

Written evidence submitted by the Midi Music Company

DCMS SC Call for Evidence COVID-19 Creative Industries

The Midi Music Company (MMC) is a twenty-five year old music education and talent development charity based in Deptford, south-east London, delivering short course programmes, music business seminars, events, bespoke outreach projects, bursary programmes, primarily for 11 – 30s and a creative industries careers advice service, CICAS®, for 16 – 30s, funded by the London Borough of Lewisham, Tom ap Rhys Pryce Memorial Trust, Jack Petchey Foundation and an Arts Council England NPO.

Q1. How has COVID-19 affected your business (or similar)? 100-250 words

The initial two months of lockdown focused on transferring our [short course programme](#), [creative industries careers advice service](#) – extending the age range from just 16 – 30 to include 31+, music bursary instrumental tuition and CICAS® Young Producers Internship online. In order to do this and ensure that all of the core team, tutors and Board remained informed we had to produce/revise our business plan for 2020/21, cashflows and budgets. The next stage was to start submitting funding applications (CAF Coronavirus and Arts Council's NPO Emergency Funds) for lost earned income (course fees, hire charges, rehearsal bookings) and cancelled or postponed projects.

The main focus for MMC was identifying the potential cashflow deficits, working with the Arts Council England and London Borough of Lewisham to release grant payments, ensuring that we had sufficient cash to immediately retain staff and self-employed contractors (furloughing staff was not an option due to the small core team - 4) and manage the technological challenge requirements; buying new software, website security and introducing online payment options. We have had to allocate money for retaining our IT & Tech Support contractor to assist with supporting staff remotely, researching and identifying the required technologies; Zoom Pro, Microsoft365, TAPForms - building a new accessible database, JetPack plugin, other software and hardware - crucial for us to programme online and stay connected. Staff have attended webinars/courses on safeguarding, social media, Google Analytics etc. It's imperative that we continue to support our staff/clients experiencing mental health issues, isolation, depression and unemployment.

Q2. How effective has government and DCMS support been? Very, effective, neutral, not, terrible with comment box below

Central government has **not been effective enough** in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable – some criteria for emergency funding hasn't been specific to arts & culture, and SEISS has excluded anyone who didn't make a profit in the previous financial year leaving them with no income at all, and Universal Credit is barely enough for people to survive, as well as taking too long to hit their bank account.

Q3. What do you think are the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on your business? 100-250 words

This is absolutely unknown at this stage considering that everything is so uncertain, but we are starting to address some of the issues that will impact MMC; cost of third-party building cleaning on a regular basis, cost of automated hand sanitizers, need to have self-flushing toilets and infrared taps (cost?), egress and ingress in the building, signing into the building, implementing directional systems for users utilising two sets of stairs (relying on users to adhere to directional flow), instrument cleaning, sanitizing computers, reduced numbers of users on courses, studio and rehearsal spaces due to social distancing, limited band rehearsal space to just two rooms; studio live and the performance hall, increased downtime between bookings to sanitize room (additional duty for Premises Coordinator and increased health risk due to use of COSHH cleaning agents), reduced number of hires and rehearsal bookings, which will impact on earned income and increased management of well-being for both staff and clients.

With live music on hold we have to consider how we will execute our regular live events, explore what our partner venues are planning to implement for artist/event management safety, review our artistic programme to incorporate more education/training on increasing royalty and online income, staying safe at gigs etc, and reducing the number of participants for our music business seminars. Travel may become an issue for touring, meetings, conferences; confined spaces in tour buses, cost of travel, impact on environment if individuals have to drive, increased insurance costs and aversions to using public transport.

Q4. What lessons should be learnt from COVID-19? 100-250 words

MMC has learned that a lot of business activity can be implemented online: meetings, courses, technical support, careers advice, e-commerce, conference and webinar participation, CPD and live streaming, which will need to become an integral part of what we do moving forward, including pre-recorded events.

Some of our clients will not use video conferencing and prefer to meet in person, which highlights a problem living in the virtual world. More money will need to be spent on keeping software and hardware up-to-date, as well as continuous training and tech support, which will all need to be factored into budgets that we don't currently have.

Working in partnership with other organisations to develop and deliver programmes has been useful to maintain industry networks and profile; Red Bull providing remote mixing for CICAS® and CAPs members, developing a song and spoken word competition with the Lewisham Council/partners, creating a London/Hull collaborative emerging artists' project, supporting young creative entrepreneurs to access finance and develop their own projects.

Maintaining good health is paramount for all staff and clients, which means not spending the working day sitting at a computer, breaking up tasks so that there is sufficient time away working offline and circulating more advice on health and well-being.

It's not always easy to manage networking online when so much time is spent in front of the computer working through the crisis – interactive meetings can be more productive, but sustaining networks and sharing information is important to understand the various lived experience.

Q5. What areas of support should DCMS focus on in the future? 100-250 words

DCMS should help organisations like ourselves to raise our profile, creating public advertising campaigns, including TV & Radio adverts paid for by the DCMS, whilst raising public/international awareness of The Culture Diary to help promote our services.

Additional funding should be allocated for the transition back to onsite delivery in order to help organisations adapt their buildings to make them more resilient to any future pandemics or lockdowns, plus allocated grants for technology upgrades.

DCMS can continue to pressure the Treasury/Prime Minister to support the self-employed and get the SEISS extended so that it includes ALL freelancers registered self-employed, recognising the contribution that the sector makes to our communities and the substantial impact of the pandemic, with television already having to broadcast re-runs and historic programmes because filming has stopped and entertainment production is on hold.

Support packages are needed for independent venues and boutique festivals, which are the 'life blood' for emerging artists. Without them our clients will have nowhere to finetune their performance skills, become sound engineers, host events, develop their fanbase or discover new music.

Finally, a visual map identifying organisations that have survived the lockdown and a list of organisations that are no longer operating would be useful, highlighting geographic, demographic, art form etc., enabling us to have a picture of where the gaps in provision are - A review of the local, regional and national creative & culture businesses, private, public and voluntary/social enterprise sectors relative to the Creative Industries Mapping Document 2001.