

Culture in Crisis

Recommendations For Policymakers



**CENTRE FOR
CULTURAL VALUE**

May 2022

Forewords

Professor Ben Walmsley

In February 2022, we were proud to publish one of the world's largest studies into the impacts of Covid-19 on the UK's creative and cultural sectors. At the *Centre for Cultural Value*, we're extremely grateful to our research team, project partners and our funders, who enabled the development of the unique insights used to create this latest policy report. Those findings highlighted not only how these vital sectors were impacted, but also captured the lived experiences of artists, cultural workers, audiences and the general public as the pandemic unfolded in real time.

While we're proud of the research undertaken, we knew right away that our findings would raise important questions that needed urgent answers. The significant sectoral imbalances and inequalities, as well as the pressures the sector are now under, represent vital challenges that need action now.

That is why, since the publication of our findings, we have worked closely with our policy partner *Culture Commons* to translate our insights into concrete policy recommendations, coalescing around three thematic areas. These recommendations represent the vital step from insight to action. They seek to offer a way forward for the UK Government and devolved administrations to address both the structural deficiencies within the creative and cultural sectors, while maximising the life-affirming potential of arts and culture; phenomena recognised widely during the pandemic and across our research.

As a collaboration between research and policy professionals, we hope this report will support the UK's creative and cultural sectors to develop into a more diverse, innovative, and professional sector, representative of the UK's unique place as a world-leading global centre for creativity.

Trevor MacFarlane, FRSA

At *Culture Commons*, we've been taking inspiration from the extraordinary level of detail and insight in the *Centre for Cultural Value's* landmark 'Culture in Crisis' report. Working in partnership with the research team and our policy networks, we've been translating the key findings into evidence-led recommendations that can make a tangible difference to both the creative and culture sectors and the wider public, now and for the future.

Many are, of course, already working on policy responses to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic. Taking workforce policy alone we find; *Creative UK* gearing up to develop an industry-led 'Framework for Creative Freelancers'; *Culture Commons'* own 'Creative Workforce Pledge' which now has widespread support from Metro Mayors across England; and *The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre's* ongoing 'Good Work Review', which will provide us with a much-needed baseline picture of what constitutes job quality in the creative industries. If we were to look at any of the other policy areas covered in this report, we'd find equally innovative and trailblazing initiatives.

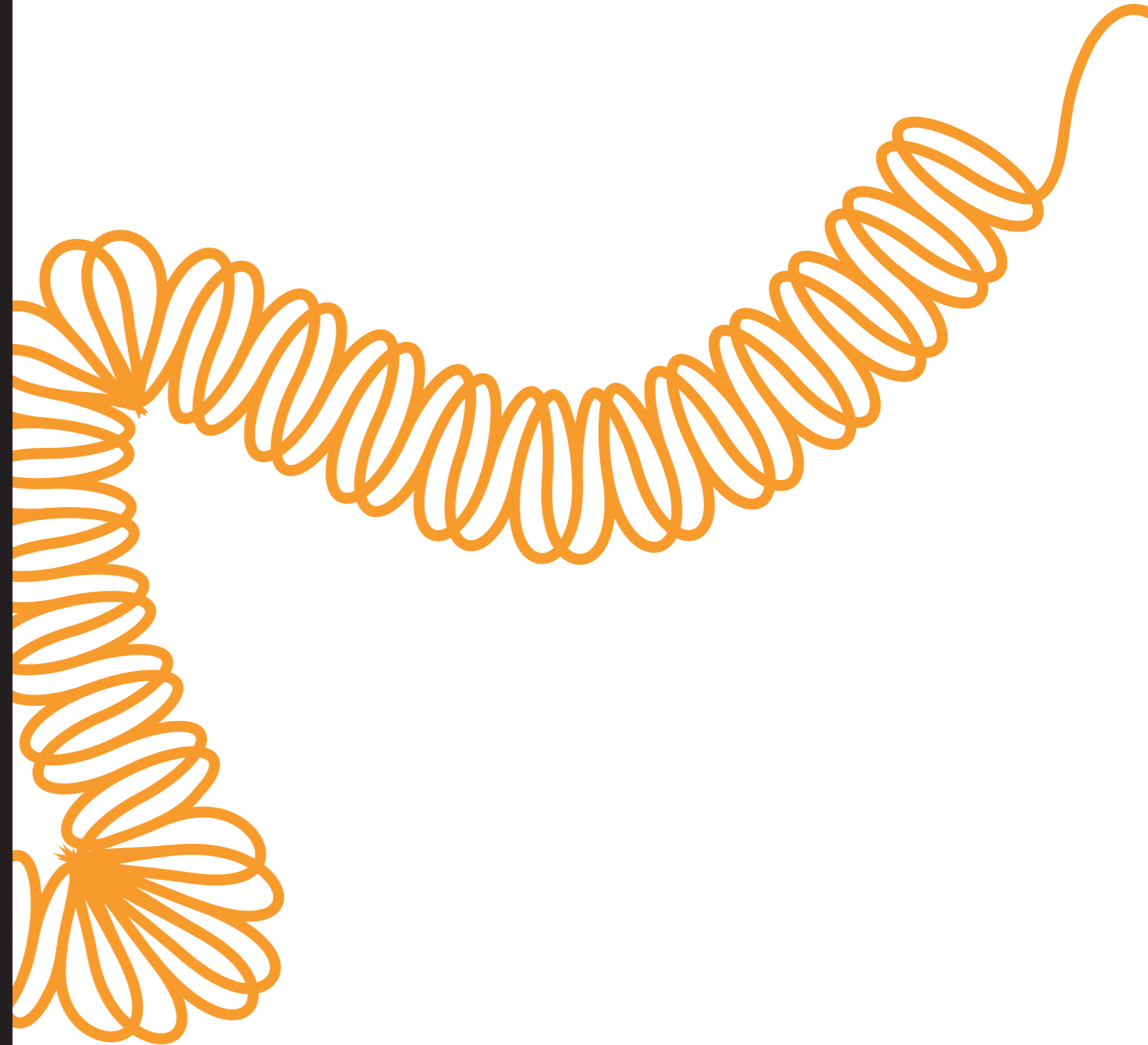
We hope the thinking laid out in this report builds on such spirit and momentum already generated, while aligning with the ambitions of the UK Government, devolved administrations and local government; including the UK Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda and *Arts Council England's* 'Lets Create 2020-2030 Strategy'.

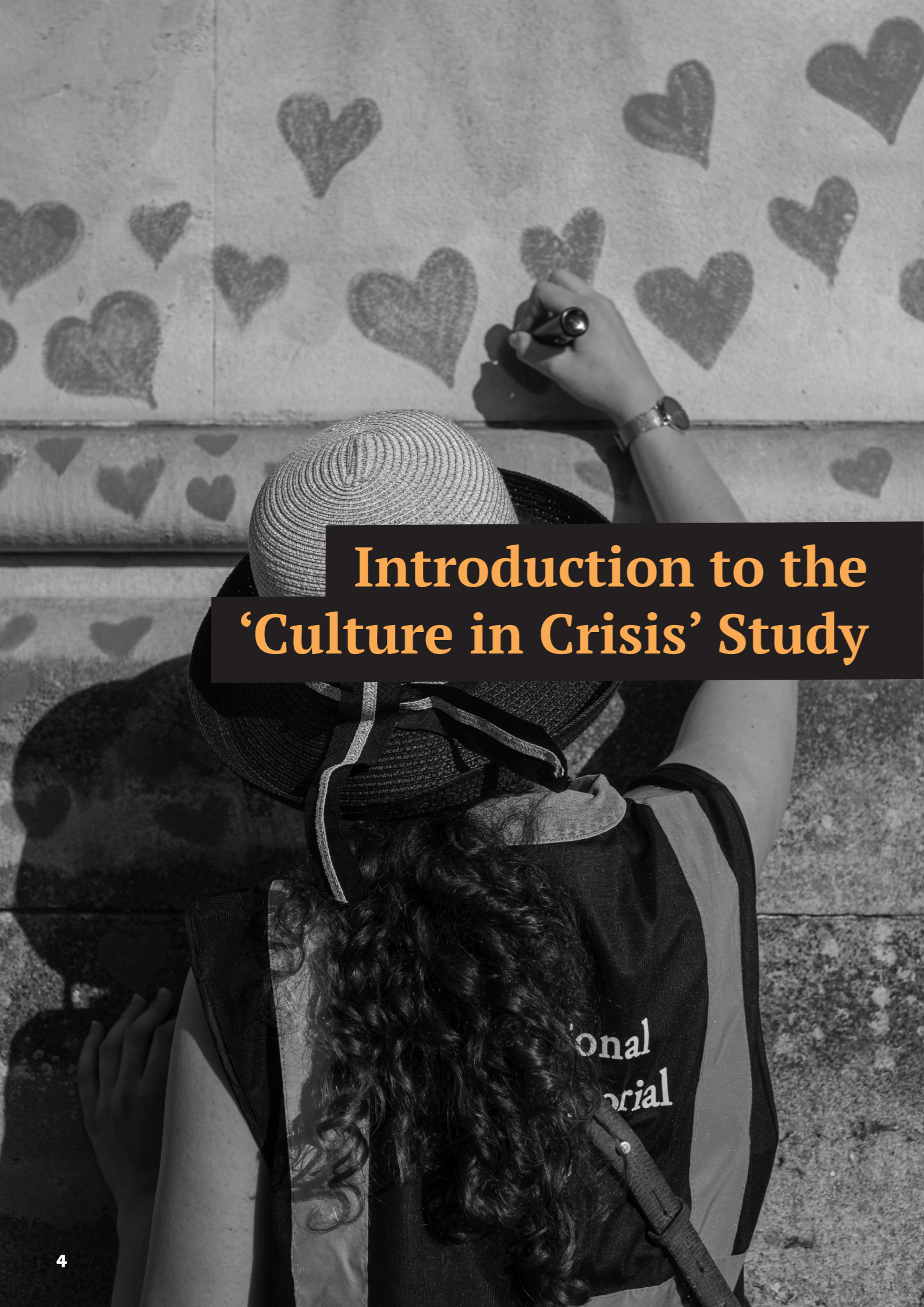
However, we're not shy in stating that some of the recommendations also intend to kick start a dialogue on several radical approaches that might better support the creative and cultural workforce, get public funding to the places that need it the most and protect the UK's bruised creative and cultural ecosystem.

We look forward to working with our partners in the coming months and years to further translate these recommendations into action.

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Introduction to the 'Culture in Crisis' Study










In 2019, the creative and cultural sectors contributed £178 billion in direct and indirect Gross Value Add (GVA) to the UK economy, exported £46 billion in goods and services worldwide and created jobs at three times the UK average, employing 2 million people. Beyond their economic significance, these sectors foster a deep sense of pride and joy for communities the length and breadth of the nation; their benefits 'spill over' into policy areas as diverse as regeneration, international 'soft power', educational attainment and health and wellbeing. In short, the creative and cultural sectors demonstrably improve the lives of people here in the UK.

This is why, when Covid-19 arrived on our shores and cultural venues, institutions and public spaces were required to close for the first time in **March 2020**, a deep rift was felt across the country. Whether involved in the creation, distribution or

consumption of creative and cultural content, the prolonged loss of traditional in-person cultural activity weighed heavily on the nation.

In **September 2020**, the Centre for Cultural Value embarked on an extensive 15-month research study into the impact of Covid-19 on the UK's creative and cultural sectors. Funded by *UK Research and Innovation* (UKRI) through the *Arts and Humanities Research Council* (AHRC) and conducted in partnership with *The Audience Agency* and the *Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre* (PEC), this was the largest study of its kind anywhere in the world.

The study drew on evidence gathered from several sources across the UK, including:

-  An analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey data
-  Five waves of a UK-wide general population survey on cultural engagement via The Audience Agency's 'Cultural Participation Monitor'
-  A series of case studies of cultural organisations in all four nations
-  Over 230 in-depth interviews with sector professionals working in English theatres; Scottish festivals; Welsh screen and media industries; northern English museums, galleries, and visual artists; emerging cultural leaders in Northern Ireland; and recent graduates from relevant training and courses
-  A detailed case study of Greater Manchester's cultural ecology
-  Two deep-dive policy roundtables with the PEC's panel of 'Industry Champions'
-  A programme of placements within local and combined authorities, devolved administrations and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)
-  Ongoing engagement with high level policy makers and key policy stakeholders
-  An analysis of culture-related social media activity
-  An open two-day conference held in November 2021

Throughout the study period, teams from the Centre for Cultural Value and Culture Commons shared emerging findings with the UK Government, the devolved administrations and local government, helping to inform policy responses in real time as the pandemic progressed.

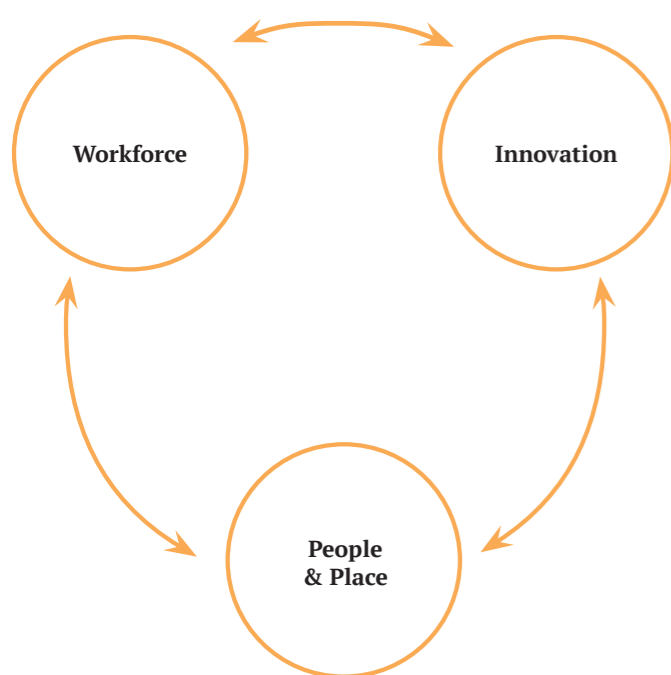
In February 2022, the Centre for Cultural Value published findings from the study in 'Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the UK cultural sector and where we go from here' (hereafter referred to as the 'Culture in Crisis' report), which provided insights into the myriad ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the sectoral workforce, venues, organisations, audiences and participants.

In the months since, the Centre for Cultural Value has been working in partnership with Culture Commons to consider the implications of the study findings for future policy, develop the recommendations outlined in this report and engage policy makers in meaningful dialogue.

Recommendations for policymakers

This paper sets out 12 new policy recommendations designed with one overarching objective in mind: **to support policy makers within the UK Government, devolved administrations and local government to make targeted, evidence-led policy interventions that support the creative and cultural sectors both recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and rebuild in more sustainable ways.**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the policy response to it have illuminated several pre-existing structural realities that are holding the sectors back from reaching their full potential. The pandemic has also highlighted several new policy areas where the creative and cultural sectors can provide fresh insights and possible solutions.



Policy Approach

Although the policy recommendations in this report have primarily been developed in response to evidence-led findings from the 'Culture in Crisis' report, we have taken care to consider a wealth of activity already coming forward from key sectoral stakeholders.

Each of our recommendations, therefore:

- Aim to complement and build on existing research and best practice within the creative and cultural sectors
- Have been developed as robustly and collaboratively as possible, responding to input from several sources, including: the study's research team of 25 academics; the Centre for Cultural Value's 'Policy Reference Group'; creative and cultural sector leaders; policy specialists; decision makers at the local, regional and national levels; and civil servants
- State a clear policy intervention that is within either the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Executive, and/or local government remit to deliver individually, collectively or in collaboration with the creative and cultural sector
- Have been considered with several operational realities in mind, including potential budgetary implications, political risk, feasibility, and precedent

Policy Themes

Taken together, the individual findings from the 'Culture in Crisis' report naturally coalesced into three top level themes, broadly clustered around:

- **Workforce & Skills**
- **Purpose & Place**
- **Innovation & Sustainability**

While our individual recommendations work to address specific findings, a number of them can work together more holistically building on and mutually reinforcing at least some of the others in other clusters.



Workforce & Skills

The workforce are critical to the success of the UK’s creative and cultural sectors. From musicians to story editors, front of house staff to technicians; it’s the complex mix of skills and experiences that interconnect across the creative ecosystem that help make these sectors world leading. However, the Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted people making a living in these sectors, stripping work opportunities from groups already chronically underrepresented, whilst overburdening and causing burnout for others.

Workforce imbalances

Whilst almost every creative and cultural subsector and demographic group were negatively impacted, both in terms of job losses and reductions in the overall number of hours worked, these impacts were certainly not experienced equally.

In particular, the ‘music, performing and visual arts’ subsectors were disproportionately affected by the closure of cultural venues and creative workspaces, leading to a loss of around one quarter of all occupations in these sectors between Q1 and Q2 of 2020 (202,000 to 159,000), with little sign of recovery by the end of the year.² Indeed, the latest ONS data from 2022

demonstrates that these subsectors are still experiencing a significantly slower recovery than other sectors in the creative industries.³

People leaving creative occupations (i.e. creative roles in the creative and cultural sectors but also in the wider economy) were predominantly: women; disabled; younger (under 30); without higher education qualifications; and from ethnically diverse backgrounds. In contrast, some workers in creative occupations who were well-networked, equipped with existing digital skills and with degree level qualifications found themselves in greater demand than ever before.

As we explore in ‘*Innovation & Sustainability*’, sector-wide ambitions to take content to digital platforms increased the demand for workers with established ‘Digitech’ skills. By Q4 of 2020, those already working in the associated subsectors and able to work remotely using digital technology were less impacted overall. People working in publishing were also working more hours than they were before the pandemic started. Widespread reductions in the number of hours worked and job losses left people remaining in post having to do “more with less”. Increased demand and expectations on the sector’s role in supporting hyperlocal cultural and non-cultural activities, as we’ll explore further in ‘*Purpose & Place*’, added to unmanageable and unsustainable workloads.

Falling through the gaps: the freelance experience

We know that 33% of all creative workers are freelance, self-employed or atypical workers which is double the rate across the wider UK economy, rising to 70% in subsectors such as ‘music, performing and visual arts’ (notably the very subsectors most negatively impacted by the pandemic).⁴

The UK Government’s “furlough” scheme was widely as a success, including by the creative and cultural sectors. However, large number of self-employed, freelance, and atypical workers in the creative and cultural sectors were unable to access emergency financial support programmes (e.g. UK Government’s Self-Employed Incomes Support Scheme), and were generally less supported by the state than cultural workers in other comparable countries.⁵

Overall, freelance, self-employed, and atypical workers constituted 62% of a core set of creative and cultural workforces before the pandemic, but only 52% at the end of 2020.⁶

The squeeze on skills

Significant workforce losses led to a widening skills gap, with some organisations reporting a loss of a “generation’s worth of curatorial and stagecraft skills overnight”.⁷ Those working in finance, administration, human resources within the creative and cultural sectors were tempted away into better paid roles in other parts of the economy with less volatile working conditions.

Encouragingly, early career creative and cultural professionals who lost working hours but who also engaged in training during the pandemic appear to have been ‘upskilling’ in areas relevant to their practice, rather than ‘reskilling’ for new types of work, suggesting an intention to remain in the creative and cultural sectors post-pandemic.⁸

Lack of supportive organisational infrastructure

Whilst the experiences of different subsectors and occupation types varied, the challenge of maintaining good mental health and general wellbeing were widespread and recurrent concerns. Mental health challenges, coping with burnout or isolation, and reports of limited HR or organisational support to deal with issues caused by the pandemic were common findings from the ‘Culture for Crisis’ report. These findings, pointing to a lack of supportive organisational infrastructure across the creative and cultural sectors, correlated with the findings of the ‘2019/2020 Creative Skills Monitor’ (CRM). The CRM is the first of a new annual initiative led by *The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC)* to assess the profile of current and future skills capacity in the creative industries and the wider creative economies.⁹ The CRM found that in this period, while the evidence varies across subsector and organisational size, there was need for better organisational management practices to support quality employment opportunities, as well as better access to lifelong learning and development for staff.

The growth of networks

On a more hopeful note, the pandemic saw the emergence of new semi-formal creative and cultural sector workforce networks. These organic and self-organising entities united traditionally fragmented sectoral workforces, enabled the sharing of limited resources and emerging information, and provided critical pastoral and professional support to individuals excluded from social security measures.

Policy Approach

Even before the pandemic, the creative and cultural sectors made up some of the least diverse workforces in the UK economy.¹⁰ The UK Government has expressed a clear intention to tackle this issue to ensure that people from all backgrounds can get in, and get on, in the creative and cultural sectors.

Policy makers will now need to develop processes that accurately identify demographics underrepresented in the creative and cultural workforce and target interventions towards specific groups as necessary. By taking a data-led approach of this kind, employers and decision makers can tackle disparities head-on with transparency, avoiding the risk of any regression on progress that has already been made, as well as preventing potential future inequalities from taking root as we emerge from the pandemic.

Policy makers and employers will have to work collaboratively with the workforce and their representatives to eradicate the unsustainable levels of precarity that too many creative and cultural sector workers experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly those in freelance, self-employed and atypical roles. Whilst future social security measures in emergency periods could be better tailored to these sectors, instability of the workforce, which came through so strongly as a headline finding in the study, suggests that longstanding structural issues played a considerable role too.

If left unaddressed, the growing skills gap and lack of organisational support including in roles such as funding, HR and project management, could result in a decrease in overall sectoral productivity. Now, perhaps more than ever before, the creative and cultural workforce would benefit from clear skills development pathways that support the realisation of personal career objectives and the sector’s needs.

Taken together, findings suggest that the direct and indirect GVA the creative and cultural sector workforce generates, including the strong regional growth rates we see, could be negatively impacted and the UK Government’s efforts to ‘level up’ impeded.

² Walmsley, B., Gilmore, A., O’Brien, D. and Torreggiani, A. 2022. Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector and where we go from here report at https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Culture_in_Crisis.pdf P.14

³ See the Centre for Cultural Value blog by Ben Walmsley and Tal Feder at <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVresources/workforce-a-slow-recovery-from-covid-for-performing-arts/>

⁴ Sector statistics via Creative UK at <https://www.wearecreative.uk/champion/statistics/>

⁵ See the Centre for Cultural Value’s report on social security for cultural practitioners at <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Policy-Review-Social-Security-for-Cultural-Practitioners.pdf>

⁶ Walmsley, B., Gilmore, A., O’Brien, D. and Torreggiani, A. 2022. Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector and where we go from here report at https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Culture_in_Crisis.pdf P.65

⁷ Ibid, p.67

⁸ See the Centre for Cultural Value’s blog by Tal Feder, Mark Taylor, Dave O’Brien, Siobhan McAndrew at <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVresources/fatimas-next-job-wont-be-in-cyber-creative-workers-and-education-during-the-pandemic/>

⁹ Giles, L., Spilsbury, M. and Carey, H. (2020) A skills monitor for the Creative Industries. Multiple: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and Work Advance. Available from: <https://pec.ac.uk/discussion-papers/creative-skills-monitor>

¹⁰ See the ‘Creative Diversity’ report by the APPG for Creative Diversity at <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/creative-majority-report-v2.pdf>

Evidence of the workforce rallying to support each other is a hopeful story, arising amidst one of the most difficult periods ever experienced at an individual level. However, as we near the end of the pandemic and creatives return to the workplace, there is a risk these networks might disappear and the learning from this moment could be lost without targeted measures.

The following five recommendations set out an approach to overcome these challenges:

1.1 Develop a comprehensive strategy to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in the creative and cultural sectors

The UK Government should build on stated ambitions with a new UK wide strategy to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion in the creative and cultural sectors.

This strategy should be:

- Led jointly by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Minister for Women and Equalities
- Informed by an independent panel of advisors from across all DCMS subsectors
- Informed through robust and ongoing consultation with the industry, trade unions and representative bodies, and hear directly from workers within demographic groups currently underrepresented within these sectors
- Lead to bespoke interventions that encourage greater representation, both for employment and audience engagement, for women, those from ethnically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and LGBTQIA workers

1.2 Provide skills training to employees and management within the creative and cultural sectors

The UK Government and devolved administrations should make a grant funding programme available to strengthen and build the organisational support within the creative and cultural sectors.

Funding should be available to targeted individuals who are:

- Employed, freelance, self-employed or atypical workers who had, have had, or would like to have, an occupation in administrative or supportive roles such as fundraising, HR, project management and finance within the creative and cultural sectors
- Senior managers or appropriately empowered members of staff within publicly funded cultural organisations who would like to improve their skills and knowledge in effective HR and people management skills, staff learning and career development support and whole organisation approaches to staff wellbeing and pastoral care

Governments should consult with professional bodies, the workforce and their trade unions to compile a list of recommended training providers and skills courses that are flexible and accessible for workers.

1.3 Establish 'Creatives Connect'

The UK Government should facilitate the establishment of a new UK-wide organisation 'Creatives Connect' to support the creative and cultural workforce networks that have emerged during the pandemic.

Creatives Connect should:

- Ensure that the creative and cultural workforce can continue to advocate for their interests and engage in mutual pastoral and professional support independently
- Provide advice, support, and staff resource for less formalised creative and cultural sector workforce networks
- Act as new grant giving body, or provide advice to existing bodies, to support the growth of existing networks and seed fund new initiatives
- Gather crucial data and insights into sector specific working conditions and challenges
- Connect networks with each other, as well as decision makers, trade unions and other professional bodies
- Be a key consultee in the development of a 'Freelance Charter' for the creative economy (see 1.5), as well as any workforce related activity undertaken by Arm's Length Bodies, parliamentary bodies, the Commissioner for Freelancers (see 1.4) and decision makers at the local, regional, and national levels

The UK Government could look to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's 'Libraries Connected' model as a guide.

1.4 Appoint a 'Commissioner for Freelancers'

The UK Government should appoint a Commissioner for Freelancers based in the Cabinet Office to champion the vital role freelance, self-employed, and atypical workers play across every part of the UK economy – including the creative and cultural sectors.

The Commissioner for Freelancers should:

- Be supported with adequate scope and resource to discharge their duties in line with the Institute for Government's 2021 report 'How to be an effective commissioner'¹¹
- Prioritise an examination of the creative and cultural sector, recognising that these sectors often account for a very high proportion of freelance, self-employed and atypical workers
- Establish a creative and cultural sector working group incorporating representatives from the freelance workforce, relevant trade unions, IPSE, and 'Creatives Connect' (see 1.3) to investigate conditions unique to the creative and cultural sectors
- Lead on the development of a national data strategy to ascertain the true typology of the creative and cultural freelance, self-employed, and atypical workforce at the local, regional, and national levels
- Compare international best practice related to the terms and conditions of freelance, self-employed, and atypical workers across the economy, including in the creative and cultural sectors, building on the Centre for Cultural Value's review of 2020
- Report back to the UK Government with publicly available findings within a reasonable timeframe

The UK Government could look to the Children's Commissioner for England or the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales for a roadmap for implementation.

“the power of arts and culture to connect communities of practice and interest within their localities”

– ‘Culture in Crisis’ report

Covid-19 illuminated the importance of local like never before. Emerging from the ‘Culture in Crisis’ report, a strong body of evidence suggests the pandemic has triggered something of a ‘reconnection’ between arts and culture and local communities, cementing organisations in their local geographic vicinity in new and deeper ways.

Place based partnerships matter

Areas with established creative and cultural networks incorporating a wide and diverse range of stakeholders not only acted as effective interlocutors for accessing centralised emergency support, delivering place-sensitive responses to the crisis, but also encouraged a sense of solidarity among the sector and wider society. Those places with existing connections between local government, the creative and cultural sectors, and grassroots workers and venues were able to share information faster, foster mutual support better and, in many cases, develop new and potentially more sustainable operating models for the longer term too.

Furthermore, local and combined authority areas with ebullient political buy-in and a dedicated culture officer enabled areas to effectively lobby with a unified voice in order to draw on the UK Government’s flagship Culture Recovery Fund (CRF). In some cases, place-based networks, often led by local and combined authorities, were even able to deliver their own match funded grant schemes and place-specific fundraising drives for local workers and organisations.

The pivot to purpose and place

Cultural organisations seem to have instinctively understood that increased outreach in local communities improved their visibility with the public, providing them with invaluable insights into the needs and priorities of local people. Many cultural organisations and individual practitioners moved away from building-based operating models to deliver both cultural and non-cultural programmes and community services (including food banks and information centres) bringing them into closer contact with local people than ever before. Several case studies in the ‘Culture in Crisis’ report spotlight a multitude of ways the sector came together with community and voluntary groups to deliver lockdown activities that targeted vulnerable groups. These organisations now stand ready to cement their new relationships with the communities that they increasingly feel part of.

Some building-based cultural institutions with established collections (e.g. art galleries and museums) began to activate them differently, including via social media or moving away from traditional and unsustainable ‘exhibition economy’ models, and have rethought how they might maximise reach upon reopening. Several local schools benefited from museums, galleries, and smaller theatre companies taking a more locally focussed approach.

A renewed appreciation

Staggeringly, when asked about the importance of taking part in arts and culture for their wellbeing during the pandemic period, 80% who had taken part said it had a positive impact on their mood and helped them to manage anxiety.¹³ Moreover, as the pandemic progressed, many audiences agreed that creative and cultural organisations were “good causes” that deserved support from decision makers. Interestingly, 50% of people surveyed were more willing to support local cultural organisations than before the pandemic, and a large proportion also indicated they intend to do more cultural activity closer to home in future too.

No place left behind

The cultural sector comprises many grassroots, micro and small organisations, which can make it hard for ‘trickle down’ approaches to funding to reach the places where it is needed most. In England, rounds one and two of the CRF were evenly distributed per capita across the UK Government’s three ‘Levelling Up’ priority areas. However, in many cases, local areas with an existing history of cultural funding, established National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and high engagement with arts and culture tended to receive more CRF investment per head than areas without.

Policy Approach

Policy makers at all levels can learn several lessons from the hyperlocal phenomena that emerged during the pandemic, as well as the types of places and infrastructures that enabled them to take root and flourish. Above all, the creative and cultural sectors have proven time and time again that they can support in the realisation of local and cross-cutting policy objectives in both emergency and non-emergency periods.

UK Government has already signalled the potential role culture might play in Chapter 3 of ‘Levelling Up: Delivering for all parts of the UK’.¹⁴ Particularly positive are the *Arts Council England’s* identification of ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’¹⁵ and the UK Government’s proposed new strategy for ‘Community Spaces and Relationships’¹⁶ which could dovetail nicely with a number of our policy recommendations.

Further policy, however, is needed to effectively establish mechanisms at the local level that can build on the hyperlocal cultural engagement that has emerged. These will bring the creative and cultural sector and the public together to co-create programmes of activity that better meet the needs of local people and shares the spill over effects of culture more widely.

In addition, we propose that a more sophisticated approach to centralised funding mechanisms to protect the creative and cultural life of areas when emergency situations hit again in future. By utilising provisions in Cabinet Office guidance that allows for non-competition-based grants where there is strong justification,¹⁷ UK Government can consider targeting creative and cultural investment towards areas with higher levels of deprivation and less cultural infrastructure.

¹⁴ See the UK Government’s ‘Levelling Up: Delivering for All Parts of the UK’ (2022) at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052710/Delivering_for_all_parts_of_the_United_Kingdom_Hi-res.pdf

¹⁵ See more information on the Arts Council England’s ‘Levelling Up for Culture’ programme at <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/LUCPs#section-1>

¹⁶ See the UK Government’s ‘Levelling Up’ White Paper at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf

¹⁷ See the Cabinet Office’s ‘Guidance for General Grants’ at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104033/2021-08-27_Grants-Standard-FIVE-Competition.pdf

Below, we have developed three recommendations that aim to support these ambitions:

2.1 Commission further research into the role of the creative and cultural sector in supporting local socio-economic needs

The UK Government and devolved administrations should commission an evidenced study into the relationship between creative and cultural engagement and impact on socio-economic needs of local areas.

The study should investigate:

- The ways in which the creative and cultural sectors have supported the realisation of health and social care, educational, charitable, and other local policy objectives
- Include case studies of programmes and initiatives that are levelling up through culture (i.e. aligning with the Levelling Up White Paper goals and objectives)
- Potential new cost benefit approaches to arts and culture funding, building on the important work of the DCMS in this policy area in recent years

The UK Government could look to the Local Government Association's ongoing enquiry into culture for inspiration

2.2 Support the establishment of a 'Culture Forum' in local and combined authority areas

The UK Government should support local and combined authorities to develop a 'Culture Forum' - a new local body designed to empower communities to set the creative and cultural priorities of their area, building on the deeper local ties that have developed between the creative and cultural sector, wider civil society, and the public during the pandemic.

A Culture Forum should:

- Bring stakeholders from across a local authority together, including representatives from: the creative industries; night-time and leisure economy; public and private cultural institutions; local decision makers; the creative and cultural workforce (including freelancers); and the public
- Be empowered to make decisions that affect the provision of creative and cultural programmes and services in the area, ensuring activity meets the needs of local people and reflects the ambitions of the locality
- Be proactively consulted in local decision-making processes including informing local Covid-19 cultural recovery strategies, wider regeneration strategies and the setting of local policy priorities
- Work with the regional representatives of relevant arm's length bodies and grant giving bodies to provide them with insights into local engagement
- Be a key stakeholder in the development of bids to centralised funds such as the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund, to ensure that the creative and cultural sector are always factored into wider regeneration goals

The UK Government should provide grants to local authorities in 'Levelling Up for Culture Places'¹⁸ who want to set up a Culture Forum to ensure those with limited cultural infrastructure can benefit.

The UK Government could consider drawing on the Neighbourhood Forums model (2011) and consider the role of a Culture Forum in their upcoming review of neighbourhood governance and subsequent 'Strategy for Community Spaces' and Relationships as set out in the 'Levelling Up White Paper'.

2.3 Develop a "mission orientated" funding mechanism for culture

The UK Government and devolved administrations should trial a new grant programme that directs funding towards local authorities with the highest level of need (for example, in England these areas should be determined using Arts Council England's most recent 'Levelling Up for Culture Places' methodology¹⁹). This will support the development of creative and cultural activities and infrastructure in places without well-established creative and cultural ecosystems. The devolved administrations should look to implement similar mechanisms in their respective nations.

The programme(s) should:

- Identify a small group of local authority "vanguards" representing a range of areas and needs to act as forerunners for the scheme
- Work with the vanguard areas to develop a cultural strategy for their local area, developed in collaboration with the local community and stakeholders including a new Culture Forum (see 2.2)
- Test and evaluate the approach for at least 2-3 years, alongside control variables, to capture both the short and medium-term impacts
- Work in tandem with existing creative and cultural programmes and funds to monitor funding 'overlap' and respond to changing place-based needs
- Publish an evaluation to inform further funding allocations



Innovation & Sustainability

“digital distribution is not the great equaliser or diversifier that much of the sector was hoping”
– ‘Culture in Crisis’ report

Throughout the pandemic, both private and publicly funded creative and cultural organisations found themselves adapting to ‘stay afloat’ during periods of extended lockdown and reduced public confidence to return to in-person cultural activities. While responding to fast changing guidance on opening dates and public safety measures, many cultural organisations turned to digital innovations to maintain and expand their audience base.

The uncertainty of digital

Evidence from the study paints an uncertain picture when it comes to the success of the ‘switch to digital’. Some organisations did have success in moving online and into the social media space to reach new audiences. Aligned with a spirit of increased social responsibility (as explored in *‘Purpose & Place’*), organisations that shared content on social media platforms that showed empathy and shared experiences of the pandemic were shared more frequently. Moreover, some cultural organisations and practitioners noted that it was digital or hybrid delivery that had revolutionised their relationships with schools and education partners, allowing them to ‘activate’ their collections to engage school children during periods of home schooling. In addition, some organisations were able to use social media to draw attention to newly digitised and/or hybrid cultural activities for new national and even larger global audiences.

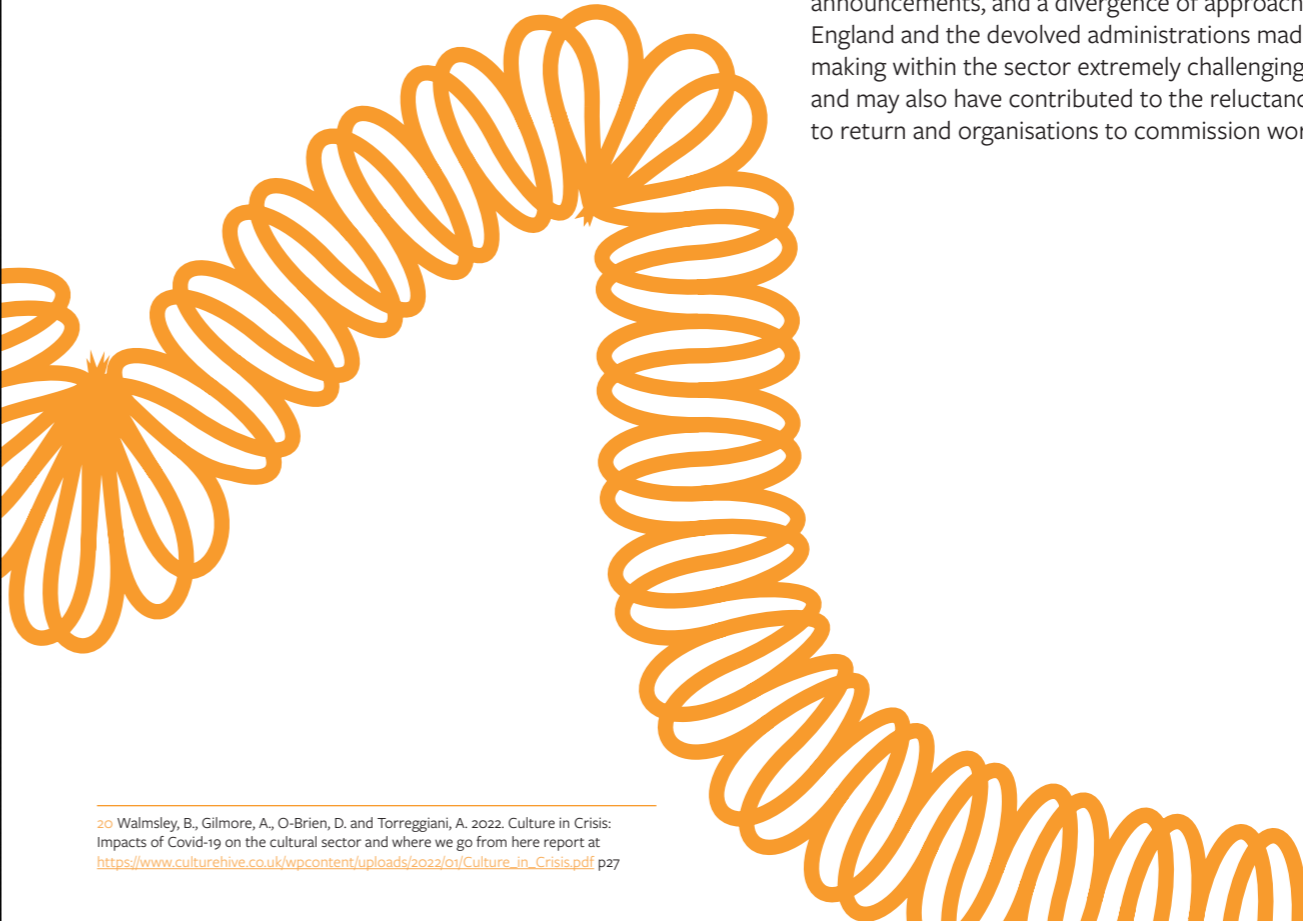
Yet some smaller organisations and individuals struggled to compete in an increasingly saturated space dominated by larger organisations with established digital platforms, technologies and workforce skills. This, again, highlights a fragmented digital infrastructure and lack of digital skills in some parts of the industry.

For large parts of the pandemic period, digital content was still only being accessed by a minority of the overall population (43%)²⁰, who tended to be those already engaging with arts and cultural before the pandemic. While digital approaches didn’t engage significant numbers of ‘new’ audiences, they do seem to have provided more accessible options for people with disabilities and additional access requirements, as well as enhanced opportunities for younger audiences interested in more participatory content that these platforms offer.

Overall, digital has not been the great leveller the cultural sector hoped it might be. The study has however brought attention to pockets of innovation and glimmers of great potential as creative and cultural organisations and individual practitioners experiment with digital, hybrid, and more immersive and participatory content, which could continue to revolutionise the way the public engages with culture at times of future national emergency, as well as into the future.

Smart guidance and communications

Lastly, mixed messages, delayed and contradictory government announcements, and a divergence of approaches between England and the devolved administrations made decision making within the sector extremely challenging and stressful, and may also have contributed to the reluctance of audiences to return and organisations to commission work.



²⁰ Walmsley, B., Gilmore, A., O'Brien, D. and Torreggiani, A. 2022. Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector and where we go from here report at https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2022/07/Culture_in_Crisis.pdf p27

Policy Approach

The UK Government and devolved administrations have already recognised the potential for a greater use of digital technologies within the arts. Through the *Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)*, *UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)* have invested heavily in innovative programmes, including the successful *Creative Industries Cluster Programme*, which saw significant investment in nine regions across the UK to explore, amongst other things, the future of sustainable retail, immersive storytelling, broadening gaming tech, equality, diversity and inclusion, and data driven innovation.

While we celebrate the story so far, we urge governments to consider approaches to the development of new digital technology that can be shared more widely across the creative and cultural sectors. Without a fuller understanding of the ways in which audiences and participants engage with new digital creative and cultural content, experimentation could prove too risky for smaller organisations and individual practitioners to take on. This is a significant risk in subsectors heavily dominated by freelance creatives and smaller business.

While public funding has been a critical catalyst for experimentation within the UK's creative and cultural sectors, the role of private sector partnerships seems to play a lesser role. Unlike in other sectors, where private sector, domestic and international investment in Research and Development (R&D)

has triggered huge leaps forwards, the UK's approach to R&D for the creative and cultural sectors lags behind. In the wake of the pandemic, when innovation in digital could be key to future adaptability and sustainability, now is an opportune moment to make use of all available investment sources and open opportunities for smaller creative and cultural organisation to benefit from innovations that receive public funds.

The invaluable insights the study has gleaned from the 'Cultural Participation Monitor' could support in evaluating the efficacy of the UK Government's pandemic response, but also inform future emergency response planning. It is the longitudinal nature of the data set we have been able to draw on that has enabled us to map trends and identify potential cold spots in specific locations and within demographics, especially as we emerge from the pandemic.

In the likelihood of future emergency scenarios, clearer and more consistent sector specific guidance, supported by agile and locally distributed communications plans, are needed right across the UK. The UK Government and devolved administrations should engage with the creative and cultural sectors across all four nations to develop more streamlined procedures and communication protocols ready for future emergency situations.

The following four recommendations set out ways to achieve these aims:

3.1 Develop a UK-wide "Digital Arts" strategy

The UK Government should work with an appropriate delivery body to establish a holistic strategy for exploring and expanding the use of technology, digital skills and social media in the culture and creative sectors.

The strategy should:

- Build on the UK Government's own 'Digital Strategy' as well as the upcoming 'Sector Vision' being developed by the *Creative Industries Council* and others
- Draw on existing and ongoing research into the relationship between social media platforms and cultural engagement
- Support smaller creative and cultural organisations and individual practitioners to access new technologies, platforms, and approaches developed with public investment that could improve the prominence of their cultural content online and attract new, global audiences
- Monitor the success of new publicly funded digital and hybrid technologies, platforms, and activities to inform future investment decisions
- Explore international export and investment opportunities to attract further investment in digital solutions and to increase the capacity of UK organisations to export their services abroad.

The UK Government should look to work of pioneering organisations such as NESTA, who have historically brought the arts and creative industries together to innovate, to shape future policy interventions.

3.2 Take an audience and participant led approach to creative and cultural policy interventions

The UK Government and devolved administrations should commission and/or collaborate with research and data gathering organisations on a more consistent basis to develop evidence-led policy that encourages audiences back to cultural venues and supports the sector to respond to changing audience behaviours in real time.

Further investment in consistent evidence gathering models that take the 'cultural pulse' of the nation in real time on a regular basis, will enable policy makers to:

- Shape public and private sector initiatives that may encourage audience demand for in-person, digital and hybrid creative and cultural content
- Direct investment and additional support towards those innovations that are demonstrably reaching new and diverse audiences and participants effectively
- Take early action to support specific areas and/or demographic groups when additional barriers to creative and cultural content emerge during both emergency and non-emergency periods

3.3 Include 'Arts, Humanities and Social Science' research and development projects in the Government's R&D tax relief programme

The UK Government should heed calls from *UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)*, and in particular the *Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)* and amend the existing Research and Development (R&D) tax relief regime to include Arts, Humanities and Social Science (AHSS) research projects, using the definitions outlined in the OECD's 'Frascati Manual'.²¹

A more appropriate R&D tax regime that brings AHSS research into scope, would:

- Enable greater public and private investment in creative and cultural R&D to support the creative and cultural sectors to 'innovate out' of the pandemic and mitigate against any ongoing sub-sectoral scarring
- Support the UK Government in fulfilling its 2021 Spending Review commitment to increase R&D investment to align with the OECD average by 2030, and bring the UK R&D tax relief regime up to par with other comparable nations
- Ensure that the UK remains a frontrunner in the development of virtual production, artificial intelligence, and emerging technology innovations, including in new paradigms such as the metaverse – all of which provide considerable opportunities for the creative and cultural sector

UK Government should also consider working with relevant stakeholders to ensure that innovations brought forward by publicly funded and subsidised AHSS R&D (e.g. platforms, technologies and processes) are made available as widely as possible, including to micro and small creative and cultural organisations and individual practitioners who might not otherwise benefit from them.

3.4 Prepare a clear pandemic and emergency response communications framework for the creative and cultural sector

The UK Government and devolved administrations should work now to prepare a more consistent, clear, and supportive pandemic emergency response and communications strategy for the creative and cultural sector. The strategy should:

- Review the approach taken during the COVID-19 pandemic to closure and lockdown guidelines and emergency funding for the creative and cultural sectors
- Set out a new emergency response and communications framework for the creative and cultural sector in a future pandemic scenario, including how central government can make better use of regional and local channels/support
- Consider how the creative and cultural sectors can play a role in local disaster management in future local or national emergency scenarios, for example via collaborations between Local Resilience Forums and newly established Culture Forums (see 2.1)



Next Steps

The UK's creative and cultural sectors are now at an inflection point. Without evidence-led and targeted policy interventions, these sectors could easily 'snap back' to some of the unsustainable operating models and working practices that led to disproportionate levels of instability during the Covid-19 pandemic. The human and economic cost of such an outcome would clearly be unacceptable.

Policymakers should now implement the 12 recommendations laid out in this paper to not only repair some of the damage inflicted by the pandemic, but also build towards more equal, diverse, and inclusive communities. In doing so, we can unlock the creative and cultural potential of every individual, whatever their background or postcode.

The 'Culture in Crisis' findings firmly backed up, through diligent chronicling and data, what many in the sector already instinctively knew; that the UK's creative and cultural workforce were terribly impacted across many subsectors. Our 'Workforce & Skills' recommendations respond directly to the disproportionately negative outcomes the study revealed for workers from demographic groups already severely underrepresented before the pandemic, and the skills deficits we're now starting to see emerge within these industries.

Culture Commons will continue to communicate with the Secretary of State for (DCMS) to make the case for a UK wide strategy that turns ambitions on equality, diversity and inclusion into a comprehensive plan of action. In addition, we'll work with industry colleagues and the policy community to advocate for an economy wide Commissioner for Freelancers amongst key decision makers, including with relevant departments in the UK Government and the devolved administrations. Finally, we'll be reaching out to the Department for Education and relevant stakeholder to talk in more detail about how our recommendations around skills might best be implemented.

A rich vein of evidence running through the 'Culture in Crisis' report strongly suggests that the deeper relationships that have formed between the creative and cultural sectors and wider civil society during the pandemic could now offer a unique "moment" to bring forward more locally focussed cultural policy interventions. As we make clear in our 'Purpose & Place' recommendations, if we get funding flowing towards those areas that need it most, local leaders, the creative and cultural sectors and local people on the ground will be best placed to determine where that cultural investment should be directed.

By bringing local people into the decision-making processes that inform the way communities produce, disseminate and engage with culture, we could truly revolutionise the way local places engage with cultural policy too. This could also have a profound impact on the way national level cultural policy is developed and ultimately deployed to support with cross-cutting policy priorities of local and combined authorities and the devolved administrations.

Culture Commons will continue to work with colleagues across key UK and devolved administration departments to explore how our recommendations in this policy area might support their respective priorities. We are pleased that several Metro Mayors across England have already made a commitment to establish a Culture Forum in their regions via the 'Creative

Workforce Pledge', and Culture Commons will now be working with them to take those initiatives forward. Through our respective leadership teams, Culture Commons and the Centre for Cultural Value are looking forward to working closely with the Local Government Association on their enquiry into culture, which provides another forum in which to spotlight the study's findings and recommendations.

The 'Culture in Crisis' report did acknowledge new innovative ways of working and digital engagement that came to the fore during the pandemic period. However, several question marks remain both over the effectiveness and the accessibility of new Digitech, and we need to be careful to ensure that individual practitioners and smaller organisations don't miss out. Our 'Innovation & Sustainability' recommendation around a digital 'Arts Strategy' coupled with an audience and participant led approach to policy development could bring some evidence-led policy interventions forward to speed up the diversification of audiences and participants.

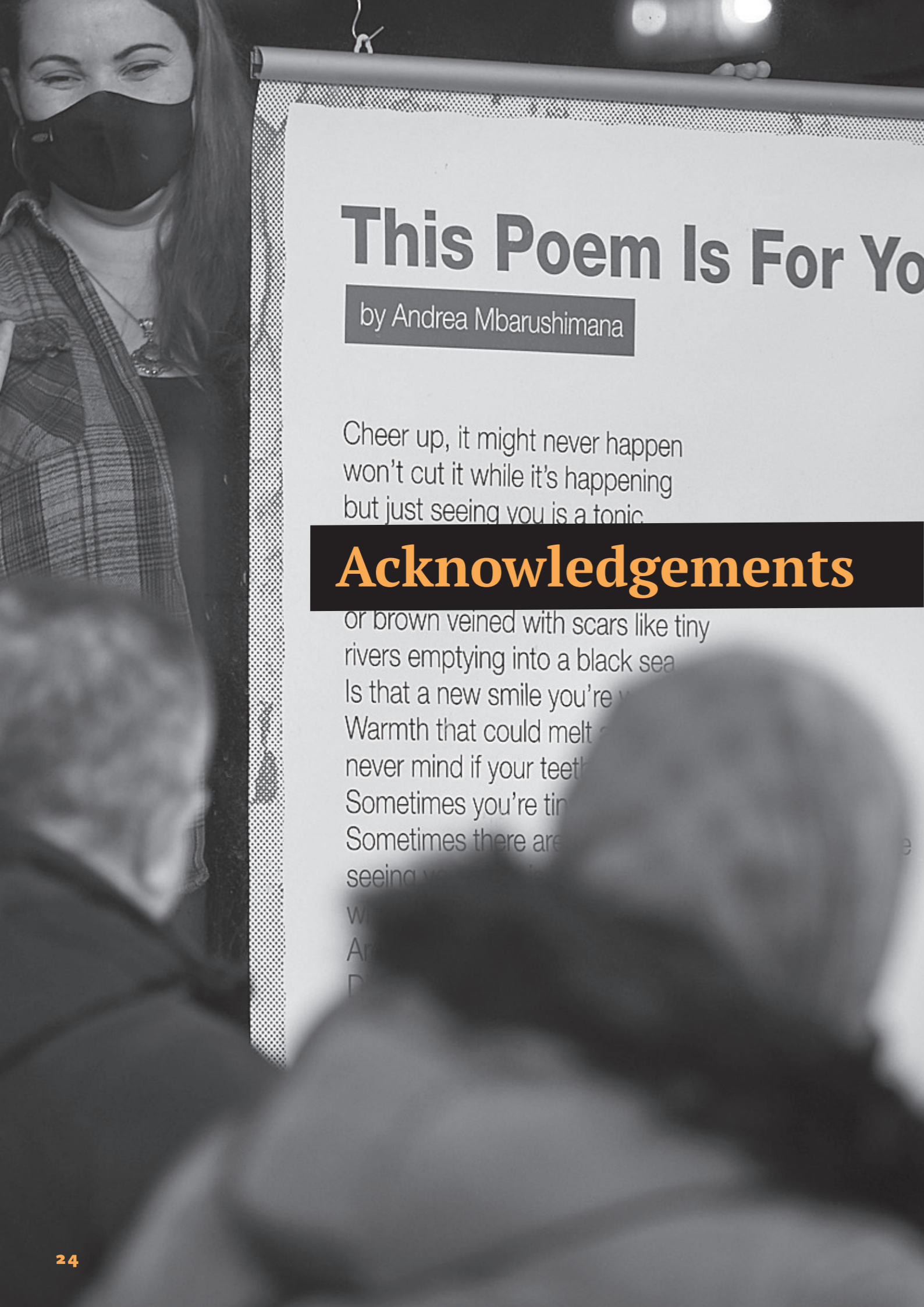
Our teams will engage relevant stakeholders on any review into the Covid-19 response, including through the upcoming national enquiry. We'll explore ways we might help shape future emergency planning processes and frameworks and make it clear where the creative and cultural sector might credibly play a role in community resilience in moments of emergency – including via our new Culture Forum concept.

We will continue to support high profile research organisations like the AHRC in calling for changes to the R&D tax relief regime to bring innovation in the creative and cultural sectors firmly into scope. The innovations this will bring forward can open up accessible platforms and operating models to more across the sector, but also unlock the creative potential lying dormant in local areas through ground-breaking cultural programmes.

We are acutely aware of the fiscal context that we are deploying our policy recommendations into. However, policymakers must now take stock of the value that the creative and cultural sectors can bring to communities, large and small, and recognise that these sectors really can be at the forefront of a creative and cultural led recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Culture Commons and the Centre for Cultural Value will now embark on a period of engagement to bring policy makers and sector representatives into dialogue around the recommendations, as well as build on and develop new partnerships to see the recommendations brought to life.

If you or your organisation would like to discuss any of the policy recommendations or discuss how you or your organisation might implement them, please contact Culture Commons at contact@culturecommons.uk



This Poem Is For You

by Andrea Mbarushimana

Cheer up, it might never happen
won't cut it while it's happening
but just seeing you is a tonic

Acknowledgements

or brown veined with scars like tiny
rivers emptying into a black sea
Is that a new smile you're
Warmth that could melt
never mind if your teeth
Sometimes you're tired
Sometimes there are
seeing you

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Our partners

Creative Industries
Policy & Evidence Centre
Led by *nesta*

 the audience agency


UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

 **Arts and Humanities Research Council**

 **Paul Hamlyn Foundation**

 **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**
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About the Centre for Cultural Value

The *Centre for Cultural Value* is building a shared understanding of the differences that arts, culture, heritage and screen make to people's lives and to society. We want cultural policy and practice to be shaped by rigorous research and evaluation of what works and what needs to change, to build a more diverse, equitable and regenerative cultural sector.

To achieve this, we are working in collaboration with partners across the UK to:

- Make existing research more relevant and accessible so its insights can be understood and applied more widely
- Support the cultural sector and funders to be rigorous in their approaches to evaluation and to foster a culture of reflection and learning
- Foster an evidence-based approach to cultural policy development
- Our approach is primarily pragmatic: we want empirical research to drive decisions about cultural funding, policy, management, engagement and evaluation

Based at the University of Leeds, the Centre's core partners are *The Audience Agency* and the *Universities of Liverpool, Sheffield and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh*. The Centre is funded by the *Arts and Humanities Research Council*, *Paul Hamlyn Foundation* and *Arts Council England*.

About Culture Commons

Culture Commons are a policy development and advocacy organisation sitting at the intersection between culture and politics, amplifying the voices of creative, cultural and research organisations who want their work to have an impact on policy at a local, national and international level.

We blend hands on experience of public relations, stakeholder management, campaign strategy, policy development and parliamentary processes to enhance the work you're already making.

We approach our work with the vigour of a campaign, thinking strategically to help clients and partners seize the moment and drive the change they want to see in the world.

We are kindly supported in our work by the *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, *Arts Council England* and the *Federation of Entertainment Unions*.

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p20: Event at Left Bank Leeds. Photo: Sally Molineaux

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p24: “This Poem Is For You” by Andrea Mbarushimana, Shop Front Theatre, Coventry, commissioned by Theatre Absolute. Photo: Andrew Moore

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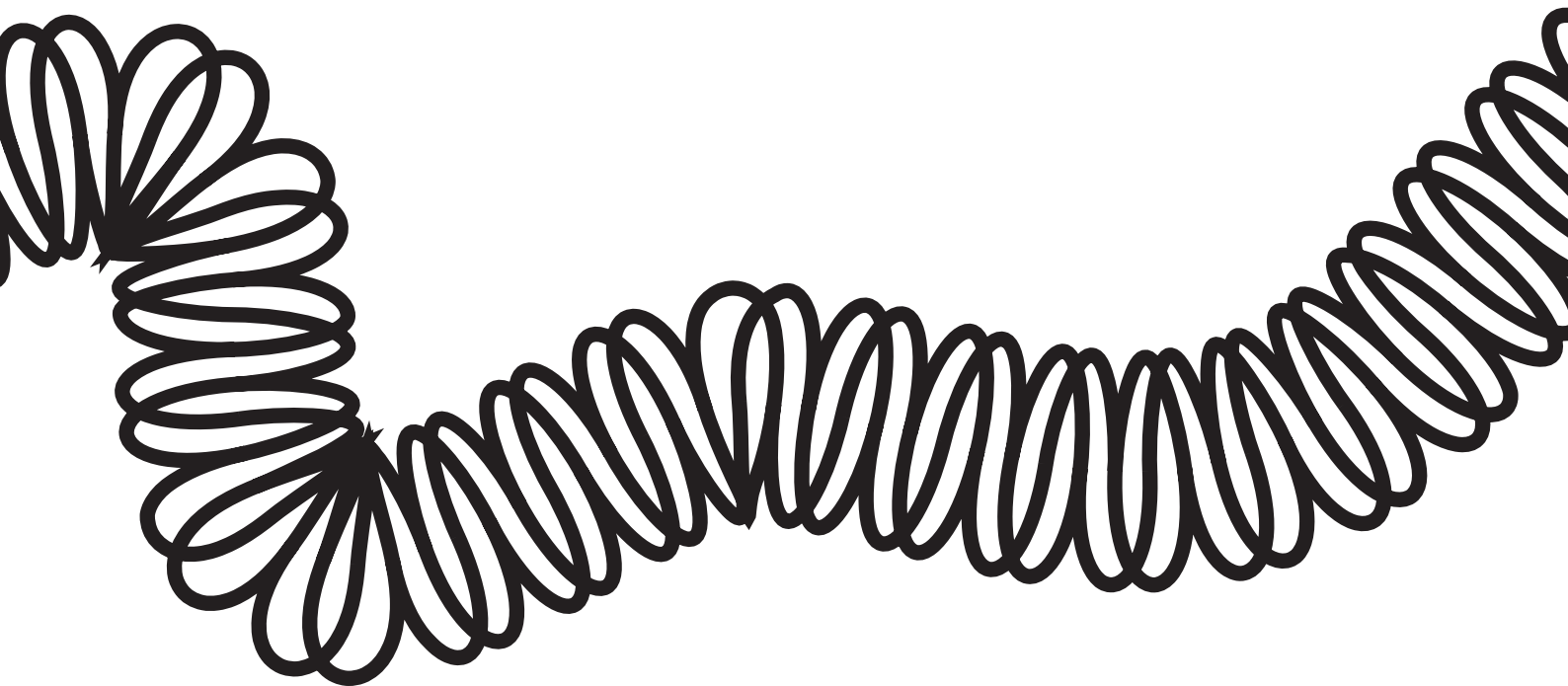
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