

Written evidence submitted by Callum O'Toole

To the DCMS committee,

I work freelance as an Assistant Producer in broadcast television (mainly in sport), for which I am paid PAYE, and also take on occasional corporate video production work through my own company, Toolebox Films, for which I am paid as a sole trader. As a result of the social distancing measures, I have had 60 days of freelance work on UEFA football programming cancelled by one client and a further 10 cancelled by clients of Toolebox Films.

Upon hearing of the Chancellor's scheme to help the self-employed, I was initially very hopeful that it would help me through the current situation. However, my PAYE employer, CXC Global, has steadfastly refused to furlough me (citing cash flow) despite my being employed and on payroll on the government's cut off date of February 28th, and the cancellation of subsequent dates I had already been booked for. As PAYE income makes up over 90% of my total income for the period stipulated by the government, with self-employed profits accounting for the other 10%, unless I am furloughed I would be entitled to less than Universal Credit under the current guidelines for self-employed workers.

It has been especially frustrating to see people (rightly) re-hired by companies who they had already left, while my employer have decided to wash their hands of the matter for their own convenience, despite the hardship this will cause. Leaving it up to the whims of individual employers whether they furlough or not just seems incredibly unfair and arbitrary - why should someone not be entitled to the same support as an equivalent individual just because they work for a company who have proven themselves to care less about their employees?

As the joint letter from major broadcasters sent on Friday April 3rd states, I believe the fairest (and safest) way to distribute the governmental support would be to allow PAYE freelancers to include their PAYE earnings over the last three years as self-employed income for this period. While I appreciate that the actual mechanism of distribution would require some additional thought, we have all completed self-assessment returns that show exactly how much we earned through all forms of employment, so this is the clearest indicator of how much we contribute and could potentially be entitled to.

Thanks for all your support in this matter so far, I really hope something can be sorted out for the many thousands of us in this difficult position.