Job quality in the Creative Industries

The final report from the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre's Good Work Review

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Executive summary

In January 2022, the PEC commenced an independent review of job quality and working practices in the UK Creative Industries, seeking to tackle head-on a range of questions and concerns about the structural features of Creative labour markets.

The Good Work Review has comprised a vast programme of work over the course of a year: a process that has entailed examining thousands of data points, reviewing hundreds of existing papers on Creative work, and listening to the views of over 120 stakeholders from across the Creative Industries in each of the four UK nations.

Our examination of Good Work in the Creative Industries paints a mixed picture of performance.

There is clearly much that is great about work in the sector: an outlet for creative expression; the ability to pursue one's passion; and the sense of making a positive difference in the world. Creative work also affords workers considerable flexibility and autonomy in determining what work they do, how, when and with whom they do it.

Yet, too often this appears to come at a high price: the need to work for free to get a foothold into the industry; the toll of long hours in challenging work environments; a lack of agency in influencing decisions that impact working life; and a lack of time and money to participate in training that would upgrade skills and enable career progression.

There are significant variations in this picture across Creative sub-sectors, but an important message is that no Creative sub-sector performs well across all measures. Even in high-paid sectors like IT, Advertising or Architecture hours can be long, work insecure, mechanisms for employee voice lacking and investment in skills development is falling short of other parts of the economy. In contrast, in Museums, galleries and libraries collective representation is stronger, investment in skills better and hours more modest, but pay rates are more limited, workers struggle to find full-time work, and job satisfaction is low. In Music, performing and visual arts, Design, Publishing, and Screen, issues are complex and nuanced, with a need for improvement in a range of areas. So, there is work to do to advance Good Work in all Creative sub-sectors, even if priorities may be different.

Job quality for Creative freelancers is a particular concern. Self-employed Creative workers report considerable autonomy and control over their working hours and job satisfaction is high. But hours can be extremely long, unpaid work and pay dissatisfaction is high, investment in professional development low and mechanisms to enable worker voice more limited.

Further, the experience of work in the Creative Industries can vary considerably depending on age, race, disability and class. Mid-career Creative workers, disabled workers, workers from minoritised ethnic groups and from working-class backgrounds fare worse on a range of measures of job quality.
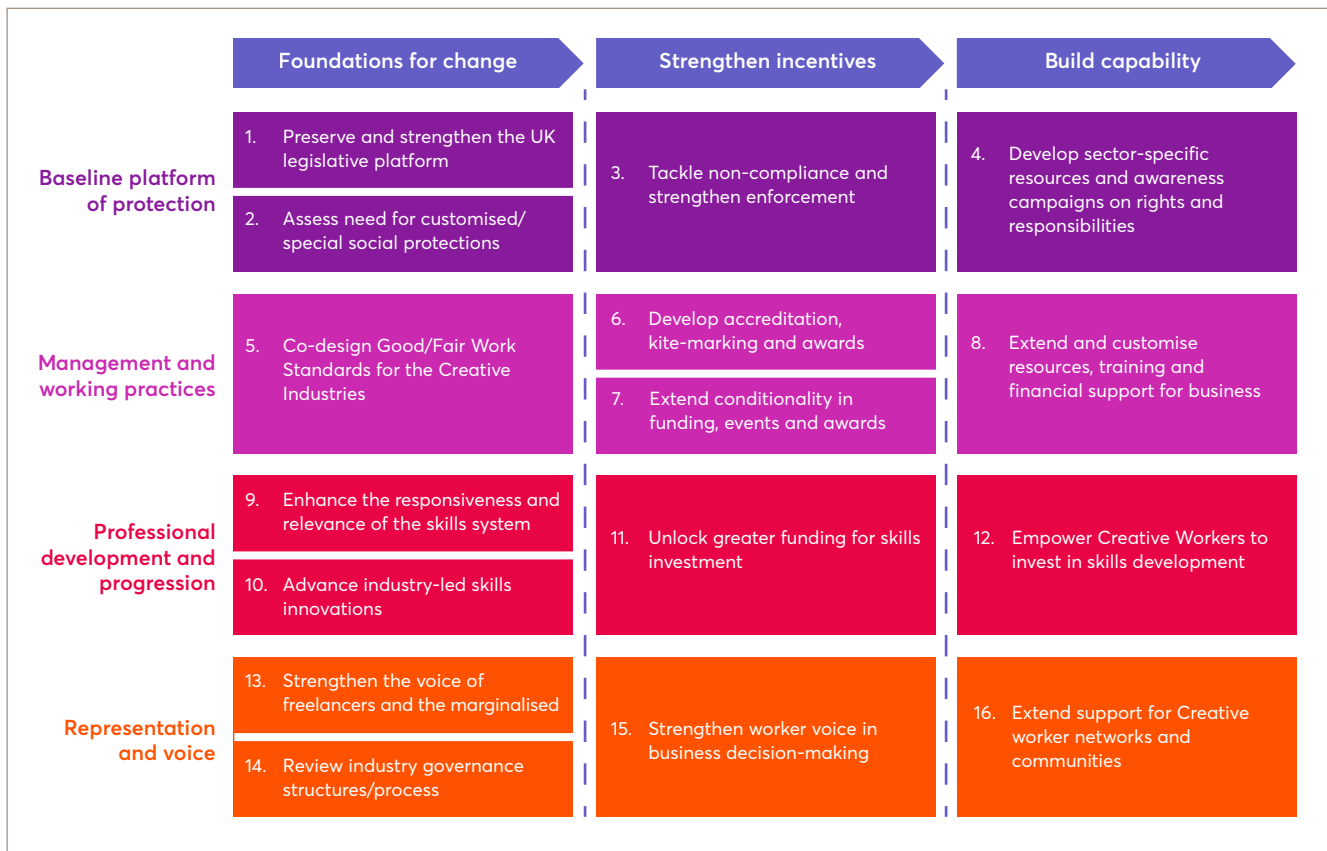
We conclude that improving job quality represents both a considerable opportunity for the Creative Industries and an imperative, to ensure their future resilience and success. Advancing Good Work will yield real dividends – for Creative workers, businesses and the UK economy – and will put the Creative Industries on a firmer footing over the long-term. There is an urgent need to safeguard what is great about work in the Creative Industries, while also mitigating the risks that Creative work presents and addressing deep-rooted inequality.

We call on Government in each nation, Industry stakeholders and Creative businesses to make explicit the commitment to advance Good Work for all Creative workers. The Review has identified four strategic priorities for achieving this in practice:

1. Strengthen the baseline platform of protection and support for Creative workers

2. Drive improvements in management and workplace practices

3. Enhance professional development and progression in the Creative Industries

4. Improve Creative worker representation and voice

Across these priorities, we identify 16 policy recommendations that seek to provide: **firm foundations** on which to build change and address a range of systemic and structural concerns; **strengthen incentives** for Creative businesses to act and take ownership; and that help to **build capacity** within the industry to deliver this and to empower Creative workers to play a central role in advancing better quality work for the next generation of Creatives. These are summarised in Figure 1, with the 'key activities' that sit under each policy recommendation set out in the pages that follow.

Figure 1. Towards Roadmaps for advancing Good Work in the Creative Industries

	Foundations for change	Strengthen incentives	Build capability
Baseline platform of protection	1. Preserve and strengthen the UK legislative platform 2. Assess need for customised/special social protections	3. Tackle non-compliance and strengthen enforcement	4. Develop sector-specific resources and awareness campaigns on rights and responsibilities
Management and working practices	5. Co-design Good/Fair Work Standards for the Creative Industries	6. Develop accreditation, kite-marking and awards 7. Extend conditionality in funding, events and awards	8. Extend and customise resources, training and financial support for business
Professional development and progression	9. Enhance the responsiveness and relevance of the skills system 10. Advance industry-led skills innovations	11. Unlock greater funding for skills investment	12. Empower Creative Workers to invest in skills development
Representation and voice	13. Strengthen the voice of freelancers and the marginalised 14. Review industry governance structures/process	15. Strengthen worker voice in business decision-making	16. Extend support for Creative worker networks and communities

These recommendations provide a basis on which to develop connected national roadmaps for advancing Good Work across the Creative sector in different parts of the UK. There will be no 'silver bullet' that will deliver this outcome, nor a 'one-size fits all' approach. Instead, we advocate for collaborative and sustained action that harnesses the Fair Work agenda in each nation, supports customisation of the approach to distinct sub-sectoral challenges and connects with place-based strategies in cities and regions across the UK.

Implementing change of this scale will require clear leadership and strong governance to build and sustain momentum, track progress and ensure accountability. We urge Government and Industry, Trade Unions, professional bodies and worker representatives in each nation to examine how best to embed these priorities and actions within established structures, such as the Creative Industries Forum in Wales and existing and forthcoming sector strategies, such as those under-development in Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Sector Vision for the Creative Industries in England.

Summary: Policy recommendations from the PEC's Good Work Review

Priority 1: Policy recommendations for strengthening the baseline platform of protection and support for Creative workers

Recommendation 1 ★

Preserve and strengthen the legislative platform of protections and rights for Creative workers – including those relating to employment, IP and corporate reporting of disparities in representation and pay.

Recommendation 2 ★

Build awareness of rights and responsibilities, customising mainstream resources and advancing targeted and tailored guidance and awareness campaigns for Creative businesses and workers.

Recommendation 3 ★

Promote compliance and strengthen enforcement of employment and IP rights and protections, working closely with pan-economy enforcement agencies and piloting Industry-led solutions.

Recommendation 4 ★

Review the adequacy of social protections for Creative freelancers, exploring the need for modernisation, customisation and 'special' schemes.

Key activities

- Preserve the current floor of employment rights that are at risk post-Brexit.
- Progress commitments to strengthen rights as set out in the UK Government Good Work Plan.
- Review the adequacy and future-readiness of the legal framework to safeguard Creators rights and drawing lessons from the Review of the Economics of Music Streaming.
- Extend corporate reporting requirements to other under-represented groups and measures of job quality; and make it mandatory to publish targets and action plans for tackling disparities.

Key activities

- Enhance the relevance and effectiveness of pan-economy resources for defining employment status and understanding rights to the needs of the Creative sector.
- Extend and unify industry-specific resources, including expanding case studies, developing an online hub for resources, and providing bespoke training and events.
- Advance targeted awareness-raising campaigns and promotional activities, working with and through key industry partners in each UK nation.
- Continue to invest in activities to build awareness of IP rights, working in close partnership with the IPO.

Key activities

- Work closely with the Director of Labour Market Enforcement, BEIS and HMRC to expand enforcement activities, targeting persistent concerns for the Creative sector.
- Complement economy-wide enforcement activities with industry-led measures, considering scope to expand coverage of the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority currently being piloted in Film, Television and Theatre.
- Engage in cross-Whitehall forums on IP enforcement and work closely with the IPO in tracking copyright infringement and ensuring demonstrable interventions for unauthorised reproduction or wider infringement of Creator rights.

Key activities

- Comprehensively review the adequacy and access to social protections for Creative freelancers.
- Advance pilots that enhance the portability of benefits, building on Access and Inclusion Passports being piloted in parts of the sector.
- Extend training and guidance for JCP Work Coaches and ensure specialist mentors have industry knowledge and experience.
- Assess the feasibility of advancing special, directed social protection schemes for Creative workers, including unconditional public transfer schemes; soft loans; flexible financial products; and insurance schemes.

Priority 2: Policy recommendations for driving improvements in management and workplace practices in the Creative Industries

Recommendation 5 ⭐

Co-design Good/Fair Work Standards for the Creative Industries, expanding and aligning existing sector-specific standards and customising national/place-based standards to reflect the distinct job quality issues in Creative sub-sectors.

Key activities

- Define 'Good'/ 'Fair' Work in the Creative Industries context and make an explicit strategic commitment to delivering this outcome.
- Customise existing Fair Work standards in the Devolved Nations for the Creative Industries context.
- Review how existing industry standards can better work together and provide a basis to establish a Good Work Standard.
- Establish core 'operating principles' to govern job quality across the Creative Industries, with stackable components to enable sub-sectoral customisation.

Recommendation 6 ⭐

Develop a tiered accreditation programme, kite-marking and awards for Creative employers that achieve Good/Fair Work Standards and establish national networks of employer advocates to champion Good/Fair Work.

Key activities

- Co-design a tiered accreditation programme and kite-marking for Creative employers working towards the Good or Fair Work standards.
- Launch industry awards to acknowledge Creative businesses that demonstrate best practice in delivering good employment standards.
- Establish a network of employer advocates who could inspire and support other Creative businesses on this journey.

Recommendation 7 ⭐

Make it a requirement for all organisations in receipt of Government or Industry funding or participating in major Creative events or awards to sign-up to Good/Fair Work principles.

Key activities

- DCMS and its Arm's Length Bodies and wider creative agencies and commissioners to make funding conditional on the adoption of Good/ Fair Work Principles/Standards.
- Extend the use of existing procurement levers (e.g., Economic Contract in Wales; Fair Work First principles in Scotland; place-based GW standards) in the Creative sector.
- Require those participating in major Creative events or awards to commit to enhancing job quality in the Creative Industries.

Recommendation 8 ⭐

Extend and customise resources and services, management development opportunities and financial support for Creative businesses to enhance their capacity to drive improvements in workplace practices.

Key activities

- Extend and better promote information, advice, resources and services available to managers, supporting the basis for ongoing workplace innovation and improvements.
- Strengthen the management training offer, ensuring it encompasses the principles of Good/ Fair Work.
- Expand financial support for Creative businesses looking to improve management and workplace practices.
- Support peer to peer learning networks of Creative businesses in each nation.

Priority 3: Policy recommendations for enhancing professional development and progression in the Creative Industries

Recommendation 9 ⭐

Enhance the relevance and responsiveness of the skills system, modernising and future-proofing the learning offer.

Recommendation 10 ⭐

Advance industry-led skills innovations to meet the distinct and rapidly changing needs of the Creative sector.

Recommendation 11 ⭐

Unlock greater funding for skills co-investment and professional development through more effective use of industry collective funds via skill levies and sector training funds.

Recommendation 12 ⭐

Empower and enable Creative workers, particularly Freelancers and diverse talent, to invest in professional development and build successful and sustainable careers in the Creative Industries.

Key activities

- Develop a common Labour Market Information (LMI) framework for identifying skill gaps, anticipating changing needs and responding to megatrends.
- Increase funding to enable employers and providers to work together to update curriculum and co-design new courses.
- Promote greater flexibility and diversity in sector-focused learning options (short, modular, stackable).
- Strengthen technical education and vocational pathways, extending funding, refreshing framework, extending pathways, enhancing flexibilities, and trialling new sector-focused initiatives (e.g., Bootcamps).

Key activities

- Extend industry-endorsed 'connected networks' of skills providers and sector-specific centres of excellence.
- Bring together academia, industry, and skills providers to update and enhance sector-focused provision and programmes in emerging skill areas.
- Further invest in technology-enabled learning options (e.g., online, blended, immersive).
- Develop stackable 'micro-credential' schemes.
- Expand sector-endorsed accreditation schemes and the use of digital badging.

Key activities

- Grant further flexibilities in the use of Apprenticeship Levy funds, particularly in England.
- Scale-up and advance new Flexi-Apprenticeship pilots, to better enable Creative businesses to make use of levy contributions.
- Examine the potential to extend and enhance industry collective measures and sector Skills Funds, including: reviewing their voluntary nature; contributions and caps; funding allocation and flexibility; and potential links with Creative Industries Tax Reliefs.

Key activities

- Review the scope for further occupational licensing, professional standards, and accreditation schemes.
- Provide holistic and personalised support for Creative freelancers and diverse talent to upskill and progress their careers.
- Expand flexible professional development funds, building on models already operating in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Work with DfE and Devolved Governments to ensure Lifelong Learning Accounts and Entitlements better benefit the sector.

Priority 4: Policy recommendations for improving Creative worker representation and voice

Recommendation 13 ★

Strengthen the voice of freelancers and marginalised groups to ensure their needs influence Government policy-making and industry practice.

Key activities

- Appoint 'Ambassadors' to represent the interests of those marginalised in the Creative Industries, including: women; disabled people; people of colour; people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups; and freelancers.

- Deploy a 'Freelancer test' when introducing new, or reviewing existing, legislation or policy measures affecting the Creative Industries, to ensure freelancer needs are being sufficiently considered.

Recommendation 14 ★

Review and extend the engagement of Creative workers and their representatives in industry governance structures and processes.

Key activities

- Review the membership of industry governance structures in each UK nation, to ensure adequate representation of Creative workers (including freelancers), newly appointed Ambassadors (see Recommendation 13) and worker representative organisations in their varying forms.

- Extend the use of independent advisory boards and consultative forums, to maximise the involvement of a diverse range of Creative workers (inc. Freelancers) in the decisions that affect their working lives.

Recommendation 15 ★

Strengthen the representation of workers in business decision-making, through enhanced representation, engagement and reporting.

Key activities

- Improve worker representation on Corporate Boards and Senior Management Teams.

- Strengthen mechanisms for worker engagement: e.g., meetings; surveys; focus groups; online forums; staff associations; consultation committees.

- Extend existing reporting systems to include metrics on: representation; remuneration; recruitment practices; retention rates; access to training; and progression, reporting data for all workers, including freelancers.

Recommendation 16 ★

Extend support for Creative worker networks, communities and representative organisations in all their forms, including social partners, informal and digital-enabled, platform-based forums.

Key activities

- Further adapt and modernise established practices for collective representation to expand membership and enhance inclusivity.

- Expand financial support for informal structures that enable collective worker representation and networking, including grassroots/place-based creative communities.

- Explore the scope to extend the use of technology and digital platforms (e.g. Worker Tech) in the Creative sector.

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.

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