

Additional evidence on COVID-19: submitted by PLASA, the Professional Lighting and Sound Association

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- **There is currently almost no work for most self-employed workers in the event and entertainment industries**
 - **The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been widely welcomed by our industry**
 - **However, there are many individuals who operate as limited companies who are not eligible for the SEISS grants**
 - **They require clarity if they can use the Job Retention Scheme, and what the parameters of using this scheme will mean for them.**
1. I am writing on behalf of the Professional Lighting and Sound Association (PLASA), a membership association that represents businesses that provide technology and services to the event and entertainment industries.
 2. Our members are the force behind the scenes of all theatres, live music venues, festivals and exhibitions, and their products and services are responsible for some of the most memorable and impressive live events and productions in the world, from the Pyramid Stage of Glastonbury festival to the world-renowned Royal Albert Hall.
 3. There is no work for the majority of self-employed workers who make up a large portion of the workforce of this industry and no prospect of any work for months to come.
 4. The announcement of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been widely welcomed by our industry. It will provide many of our members with much-needed financial support as they navigate the next couple of months.
 5. However, we are concerned about the high number of individuals who operate as limited companies who have been told are not eligible for the SEISS grants yet haven't been informed of any other support available to them.
 6. These businesses are ran and owned by a sole director, they are individuals that operate the same as all other self-employed and freelance workers in the creative industries, undertaking roles such as lighting designers, sound engineers, production managers, riggers, stage managers and many other highly skilled professions.
 7. Operating as a limited company was not a choice for many of these individuals. They rely on employment by large media companies, agencies and production companies who have long insisted they incorporate as limited companies to comply with IR35 tax rules governing "off-payroll" working arrangements.

8. As a result, many former sole traders set up limited companies whilst continuing to work on a freelance basis. They have typically structured their accounts - as recommended by their accountants - so they receive around £800 per month via PAYE and take their remaining income via a taxable dividend. They are now dismayed that the way they have been forced to structure their tax affairs means they 'slip through the gaps' on any government support.
9. The Chancellor Rishi Sunak provided some hope for these individuals by stating that they *may* be able to claim support using the Job Retention Scheme, but he has produced no further information. As there is simply no work for the majority of self-employed and freelance workers, most would be willing to furlough themselves in order to benefit from the scheme.
10. **On behalf of our members and hard-working freelancers working across the industry, we are seeking:**
 - 1) **Urgent clarification from the Government that an owner-director of a limited company can furlough themselves.**
 - 2) **Guidance published for directors and their accountants, including whether individuals can continue to operate their director roles whilst furloughed, e.g. prepare accounts, access their banking, liaise with their insurers.**
 - 3) **The Government to include dividends payments in the calculation of income, for many this is where they receive a large part of their monthly income and would ensure they are remunerated equally, and in-line with their sole-trader colleagues.**
11. This is a truly desperate time for many people in the event and entertainment industry. Without urgent support many individuals will be forced to close their businesses and seek help from the Universal Credit system. These people are highly skilled, experienced creative workers and it would be a devastating loss to UK's cultural output.