



Feedback from Bectu/CULT Cymru

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Introduction

Bectu (a sector of Prospect) is the trade union that represents behind the scenes workers in TV, Film, Digital, Theatre and Live Events. The union manages a joint-union learning programme, CULT (Creative Unions Learning Together) Cymru in partnership with Equity, the Musicians' Union and the Writers' Guild of GB.

Following providing evidence in person to the above committee on 30th November, 2022 we are delighted to provide the following information.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

Many of the barriers in terms of EDI are common across the creative sector. All the sectors employ a significant number of freelancers (as sole traders and /or casual workers on short term-contracts) that results in additional barriers in terms of recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

Bectu raised the issue of under-representation across the creative industries in its presentation to the then NaFW committee in November 2011 including the union's response to the Hargreaves Creative Industries review that excluded any mention of equality and diversity. Sadly our concerns were not acknowledged or addressed.

Under-representation from specific groups i.e. *Global Majority, Disabled People, those from Non Privileged Socio Economic backgrounds, Women in certain grades and those who do not live near or have a link to a cluster of creative businesses has been a significant problem across the creative sector for many years and in particular those roles that are higher paid and that have power/influence.

The benefits of a diverse workforce are significant including supporting the industry and individuals to contribute to the sector/economy, provides a more innovative & dynamic global sector due to a broader range of talent with diverse lived experiences, a better reflection of Wales' cultural diversity, the knock on effect on future generations encouraged to work in the sector, opportunities to recruit & retain those particularly underrepresented in Wales' workforce e.g. disabled people, neurodiverse people, Asian women. Intersectionality is key in terms of looking at the diversity of the workforce and Welsh speakers should be included. Another area that needs to be looked at in more detail is age.

Across the creative sector a key problem is that the creative industries tend to recruit people that they know. E.g. in the TV and Film industry it is estimated that 74% of freelancers are recruited via word of mouth and it can be difficult for those without the

personal links to not only get their first job in TV and Film but to sustain and progress their careers during those crucial early years. Bectu commissioned research from Bournemouth University on [Management Practices in UK Unscripted TV](#) (the findings are relevant across the screen sector and the arts sector).

Bectu's Black Members committee frustrated at the lack of progress in employing and retaining people from Global Majority backgrounds in the screen industry launched the '[Race to be Heard](#)' Campaign, that is calling on the establishment of an independent reporting body on racism via Ofcom. In 2018, 30 arts organisations throughout Wales signed [Bectu's Diversity in Theatres Action Plan](#) at the then National Assembly for Wales building, the aim was to increase the numbers of Global Majority people in particular in theatres/arts. Funding was secured via the Arts Council of Wales to drive this forward but was cancelled due to Covid. The key principles, particularly in terms for recruitment remain relevant to both the Arts, Music and Screen industries. Bectu has since developed the [Commercials Production Diversity Action Plan](#) for the commercial screen sector that includes a section on reporting racism.

* Global Majority - **People who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'**. In using this collective term, we recognise that these ethnicities are often defined in the UK as 'minority,' but that globally, they make up the majority.

Skills and training opportunities:

Access to training across the creative industries is patchy. For freelancers in particular identifying affordable, relevant learning opportunities at a local level is a barrier to them progressing in their careers. For new entrants there's an additional barrier in that training schemes are rare and often far too short. There's an over reliance on unpaid learning opportunities, which create additional barriers for those who cannot afford to learn unpaid, and they should not be expected to.

Much of the creative sector has historically relied on a freelance workforce however over the past 30 years this has increased significantly and as the industry has become ever more successful the industry requires a significant number of high skilled and creative workers. There is tension around who should pay for the training and what the role is of Further and Higher Education – are they educators or trainers? The role of employers in training the workforce has diminished significantly and with a high number of freelancers many of them don't see that training the workforce is their responsibility but that of education providers and government.

Through the Wales Union Learning Fund for the past 20 years the unions have punched above their weight in supporting the creative workforce in Wales in their learning. Hundreds of courses are being organised and thousands of creative works are benefitting from this learning. These vary from vocational courses, health & safety, EDI, business & digital skills, train the trainer and coaching and mentoring. Since 2008 this has been via [CULT Cymru](#). The benefit of union learning is that learning is identified by the workforce therefore it empowers them to reach their full potential. Unions also work closely with employers and other training providers

throughout the creative sector to pool resources on training delivery for both staff and freelancers. As a bilingual programme we offer courses in English and Welsh. From our feedback forms it's clear that many creative workers throughout Wales are very keen to learn or improve their Welsh language skills.

The industry requires a broad range of training providers and educators who work collaboratively to meet the needs of a broad range of creative workers. (Note that new roles are emerging and will continue to do so and Wales needs to be at the forefront of these developments), Creative Wales has set up the Creative Skills Advisory Panel that includes employers, unions, education and training providers that provides an excellent forum to discuss training for its sub-sectors. There needs to be a discussion around how this works with the theatres/music/arts sector under Arts Council of Wales.

Recommendations:

- All employers receiving any form of public funding (including tax relief) to contribute to training and development of the workforce including freelancers / casuals;
- Roll out of Union Learning Representatives across the sector for staff and freelancers;
- Ensure inclusive and accessible paid on the job training provision for new entrants including apprenticeships and shared traineeships (ideally a minimum of 9 months duration or 1 year for apprenticeships & shared traineeships);
- Access to free or affordable, relevant training for all creative workers including coaching and mentoring to enable them to progress in their careers;
- Ensure learning provision is available in Welsh and English & identify models for increasing Welsh language use in the sector;
- All new entrants training to include introduction to unions, rights & responsibilities at work, pensions, contracts, freelancing, health & safety, mental health & wellbeing, EDI.
- Explore how Arts Council of Wales could benefit from a skills forum and how this would link in with Creative Wales' Creative Skills Advisory Panel;
- Ensure that education providers include business skills in their programmes;
- Ensure that business support programmes are appropriate for the creative sector and offer diversity in business models;
- Support for a broad range of training providers jointly funded by Welsh Government and Employers to address market failure in this area;

Support

We are regularly contacted by people who are having to make difficult choices on their outgoings. Whilst we have a relatively buoyant screen sector in Wales, it is overwhelmingly reliant on freelancers and people with small businesses who only need one engager to delay or withhold payment to cause them significant difficulty.

Arts and Entertainments is a particular area of concern for Bectu. A combination of the significantly lower wages when compared to the screen sector and widespread use of zero hours contracts to staff theatre venues has culminated in serious recruitment challenges for the sector. Live events workers are similarly low paid in comparison and tend to be atypical workers such as freelancers. In our opinion, if we

hope to attract workers back to this sector, the terms and conditions on which people are engaged and employment practices need to improve dramatically.

General

We believe that the Welsh Government must ensure that funding is being allocated wisely to those employers who are seeking to improve the working lives of the staff and freelancers they rely on.

Bectu hopes Welsh Government will continue to work collaboratively with the creative Unions representing workers in these sectors. We feel our ability to highlight the way the industry works played a crucial role in ensuring Welsh Government was able to deliver support to the workforce during the pandemic and feel sure we can be just as useful to helping it address the challenges that lay ahead. Our democratic institutions offer Welsh Government an unparalleled means of consulting the workforce of this world class industry.

Mental Health & Well-being

Poor mental health and wellbeing has been a significant problem throughout the creative sector for many years. The culture of working long, unsocial hours, lack of work security due to a significant number of freelance/casual workforce that leads to fear in calling out bad practice as well as concerns regarding paying bills etc., lack of training and development in fair employment practices amongst employers and managers/supervisors, lack of opportunities for progression, balancing caring responsibilities with working in industry – some making the choice between a career they love and having a family, lack of strategy in terms of phased retirement and using skills of those leaving the industry for benefit of new entrants and mid-career workers.

There is significant amount of research in this area including research by the [Film & TV Charity](#) and [Bectu \(via Bournemouth University\)](#). In the arts [Help Musicians UK](#) offer support.

Harrowing statistics include:

- 9/10 people in TV and film surveyed said they'd had a mental health problem
- 55% screen workers had suicidal thoughts (compared to 20% population)
- 78% stated long working hours negative impact on health
- 39% those from Global Majority faced racial harassment / discrimination
- 74% disabled people considered leaving the industry
- 68% of workforce considered leaving the industry
- 70% managers hadn't had any management training
- Only 2% of freelancers said they'd go to manager with a problem
- 51% of women and 28% men stated they'd been sexually harassed

The unions are working hard to try and combat this problem so that Wales becomes a destination of choice for creative businesses and individuals. Regular mental health and wellbeing courses are being run including Mental Health First Aid Wales and bite size sessions with support organisations such as Beat, Mind, Time for Change are organised on a regular basis.

Most recently through CULT Cymru the unions are working with employers and Creative Wales in piloting a new impartial/independent role of WellBeing Facilitator in the screen sector. WellBeing Facilitators are currently working throughout Wales in supporting productions with their mental health and wellbeing policies etc. and the workforce with individual concerns they may have. Feedback so far is very positive and an evaluation will be undertaken in February 2023.

Recommendations (relevant to both staff and freelance workforce):

- Implement the Welsh Government's Social Partnership commitment to ensure that there's regular/open engagement between WG, Employers & Unions;
- Ensure any funding for companies/organisations from Welsh Government include clauses around fair recruitment, employment & working practices and an adherence to the Social Model of Disability;
- Endorse and build on lessons learnt from union campaigns including Bectu's Diversity Action Plans, Dignity at Work Campaign & support the union's Race to Be Heard Campaign;
- Bespoke training for managers including Heads of Departments in employment, HR, equality / diversity, bullying, harassment & discrimination, mental health & wellbeing and leadership across the creative sector;
- Adequate support in place for the workforce e.g. WellBeing Facilitators, Mental Health First Aid training, Freelance and Staff Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health Support Services;
- Improvements in recruitment practices to ensure that they are open, inclusive, fair and transparent including briefings on reasonable adjustments;
- Identify and develop flexible and accessible working practices e.g. part-time working, job-sharing, creches; information about care packages etc;
- Identifying a variety of innovative worker/community led business models e.g. co-operatives, social enterprises (CULT Cymru has been running events in this area with partners);

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