

Written evidence submitted by Lucia Tong

I am writing in response to the economic impact of Coronavirus. I am an individual in the arts- mostly working as a performer and dancer. My partner is a sound engineer focusing in live events.

Neither my partner nor I were eligible to either the Job Retention scheme nor the Self-employment income support scheme.

I have worked as a PAYE lecturer at a drama school which made up 52% of my income in the past 3 years. The drama school will not furlough me because I'm on a zero-hours contract and I cannot get SEISS because my self employment income was less than 50%. To my understanding, the 50% has SE requirement has been placed to stop people from being furloughed and receiving SEISS. I do not fall into this category. But I don't understand why it would be a problem even if I did. Why shouldn't I get 80% of my PAYE and 80% of my SE if that is my income? At the moment, I am not eligible to any help and quickly drying up savings. This has not caused us much distress and increased my anxiety levels which has had a negative impact on my mental well being.

My partner made an error in his 18/19 tax return. Due to simple human error, he did not click submit on the return he had filled out online Jan 31, 2020. He did not realise until he was repeated not eligible for SEISS. He immediately clicked send on the return as soon as he realised, but because it was beyond the deadline considered acceptable by the HMRC, he is not eligible to the scheme. I understand the government is trying to limit fraud, but I believe certain situations must be considered on a case by case basis.

Changes need to be made to support everyone who has been effected by Covid. Perhaps one way is to give a one off grant to people who have not received furlough, nor SEISS, nor any income in the past months. I would be happy to support my application with recent bank statements to show lack of income and exhibit need.

We are both in the performing arts and live events industry. All of our work has been completely cancelled since March and it is still unclear how our industries will recover. We do not know when we will be able to go back to work to make money to support our family. The creative sector is a part of UK's heritage and economy. It has been very hard hit and needs extra support to help many individuals, businesses and organisations if we are meant to thrive and continue to be a leader in the arts in the world.

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