

# SUCCESS, SECURITY AND SUPPORT

What Cultural Freelancers in Wales Need

## Key findings

Following on from our 2020 and 2021 research this report looks at how freelancers in Wales are doing now: they have weathered a pandemic, Brexit, and an ongoing cost of living crisis.

We found that:

- Most cultural freelancers are likely to live in South Wales (a fifth of respondents lived in Cardiff) where opportunities are more frequent
- 60% of cultural freelance work was commissioned or otherwise took place in Wales itself and increasing that number was highly desired
- Most cultural freelancers were in the 35-64 age bracket and had considerable experience in the sector (10+ years)
- 23% of cultural freelancers identified as disabled, d/Deaf, and/or neurodivergent
- Twice as many freelancers were learning Welsh compared to 2020 and 60% spoke some level of Welsh
- One in four freelancers still do not know whether they will stay or leave the industry and half had seen a downturn in the amount of work they could get
- 71% of freelancers feel unsupported in the culture sector and many called for more understanding and empathy from organisations and clients
- Half of all freelancers would not be able to pay three months' expenses using their savings, highlighting the financial precarity in the sector
- Brexit has left freelancers with fewer opportunities, less money, and more hassle

Those in most need of support are freelancers:

- Working in music or performing arts
- Identifying as disabled, d/Deaf, and/or neurodivergent
- From working class backgrounds
- In rural locations
- From the Global Majority
- Who are getting older

Highlighting these needs gives organisations, funding bodies, and fellow freelancers an idea of what

is required for freelancers to feel more supported and capable of continuing working in the cultural sector.

We hope this report will inform policy and decision making in the Welsh culture sector going forward.

Without change we are at severe risk of losing our freelance workforce, but together we can create a stronger, kinder, and more equitable industry for all.

## Recommendations

Aside from the recommendations below we would like to highlight the sincere need in the sector for:

- Paid or fully funded Welsh learning for freelancers, delivered as flexibly as possible to allow for different learning styles and lifestyles
- Signposting resources where freelancers can find up-to-date, free or heavily subsidised help and advice
- More earmarked funding pots for working class freelancers across the board
- Continued efforts for organisations to undertake diversity and inclusivity training on multiple levels, including involving freelancers directly with this work

Below are our recommendations for immediate actions that can be taken by funding bodies, organisations, and freelancers themselves.

### Recommendations for funding bodies

1. Prioritise financial support for organisations that actually achieve best practice around freelancing
2. Give freelancers easy-to-use tools for reporting problematic behaviours they encounter
3. Set up dedicated funding to plug the gaps left by EU funding since Brexit

Freelancers want to be treated with dignity and respect – this should be reflected in funding portfolios. This is not limited to pay rates but must include factors such as transparent work practices, inclusivity, and communication.

Freelancers must feel empowered to safely challenge and call out problematic behaviours they encounter in funded organisations. Notably these tools should be easy to use and not be an exercise in excessive bureaucracy.

The third recommendation is a big ask but the culture sector is crying out for the opportunities lost since Brexit: to instil hope in Wales would need to address this funding gap.

## Recommendations for organisations and networks

1. Advertise freelance jobs widely and transparently within Wales
2. Commit to fair pay rates for all freelancers (Union rates or better)
3. Fund intergenerational practices between cultural freelancers

Freelancers noted that recruitment could be opaque and feel steeped in favouritism. Transparent recruitment is a vital part of a thriving, equitable job market. Advertising all freelance roles in multiple places, both online and offline, would be a good start.

Freelancers need to be paid better. We would like to see all organisations, big and small, working with freelancers commit to fair pay. This will vary between sectors but guidance does exist for many job roles and we would encourage these conversations happening with freelancers themselves, not decisions taken behind closed doors.

Thirdly freelancers need more intergenerational work to be inclusive and healthy: passing on skills, learning from one another, and letting freelancers of all ages work together will benefit the whole sector. This work must be paid, as freelancers cannot give their time and knowledge for nothing.

## Recommendations for individual freelancers

1. Raise your rates and have frank conversations around money
2. Seek out or create your own community
3. Consider joining a union

For fellow freelancers reading this report: be bold and value your skills highly. It is uncomfortable for many to speak about money or increase prices, but times are hard. Raise your rates, or discuss costs with clients and employers. Challenge calls for unpaid work: organisations like [Unlimited](#) have created resources for this.

We recommend you seek comfort, strength, and solidarity in one another. Many respondents expressed a desire for community or a feeling of isolation: this can be achieved. Form collectives, reach out online, co-work, nurture spaces where freelancers can meet. A supportive network cannot be handed out: it must be grown.

Our third recommendation is outside of some budgets but joining a trade union relevant to your freelance role can come with significant added value such as tailored advice, support at work, and the ability to influence sector conditions.

To get involved with the future development of our work as freelancers supporting freelancers, or to follow up on any of the findings of this work, please contact Cultural Freelancers Wales on [hello@cfw.wales](mailto:hello@cfw.wales)