backgrounds who can lead sustainable careers in the sector by instilling them with the necessary skill set but also educating students about diverse approaches to a creative career and making a living as an artist:

> *At the same time, **we need a different set of training for artists.** […] We need them to understand the sort of professionalisms, the ethical, safeguarding, all of those other things that they need to understand to be a practising professional artist and be successful in the world. And also, […] **making sure that we're providing an extra platform and promoting and developing artists from different backgrounds. It also needs to be about thinking, how do those artists develop a living, a sustainable living, and understanding that, actually, there are diverse approaches to artists' careers.** (C3).*

As this interviewee explained, work opportunities today, at least for visual artists are increasingly diverse and no longer confined within the traditional *'funded sector'*. Considering this new reality, universities are expected to promote this understanding among students and nurture professionals who can identify and seize these new opportunities.

> *So, health and well-being, climate, and place, those three agendas. Now, in those three agendas, visual art is practised and the way in which individual artists operate in those agendas are often outside of the funded sector, if you like. […] the opportunities for them to develop work in those arenas are greater than they have ever been before. (C3)*

6. Further questions

Through this research project, we sought to identify concrete policy solutions to the issue of precarious cultural freelancing in the UK. After interviewing key cultural stakeholders (see Section 4) and gathering their views on potential policy measures, we were first able to shortlist a range of challenges that perpetuate precarity (see 5.1.). Second, we identified some broader approaches and strategies to tackle the issue, namely the need to involve freelancers more in policy- and decision-making (see 5.2.) as well as the need for a complex ecological approach (see in 5.3.). Finally, we pinpointed some of the more specific policy directions our interviewees proposed (see 5.4.). Reflecting on our findings (outlined in Section 5), **we put forward three areas for further discussion and research.**

First, **we call for more research investigating why forming a consensus on concrete policy solutions to the precarity issue is so difficult.** Considering the lack of clear consensus on policy proposals/solutions among our interviewees, who belong to the key groups of contributors to the policy debate on cultural freelancer precarity, we believe it is an important avenue for future research. Further research is urgently needed to gain a better understanding of the conditions under which such a consensus would emerge.

Second, being aware of the existence of the ongoing cultural value debate over the past 20 years in the UK and beyond, **we wonder why, so far, we have not seen significant shifts in society's recognition of the value of culture and thus the value of (freelance) cultural work**. Given the current undervaluation of cultural work, we believe it is imperative to revisit discussions around cultural values and find ways to reinvigorate them. This process should involve the public in order to make discussions about cultural values and the value of cultural labour a socially significant issue.

Third, **we urge cultural policy researchers to think about the specific role of cultural policy within the proposed comprehensive or holistic policy approach** (outlined in 5.3.2.). Channelling the logic shared by some of our interviewees, we believe cultural policy could take up the role of a mediator, which facilitates conversations with other policy domains (inclusive of social, economic and labour policies) and catalyses the latter's responses.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Workers, employees and self-employed

Status	Definition	Employment rights
Worker	**A person is generally classed as a 'worker' if:** ▪ they have a contract or other arrangement to do work or services personally for a reward (a contract can be written or unwritten); ▪ their reward is for money or a benefit in kind, for example the promise of a contract or future work; ▪ they only have a limited right to send someone else to do the work (subcontract); ▪ their employer has to have work for them to do as long as the contract or arrangement lasts; ▪ they are not doing the work as part of their own limited company in an arrangement where the 'employer' is actually a customer or client	**Workers are entitled to certain employment rights, including**: ▪ getting the National Minimum Wage; ▪ protection against unlawful deductions from wages; ▪ the statutory minimum level of paid holiday; ▪ the statutory minimum length of rest breaks; ▪ to work no more than 48 hours on average per week or to opt out of this right if they choose; ▪ protection against unlawful discrimination; ▪ protection for 'whistleblowers' who report wrongdoing in the workplace; ▪ not to be treated less favourably if they work part-time **Those earning at least £123 per week (before tax), may also be entitled to:** ▪ Statutory Sick Pay; ▪ Statutory Maternity Pay (but not leave); ▪ Statutory Paternity Pay (but not leave); ▪ Statutory Adoption Pay (but not leave); ▪ Shared Parental Pay (but not leave)

9.1 Appendix 1: Workers, employees and self-employed (continued)

Status	Definition	Employment rights
Employee	**An employee is someone who works under an employment contract.**	**All employees are workers, but an employee has extra employment rights and responsibilities that do not apply to workers who are not employees. These rights include all the rights workers have and:** ▪ Statutory Sick Pay; ▪ Statutory Maternity Pay and Leave; ▪ Statutory Paternity Pay and Leave; ▪ Statutory Adoption Pay and Leave; ▪ Statutory Shared Parental Pay and leave; ▪ Minimum notice periods if their employment will be ending, for example if an employer is dismissing them; ▪ Protection against unfair dismissal; ▪ The right to request flexible working; ▪ Time off for emergencies; ▪ Statutory Redundancy Pay Some of these rights require a minimum length of continuous employment before an employee qualifies for them. An employment contract may state how long this qualification period is.

9.1 Appendix 1: Workers, employees and self-employed (continued)

Status	Definition	Employment rights
Self-employed	A person is self-employed if they run their business for themselves and take responsibility for its success or failure. Self-employed workers are not paid through PAYE, and they do not have the rights and responsibilities of an employee. Someone can be both employed and self-employed at the same time, for example if they work for an employer during the day and run their own business in the evenings.	Employment law does not cover self-employed people in most cases because they are their own boss. If a person is self-employed, they have: ▪ protection of their health and safety; ▪ protection of their rights against discrimination (in some cases); ▪ the rights and responsibilities set out by the terms of the contract they have with their client

Source: GOV.UK. (2023). *Employment status*. gov.uk/employment-status

9.2 Appendix 2: From codes to themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Selected codes
1. Freelancers' participation in policymaking	**Freelancer voice**	A better voice for freelancers is required
		Making oneself heard in policymaking done voluntarily
		Lack of consultation with freelancers in policymaking
	Impact of COVID-19	Covid-19 gives better voice to a campaign group (CG)
		Established CGs expanded due to covid-19
		Covid-19 foregrounds the issue of precarity
	Workers as agents of change	CG keeps the conversation alive
		CG seeks to lead change from bottom up
		CG emerges to give better voice to freelancers
2. Complex ecological approach	**Collaborative approach is required**	Funders and unions to ensure good practice codes
		Removing siloed thinking is required
		Different stakeholders – different roles and capabilities
	Comprehensive approach is required	No one-size-fits-all measure
		Several policy domains required
		Long-term solutions are needed instead of quick fix

9.2 Appendix 2: From codes to themes (continued)

Theme	Sub-theme	Selected codes
3. Potential policy directions	**Evidence-based policy is required**	Brushstroke and unresearched policies are harmful
		Policy trails are required
		Research is required
		Devolved funding more effective
		Concerns over devolved funding
		From national to local infrastructures
	Fiscal policy	Exhibition tax relief makes a difference
		Fiscal policy measures are overlooked
		Culture tax relief for organisations
	Freelancer commissioner	Freelancer commissioner as a potential measure
		Concerns over representing different types of freelancers
		Freelancer commissioner sensible, but won't solve the problem
	Better pay	We want equal pay
		Lack of pay transparency
		Unions to set min rates
	Social security	UBI as a potential measure
		UBI a can of worms
		Freelancers' access to social security
	Working conditions	Funders to improve fair work
		Employers have a role to play
		Scotland doubles down on fair work since COVID-19
	Public funding	Applying for ACE's funding is laborious for freelancers
		Changing criteria for funding distribution
		More funding is not coming
	Education policy	Need for many models of sustainable career in the arts

9.2 Appendix 2: From codes to themes (continued)

Theme	Sub-theme	Selected codes
4. Challenges	**Underfunded ecology**	Trickle down funding model is tricky
		Underfunded ecology hinders resolving precarity
		Money has to be better distributed across the whole ecology
	Limitations of unions	Unionisation is more difficult in some sectors
		Weak unionisation and weak voice
		Limitations of young unions
	Siloed thinking	Lack of joined up thinking between gov departments
		Lack of joined up thinking and oversight
		Lack of joined up thinking between unions
	(Un)sustainability of campaigning	CG survives on voluntary input
		Long-term unsustainability of campaigning
		Nature of freelance work hinders campaigning
	Value of art(ists)	Art(ists) are undervalued
		Art is not seen as a job
		Gov has to properly appreciate art(ist)'s contribution
	Freelancers are a heterogeneous group	Each sector is different
		Freelancers are a disparate group even in one sector
		No central body representing freelancers
	External shocks (COVID-19, BREXIT, etc.)	External shocks worsen precarity
		Rise of AI leads to job loss
		Workers are leaving sector since covid

9.2 Appendix 2: From codes to themes (continued)

Theme	Sub-theme	Selected codes
4. Challenges (continued)	**Freelancer status**	Lack of clarity between worker, self-employed etc
		Diminished social security for freelancers
		Vulnerability beyond cultural work
	Supply and demand of artists and CWs	Oversupply of artists contributes to precarity