

What Next?
Coronavirus: issues, good practice and information
Draft
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Purpose and origins of this paper

These notes were taken at a What Next? Young Vic meeting on the 11th March and have been supplemented by e-mails and queries from across the What Next? movement. They represent a snapshot of the concerns and issues related to coronavirus as faced by colleagues in the arts and cultural sector.

This is a live document that we will update share regularly as the situation develops – with Arts Council England, with DCMS, and with others across the movement.

We will add in trusted sources of advice, information and good practice as we receive them.

Please contact lizzie@culturallearningalliance.org.uk if you would like to add or amend anything to this paper, or if you or your organisation are experiencing issues or problems that have not been logged or noted.

Let us know if you have a specific query that you would like an answer for, and we will endeavour to pass it on swiftly to a body that can help.

Trusted sources of advice

The latest public health advice is available at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus. In addition, more information on specific areas can be found here:

- Advice for patients is available on NHS Choices regarding symptoms <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Public Health England have published a Q&A about the virus on their blogpost [Coronavirus: what you need to know](#)
- Guidance for employers and businesses - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- FCO travel advice - for organisations touring - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

In the Spring Statement on the 11th March the Chancellor outlined a package of support for public services, individuals and businesses that may experience economic disruption at this time due to COVID-19.

The guidance can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871900/Covid-19 Budget fact sheet FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871900/Covid-19_Budget_fact_sheet_FINAL.pdf)

The DfE has set up a dedicated helpline for anyone working in education, from early-years through to universities: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfе-sets-up-coronavirus-helpline-as-education-secretary-advises-schools-to-stay-open/>

ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) has produced [this workplace guidance](#) for employees and employers.

There is also specific advice, guidance and legal support provided by Unions and sector support organisations. **Do contact these organisations directly for specialist advice:**

- **Incorporated Society of Musicians:** <https://www.ism.org/advice/coronavirus-stay-informed>
- **Equity:** <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/march/coronavirus-advice-to-equity-members/>
- **Independent Theatre Council:** <https://www.itc-arts.org/blog>
- **UK Theatre:** <https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/news/theatre-industry-coronavirus-advice/>
- **Musicians Union:** <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/News/2020/Mar/advice-for-musicians-Coronavirus-covid-19>

Bates Wells has produced [this blog](#) which includes useful employment operations advice.

Unlimited has produced this excellent guide to best practice in access for staff with autoimmune conditions: <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/staff-with-autoimmune-conditions/>

Asia Art Activism: Un-racialising the coronavirus epidemic: <https://asia-art-activism.net/2020/02/21/un-racialising-the-coronavirus-epidemic/>

From NCVO: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus>

- Diabetes UK has provided an [updated information page](#) for people living with diabetes.
- Asthma UK has released a [blog post with advice for people with asthma](#).
- The British Heart Foundation has published [guidance for people with health problems](#).
- The National Eczema Society has offered [advice on handwashing techniques](#) for people with eczema and other skin conditions.
- SignHealth has created [British Sign Language \(BSL\) videos](#) to help deaf BSL users either working in charities or receiving support.
- Carers UK has produced [recommendations for carers](#).
- Housing Justice has issued [specialised advice to homeless shelters](#). Glass Door is emphasising the importance of handwashing and has [boosted their stock of hand gels](#) kept in their vans that move between shelters. [Pathway](#) and [Crisis](#) have called on the government for guidance on how best to protect homeless people against coronavirus.
- Full Fact has generated a [fact check page](#) on covid-19 to help dispel any false information.
- The [Cystic Fibrosis Trust](#), [Primary Immunodeficiency UK](#) and the [Mental Health Foundation](#) have all issued advice and support.

Issues arising

Travel and touring

- Impact on international touring and projects - many are being cancelled or deferred at short-notice
- Travel for artists: getting back to the UK for some, and outward travel cancellations for others – rise in accommodation costs
- International working will be significantly affected. E.g. Chinese schools will not have a summer recess and therefore lost income for these international education projects

Impact on financial health and ability to deliver arts work

- We are already seeing behaviour changes from audiences; reduction in attendance, forward ticket sales reducing
- Impact on the markets is affecting investment income
- Impact on volunteers and their willingness / ability to volunteer
- Increased cleaning costs from venues
- Insurance issues. – many policies are unlikely to cover these issues if there are cancellations – is this force majeure? https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Force_majeure
- Reputational concerns: colleagues are considering closure and cancellations of events because they don't want the adverse PR should an outbreak take place
- There are many micro-organisations made up entirely of freelancers. These organisations will be at significant risk if they have no reserves to manage any extended project timelines

Impact on individual employees and freelancers

- **Staff on lower pay or on zero hours contracts** are being affected now
- Although there is no official advice on **home working** - we know that this is coming, some organisations are already moving to advise this
- Many large summer festivals are not yet confirmed - delay in contracting for organisations and freelance individuals – **increased precarity which impacts on mental health**
- In a climate of social distancing / self-isolation, then **disabled freelance artists** are going to be really vulnerable and there is significant fear and anxiety amongst colleagues. Individuals could potentially be isolated, but also unable to go and collect medications. We need a specific plan in place to identify where these colleagues might need support
- **Anxiety management and mental health:** some colleagues want to self-isolate even though the advice is to carry on as usual. Anxiety is an underlying medical issue and should be addressed through a sickness /wellbeing policy. We need plans in place to deal sensitively with a significant rise in anxiety

Rise in racism and hate crime as a result of coronavirus

There has been a documented increase in attacks and abuse of Asian communities, and there are so many instances of casual memes and jokes shared in workplace that are racist. There are reports of Asian students not attending classes at universities and of artists being excluded from public events.

As a sector we should look at what is being done structurally to address this. Asia Art Activism have developed a blog of five things that you can do: <https://asia-art-activism.net/2020/02/21/un-racialising-the-coronavirus-epidemic/>.

These include: **educating your colleagues** and your staff members, **not sharing misinformation**, **humanising the information** – sharing the stories of survival and creative ingenuity of artists in Asia: e.g. musicians have been making amazing work in their bedrooms in Wuhan.

Be an ally – take a stand, when you see this verbal abuse – or when people are not sitting next to someone on the tube. Use privilege and support anyone you see being marginalised. There are ways of supporting victims that do not put you in danger.

Think about the stock photo you use on your coronavirus information page, and the language you use.

Arts Council England Advice

The Arts Council's advice is to firstly seek up to date information sources including Public Health England and the Foreign Office. At present there are no government ordered bans on live events or other gatherings.

However, the Arts Council is advising individuals and organisations to plan and prepare, considering adjustments to their business plans, as we move into the later stages of the Government's action plan.

Whilst Arts Council England does not currently have an extra pot of money from government or other sources to deal with the impact of coronavirus on the sector, individuals and organisations are encouraged to get in touch. This will enable us to talk to people about the specific circumstances they are experiencing, as well as to collate information to pass onto Government to assist with planning.

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The guidance can be found

here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871900/Covid-19_Budget_fact_sheet_FINAL.pdf

These measures also apply to arts and cultural businesses / freelancers and employees.

NPOs and Music Education Hubs should contact their relationship manager to talk through their specific issues for their organisation and agree a plan.

ACE project-funded organisations / artists should send their queries and information to this email address: Coronavirus-queries@artscouncil.org.uk

Arts Council will also send regular updates through its social media channels.

Specific questions to ACE on 11/03/20:

- Can organisations use their money more flexibly?
- Are they able to carry forward funds / or use them differently?
- Will ACE support Project funded organisations to deliver projects as best they can within original timelines? This will impact on targets and outcomes but will reduce risk of organisations folding.
- Arts Centres: if advice does come out about reducing gatherings over a certain number - is it people coming into the building or people in each venue in a building?

ACE knows these are unprecedented times - we should talk to our relationship managers/send an email on a case-by-case basis.

Good practice

Even though the government advice is to keep business as usual, we should prepare and think through our business planning.

Organisations should **consider how their boards and trustees can best support** with this. **This is an excellent time to review HR, Health and Wellbeing, home working and sickness policies within organisations and to make sure that all senior leaders are aware of how they will apply in a variety of different scenarios.**

Colleagues are currently updating their risk registers and are putting together mitigation plans.

ACTION: If you have drafted a risk mitigation strategy for coronavirus that you are willing to share, then please send to Lizzie: lizzie@culturallearningalliance.org.uk

Use this opportunity to review your contracting practice and ensure that it meets good sector guidelines.

Review your insurance policies.

Use your unions and specialist support organisations for specific advice.

Assess your use of zero-hours contracts and the support in place for your casual workers.

Consider including an 'in good faith' clause in your contracts:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_faith_\(law\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_faith_(law))

Forward planning for moving/rescheduling events is really important - looking for programming windows for when things might be rescheduled and clearly plan / to put them in place.

We need healthy dialogue between large orgs (operating as businesses) and smaller organisations and individuals who are contracted by them. If possible, there should be compromises which protect both as much as possible. **Consider bringing in your partners to discuss the issues and how you might move forward together.**

We should see this as an opportunity to look again at how we create a culture in our sector where people feel comfortable talking about their caring needs and their mental health needs.

What are the creative solutions that we can develop?

If performances are cancelled can we ask artists to find new ways of reaching audiences? Digital engagement? Filmed closed performances etc. Can we build these into contracts and planning?

ACTION: If you have a creative solution for replacing a cancelled performance / exhibition / show. Please do share with What Next? If there are excellent technological systems you have used, please share them also.

Relook at our diversity action plans and think about how we equip all colleagues in our organisations with information language and on how to support and ally Asian colleagues, artists, audiences.

Explore this opportunity to really connect issues - decolonise the way that we are sharing stories - understanding how the global epidemics are linked to industrialised farming practices etc and Climate Justice - there are many ways to connect these issues and different lenses to use.

Planned activity from other bodies

- **Charities:** is there is a co-ordinated approach to assessing the impact on charities? Can we check in with the charities commission?
- **Creative Industries Federation** will be collating advice coming from the budget on plans for businesses - it will be on the website later today (March 11th)