

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Her Majesty's Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

10 September 2021

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing on behalf of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) to express our concern for the future of musicians and other creative workers going into the autumn and winter seasons. At the end of September both the Coronavirus Income Support Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme come to an end.

As you know, these schemes have been a lifeline to many businesses and individuals working in the creative industries, as the creative industries have been one of the hardest hit sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are now in a position where most of the sector can return to work in some degree but there are areas, such as live performance, that have not been able to return to anything like pre-pandemic strength yet.

We appreciate the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme has recently been announced but the industry still needs time to create production/performance schedules and for confidence to return. We also believe that the reinsurance scheme would benefit from being expanded to provide cover if social distancing guidelines return and make events financially unviable, and where events are cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreaks or self-isolation notifications within the performance cast and crew. This step would give venues and promoters increased confidence to plan and book future schedules.

Indeed, the results of the ISM's recent COVID-19 Summer Survey made for some stark reading. They showed that despite the easing of restrictions in July many musicians are still having work cancelled due to COVID-19 and that confidence amongst musicians is low that their work levels will return to pre-pandemic levels this year.

A summary of key findings include:

- A third (33%) of musicians have had work cancelled by others or had to cancel work themselves since 19 July
- 90% of cancellations are COVID-19 related and work will not be covered by the treasury-backed reinsurance scheme
- Over half (54%) have lost over £500 of potential earnings due to cancelled work since 19 July
- 62% have less work booked between July-September 2021 than they did in the same period in 2019 and only 9% have more
- Only 23% are completely or somewhat confident their engagements will have returned to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021<sup>1</sup>

Earlier in the pandemic there were fears that musicians would leave the profession as opportunities to work were halted.<sup>2</sup> In many cases the support schemes prevented our highly skilled musicians from making that decision. Now we are concerned that current

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ism.org/news/isms-covid-19-summer-survey-results-show-musicians-still-feeling-the-financial-impact-of-the-pandemic>

<sup>2</sup> <https://encoremusicians.com/blog/musicians-leaving-music-industry/>

plans will lead to a period in between the income support schemes stopping and opportunities to work for musicians returning in a sustainable manner. This period could be financially disastrous for musicians and force them to look for work outside the sector, which would harm our economic recovery.

Will you consider keeping income support for those sectors, such as music, which need a bit more time to return to pre-pandemic levels of activity?

Will you also look to expand the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme to cover more COVID-19 related cancellations?

A strong return for the music sector is necessary both culturally and economically for our country. I hope that we can work together to support musicians as we recover from the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic the creative industries contributed £111.7bn to the UK economy and music alone contributed £5.7bn<sup>3</sup>. If we are to get back to those levels of contribution, targeted support for the workforce is required.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely



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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uks-creative-industries-contributes-almost-13-million-to-the-uk-economy-every-hour>