Call for Evidence: key messages

Working Paper 2 from the Creative PEC's Good Work Review

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Introduction

In January 2022, the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) commenced an independent review of job quality and working practices in the UK Creative Industries. The objectives of the PEC's Review as they were set out in the original Terms of Reference have been to:

1. Establish a robust baseline picture of job quality in the Creative Industries, across a range of domains and benchmarked against other sectors of the economy;

2. Identify the key challenges and opportunities for promoting quality work, spanning the range of themes considered in the Taylor review and Fair Work Frameworks that exist in the Devolved Nations, but drawing out priority themes and the most pressing concerns in the Creative Industries context;

3. Consider sector-based policy levers for improving job quality and articulate a set of high-level priorities and detailed recommendations for Government and industry, that could help to shape ten-year roadmaps for advancing job quality in the Creative Industries in each of the four UK nations.

The Good Work Review has comprised a vast programme of work over the course of a year. Engagement was central to the process and the PEC sought to actively consult with a multitude of stakeholders throughout the Review.

One key mechanism to kickstart a conversation about the quality of work in the Creative Industries was through an open 'Call for Evidence', launched in March 2022 and open for 6 weeks. The Call provided a mechanism through which to enable early-stage stakeholder input on the critical issues and policy choices facing the Creative sector concerning job quality and how Governments and Industry* can work together to drive improvements. It was designed to help set the agenda, identifying issues that could later be examined in greater depth through desk-based research and bilateral interviews, and exploring policy positions that could subsequently be debated on a wider platform, through the policy roundtables in Phase 3. It should therefore be seen as one component of the much larger Good Work Review process.

The Call for Evidence was widely publicised and the PEC research team invited stakeholders from across the sector and in each UK nation, actively seeking a broad range of expertise, experiences and evidence relevant to the objectives of the Review. In total, the PEC received 35 submissions to the Call for Evidence. Responses were received from a wide spectrum of stakeholders including policy makers, industry bodies, unions, charities, subject matter experts, diversity champions, businesses and creative freelancers. This included submissions from different sub-sectors of the Creative Industries: including Screen; Publishing; Advertising; and Music, visual and performing arts. While this provided a valuable platform of evidence, responses are not necessarily representative of the views of all stakeholders across the Creative Industries. The PEC research team undertook further work during Phases 2 and 3 of the Review to seek input from a broader cross section of stakeholders from all Creative sectors and UK nations. A full list of submissions received to the Call for Evidence is included in the Annex A. A list of all stakeholders engaged throughout the Good Work Review can be found in Annex A of the main report.

The Call for Evidence presented a series of questions, where input was sought. These questions were designed to help inform the PEC's definition of Good Work in a Creative context, assessment of job quality in the Creative Industries and potential policy directions and options for advancing Good Work that would later be deliberated at a series of national policy roundtables. This report summarises the key messages from the PEC's Call for Evidence, drawing out common themes from the submissions received. This Working Paper accompanies the quantitative baselining of job quality in the Creative Industries (Working Paper 2) and the final report from the PEC's Good Work Review, available here.

*By Industry we mean key industry representatives from creative businesses, industry bodies and trade associations, trade unions and professional bodies.

Defining Good Work in a Creative context

The Call for Evidence presented a working definition of 'Good Work' (Box 1), founded on a review of the definitions adopted by a range of Good, Fair and Decent Work Frameworks in each UK nation, in specific UK cities or regions, and internationally, by organisations such as the OECD, ILO and European Commission.

What is Good Work?*

Good Work includes and extends beyond compliance with minimum statutory employment rights and protections, seeking to unlock the benefits of high-quality work for individuals, employers, the economy and society.

While there is no singular, widely adopted definition, most Good, Fair and Decent Work Frameworks suggest that 'good' work is characterised as offering: fair reward, terms and conditions; that counterbalances security and flexibility; where workers have agency, voice and representation; which offers opportunity to utilise skills, develop and progress, in a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.

Equality in access to opportunities and experiences at work for those from all backgrounds is a crucial underpinning principle. It is also important to acknowledge that what constitutes Good Work will be subjective, meaning different things to different people and varying throughout an individual's working life.

A range of questions then sought to test this working definition in a creative context, including by inviting respondents to present their own definition and dimensions of job quality.

- The Call for Evidence found strong support for the PEC's working definition of Good Work, capturing multiple dimensions including fair reward, terms and conditions; security; worker agency; voice and representation; skills and development; and a safe, healthy and inclusive working environment.

- Respondents suggested that different dimensions required a more specific articulation to add 'creative colour'. Submissions offered rich insights into what aspects of Good Work are important in a Creative context and helped to draw out their sector distinctiveness.

- It was felt the PEC's definition also needed to give greater emphasis to the recognition, retention and protection of Creator rights; and to better capture qualitative aspects of what inspires people to work in creative roles, acknowledging the intrinsic value to creative work and the sense of purpose and personal fulfilment it offers workers.

- The Call for Evidence emphasised the importance of being sensitive to different language and definitions of job quality in different UK nations. There are also wider implications in terms of the different Creative Industries footprint within the nations, and sub-regions, variations in the policy landscape and (relatedly) priorities for the future.

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*Based on a review of: Dickens et al. 2019; Giles 2016; HM Government 2018; ILO 2008; Measuring Job Quality Working Group 2018; OECD 2016 and 2017; OFMDFMNI / NEF 2021; Scottish Government 2016, 2020 and 2021; Taylor 2017; Warhurst, Wright & Lyonette 2017 and 2018; UNECE 2015

Assessing job quality in the Creative Industries

The Call for Evidence subsequently asked respondents to reflect on definitions of job quality and consider how 'good' work is in the Creative Industries – overall and in different sub-sectors, artforms or creative contexts. This included perspectives on positive and more challenging dimensions to being a freelancer.

- The Call for Evidence highlighted many positive aspects of Creative work: for some, pay is good; many enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility over their work; and, for most, Creative work offers an opportunity for creative expression, to pursue a passion, provide a platform for the marginalised and to make a positive difference in the world.

- Respondents offered various examples of where Creative work was not perceived to be 'good'. Whilst these were not necessarily evident everywhere, taken together they have identified the need for improvement in a range of areas, including: unpaid work, low pay and limited work-related benefits; insecurity driven by the prevalence of contract and project-based work and exacerbated by deficiencies in the statutory framework of employment rights and protections; work intensity, with extreme working hours in parts of the sector, impacting work-life balance; work environments which lack empathy, respect and support and foster a culture of bullying; a lack of worker voice and representation; informal recruitment and employment practices; opaque career pathways compounded by a lack of training and professional development; and leadership and management deficiencies; all of which negatively impact the health and wellbeing of workers and equality, diversity and inclusion in the Industry.

- Submissions suggest that job quality does, however, vary considerably based on a number of factors, including how advanced individuals are in their career, the type of employer, the structural features of the sub-sector or Creative discipline, employment status and the personal characteristics of the individual. Particular concerns were raised about the quality of work experienced by Creative freelancers; mid-career Creatives, particularly those with care responsibilities and those marginalised in the Creative Industries, including women, people of colour, disabled workers and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Priorities for advancing Good Work in the Creative sector

A final set of questions sought to: explore barriers to the achievement of Good Work in the Creative Industries; examine support for different types of policy approaches; and identify priorities for advancing quality work in the Creative sector.

- Several submissions highlighted that work was already underway to advance the conditions for Good Work, but there was a perception there was much more to do. Respondents identified several barriers that could inhibit progress, including: the structural features of the Creative Industries (dominance of micro-sized firms, propensity for project-based / freelance work and urban-centric spatial footprint); funding and budgets, which limit scope to improve working practices; sectoral culture with a resistance to change; and a lack of management capability to drive improvements.

- The Call for Evidence sought to explore support for alternative policy approaches and the varied responses suggest there is no 'silver bullet', but instead a need to consider various policy directions:

  » **Mandatory vs voluntary measures** – some responses supported further mandatory measures, while others emphasised a need for mechanisms that enable industry-leadership and collective action across creative sectors on a voluntary basis.

  » **Social partnership** – there was considerable support for the role of social partnership, particularly in the Devolved Nations, and submissions presented several existing examples of trade bodies, government agencies, businesses, workers, trade unions and charities working collaboratively to advance shared plans, resources and activities to improve various aspects of Good Work.

  » **Employer leadership** – was emphasised by many respondents, with sector-focused approaches generally thought to be more customised to sector specific needs and interests.

  » **National & place-based approaches** – there was strong recognition that, given the spatial footprint of the Creative Industries, the different policy landscape in each UK nation and moves to increase devolution, place-based approaches will provide a vital mechanism for promoting and progressing the conditions for Good Work.

- The Call for Evidence also highlighted a range of priorities for action, including:

  » **Developing a more strategic approach** – with calls for Government in each nation, working with Industry, to develop overarching strategies for promoting Good or Fair Work in the Creative Industries; and for stakeholders in different sub-sectors to advance sector-based plans customised to their distinct challenges and policy landscape.

  » **Strengthening the platform of rights and protections for Creative workers** – particularly enhancing employment rights and social protections for Creative freelancers and strengthening and future-proofing intellectual property legislation.

  » **Improving management and workplace practices in the Creative Industries** – extending and promoting coordination of existing industry standards to cover multiple dimensions of Good Work; driving take-up of these standards through stronger corporate governance; procurement levers; public funding conditionality; a new standards authority; and better data and reporting; while also extending support for both businesses and workers.

  » **Promoting professional development and progression** – reprioritising creative subjects across the education system; scaling and extending apprenticeship reforms; developing skills for portfolio careers and the transferable skills of Creative workers; investing in management and leadership training; and new measures to support the professional development and career progression of Creative freelancers.

  » **Enhancing worker voice, including for freelancers** – enhancing communication between workers and employers; ensuring all workers have the right to representation, through existing and new mechanisms for worker representation; and reviewing industry governance structures to ensure those that represent Creative workers, particularly freelancers, are involved in policy and funding decisions.

  » **Data gathering** – with more robust and timely evidence on the quality of work, including regularly published statistics on pay, benefits, equality and diversity; enhancing existing and investing in new mechanisms to capture this data, particularly to address the dearth of evidence on Creative freelancers.

Annex A: Respondents to the Call for Evidence

The authors would like to extend their thanks to those individuals and organisations that took the time to respond to the PEC's Good Work Review Call for Evidence.

Anonymous submission, Performing Arts and Academia

Arts Council England

Association of Illustrators

Charitable Organisation, Screen

Commercial Break

Crafts Council

Creative Scotland

Creators' Rights Alliance

DACS, the Design & Artist Copyright Society

Dance North Scotland

Directors UK

Dr J Swords, XR Stories and Screen Industries Growth Network at University of York

Dr N. Willment

Dr. G. Musgrave and S.A. Gross

Equity

Ffilm Cymru Wales

Film and TV Charity

Freelance dance psychology researcher, lecturer, and coach

Freelance Illustrator (Advertising, Design & Publishing)

Freelance Music Promoter & Consultant

Freelance Writer and Facilitator

Freelancer and Chair of TV Mindset and Coalition For Change

Membership Organisation, Music

Musicians' Union

Professional organisation, Performing Arts

Public Service Broadcaster, Screen

ReWAGE

Skills Agency, Scotland

Skills Agency, Screen

Society of Authors

Spectra

The Publishers Association

Trade Association, Screen

Trade Union, Creative Occupation

WGGB – Writers Guild of Great Britain

About the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (The Creative Industries PEC) works to support the growth of the UK's Creative Industries through the production of independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice. Led by Nesta and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, the Centre comprises a consortium of universities and one joint enterprise from across the UK They are: Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Work Advance, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Sussex, and Ulster. The PEC works with a diverse range of industry partners including the Creative UK.

To find out more visit **www.pec.ac.uk** and **@CreativePEC**

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Image credit: Bryan Garces, Unsplash

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