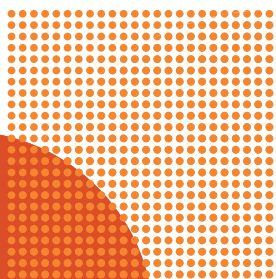
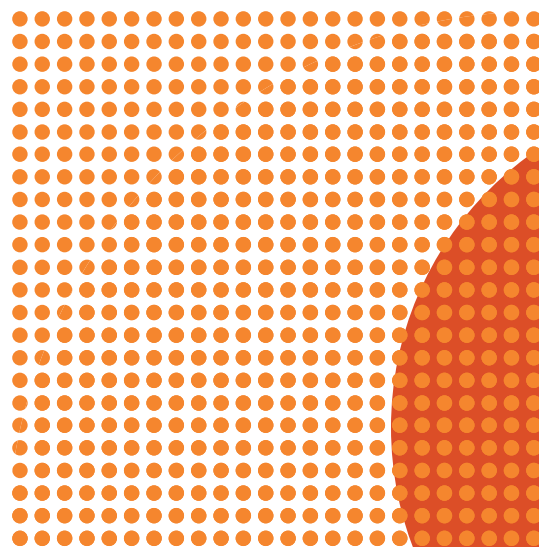


Mapping support for creative freelancers

West Midlands | March 2023



West Midlands
Combined Authority



Cultural
Leadership
Board

Photographs: Top - Highly Sprung, photograph by Andy Moore. Bottom - BCT, Auden Allen at What's In Store, photograph by Anand Chhabra.



China Plate, Yvette by Urielle Klein-Mekongo, photograph by Bronwen Sharp



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Report written by Jenny Smith, with support from Isaac Boothman, Curiosity Productions Ltd.

Commissioned by the Cultural Leadership Board of the West Midlands Combined Authority

Designed by [We Can Create](#)

With input from organisations and freelancers in the West Midlands who provide support to creative freelancers

A full list of contributors is in [Appendix B](#).



Contents

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Findings | 7 |
| 2. Analysis | 7 |
| The gaps | 8 |
| The challenges | 10 |
| The opportunities | 11 |
| 3. Conclusion and recommendations | 12 |
| a. Short-term actions | 12 |
| b. Actions that require funding and time to develop | 13 |

1. Introduction and context

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| a. Scope | 15 |
| b. Background | 15 |
| c. Context | 17 |
| d. Definitions | 19 |
| i) Freelancers | 19 |
| ii) Cultural sector and creatives | 19 |
| iii) West Midlands | 19 |
| iv) Systemically marginalised | 19 |
| v) Equity, access and inclusion | 20 |

2. Methodology

3. The Data

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| a. Where and when support takes place | 23 |
| b. Who support is for | 25 |
| c. What support is offered | 27 |

3. Findings

| | |
|---|----|
| a. Membership organisations | 31 |
| i) National | 31 |
| ii) Regional | 31 |
| b. Networks | 35 |
| c. Training and development programmes | 36 |
| d. Mentoring and one-to-one advice | 39 |
| i) Mentoring | 39 |
| ii) One-to-one advice | 39 |
| e. Funding and commissions | 40 |
| f. Practical support (workspace, equipment, platforms, producing, signposting to paid work) | 40 |
| i) Workspace and equipment | 42 |
| ii) Platforms | 44 |
| iii) Producing | 44 |
| iv) Signposting to paid work | 44 |
| g. Information and guidance | 45 |
| h. Care and wellbeing | 45 |

Contents

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| 5. Analysis | 48 | 6. Conclusion and Recommendations | 59 |
| a. Training and development programmes | 48 | a. Short-term actions | 59 |
| The gaps | 49 | b. Actions that require funding and time to develop | 60 |
| The challenges | 49 | | |
| The opportunities | 49 | | |
| b. Mentoring and One-to-one advice | 50 | | |
| The gaps | 51 | 7 Appendices | 62 |
| The challenges | 51 | Appendix A: West Midlands Freelancer support database | 62 |
| The opportunities | 51 | Appendix B: Contributors to the mapping research | 63 |
| c. Universities and colleges | 52 | Appendix C: Research and reports relevant to this report | 64 |
| The gaps | 53 | | |
| The challenges | 53 | | |
| The opportunities | 53 | | |
| d. Support at different career stages | 54 | | |
| The gaps | 55 | | |
| The challenges | 55 | | |
| The opportunities | 55 | | |
| e. Support for systemically marginalised creatives | 56 | | |
| The gaps | 57 | | |
| The challenges | 57 | | |
| The opportunities | 57 | | |



China Plate, To The Streets! photograph by Simon Hadley

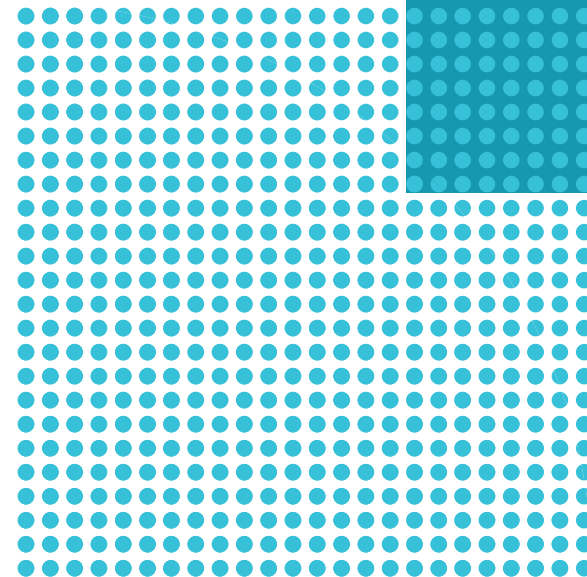
Executive summary

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) contracted Curiosity Productions to map support for freelancers in the cultural sector and creative industries in the region. The analysis within this report is based on research carried out by Curiosity Productions over a period of 5 weeks in February and March 2023.

The main purpose of the mapping is to provide an overall picture of the support and resources currently available to freelancers in the region, and to identify potential gaps or opportunities. This report will inform a potential regional cultural strategy and help direct strategic decision making around development of any future support for freelancers.



Photograph provided by Talking Birds



1. Findings

There are several types of support available to creative freelancers in the region. These range from national membership organisations and unions that charge monthly or annual fees, to regular or one-off training programmes. Training and development programmes cover a wide range of topics and themes, including creative practice, business skills and wellbeing, and often include mentoring support. There is a huge amount of ad-hoc one-to-one advice or mentoring given by professionals in the sector, often outside of any formal structure or program.

The database in [Appendix A](#) lists all the individual identifiable support offers that the team were able to uncover during the five weeks of this project.

2. Analysis

There is a wealth of training and development available to freelancers in the cultural sector and creative industries in the West Midlands. All artforms and practices within the cultural sector have opportunities available, with many open to all artforms and practices. There is unsurprisingly a higher concentration (approximately 56%) of regional offers based in Birmingham. There is a relatively even split between online, hybrid and in-person opportunities and resources. Many of the online offers are information resources. There is a strong return to in-person training and networking events, having been solely online throughout much of 2020 and 2021.

Many of the most consistent offers are only accessible if you are willing and able to pay for it, often through a regular membership payment. This includes some online resources which membership organisations put behind their paywall. There are some really great examples of subsidised training and development

programmes that have had significant benefits for freelancers. Some have been offered free to all participants or to people who either have low incomes and/or those who experience barriers to opportunities due to systemic marginalisation. Some programmes also offer bursaries to compensate for travel, access costs and working time lost.



The gaps

- Accessible and affordable training and development offers that are consistently delivered on a regular repeated basis across all artforms and practice areas, and across the geographical areas of the region are limited.
- Outside of membership organisations and formal training and development programmes, there is no clear route to finding a mentor or accessing one-to-one advice. This results in an inequitable system where only people with existing relevant networks get signposted through word of mouth to people who could help them.
- A lot of informal support is given unpaid and therefore capacity is limited.
- Providing extra, unpaid, unsupported time could result in burnout. Many of the people providing this support are some of the best, most experienced, most open and supportive creatives in the sector, and it is important they are also supported to ensure they do not suffer as a consequence of their altruism and are not lost to the sector.
- None of the people within the universities we spoke to were aware of any programmes that directly support students once they finish their course of study.
- The cost and time commitment for higher education and postgraduate courses can be a barrier for freelance creatives.
- Opportunities for entry and early career creatives often target an under 25 demographic. This excludes anyone making a career change into the sector and anyone returning to the sector after a significant life event, such as maternity, parenting, or illness.
- Most of the people providing informal advice and support are not clear on where they could signpost for some of the practical needs of the creatives they are supporting, and are often freelancers or small organisations themselves with little capacity to seek it out.
- Whilst some progress has been made over the last few years there is still discrimination and marginalisation in society and the sector.
- Much of the work to make change is being done by people who are also having to break down the same barriers for themselves.
- Whilst there are an increasing number of organisations that are taking an equitable approach to provide subsidised opportunities, sliding scales on fees, with access costs covered for those who need it, this is not always standard practice.
- People who already face systemic barriers are even less likely to have the resources and capacity to navigate and access the complex and relatively hidden support opportunities that are available.



F13 Network, photograph provided by Talking Birds

The challenges

- The funding system is structured to encourage new and different projects, not repeat and build on things that have been done before.
- The majority of one-to-one advice and some mentoring support happens informally, under the radar. It is difficult to quantify.
- As there is no formal structure, it is only people who are willing to give up their time, and who are known in the sector to do so, that get approached for advice. Therefore a relatively small number of people are holding this responsibility, which makes for a very fragile system.
- Opportunities for people entering the sector or very early in their career are the hardest to promote and recruit for, particularly for smaller organisations and freelancers with limited resources and capacity.
- Early career creatives are the least networked and quite often don't know what they don't know, or what support they might need, until they come up against a specific challenge.
- Individuals who are systemically marginalised face even greater barriers to accessing support.
- Individuals who do not have an additional income source or financial support will have less capacity to take on very low paid opportunities, like minimum pay apprenticeships or training that does not come with a bursary to cover time.
- A disjointed sector with poorly resourced communication and marketing contributes to the sector failing to diversify the work that is made and the stories that are told. It is a major contributing factor to the lack of representation of systemically marginalised people on stages, screens, pages, in gallery spaces and on digital devices. It is part of the system that marginalises people.
- The dominant communication channel in the sector is word of mouth. People who know someone, who knows someone, get to find out about the opportunities and get signposted to the people who can help them.
- A lot of the people providing support, especially the informal one-to-one advice are deeply committed to equity, access and inclusion. They also largely lack the capacity to communicate what they offer to the people they most want to support, or who most need that support.
- Vulnerable and marginalised people are more likely to have experienced trauma. Most people participating in personal and professional development need care and nurturing alongside the practical support. That takes time and energy which is often not budgeted into plans and projects.

The opportunities

- There is a huge wealth of expertise and many brilliant training providers in the region across all creative sectors and geographical areas, many of whom are practicing creative freelancers themselves, who have worked with various organisations and funders to deliver training programmes in the past.
- There could be a collaborative approach across the sector and region to curate a training and development programme from all of the great work that has recently and is currently taking place, that ensures there is a consistent offer that fills any current gaps in regular provision in terms of artform/practice or geographical access.
- There are many very skilled and experienced creatives in the region with 10-20+ years of experience, who are very willing and able to share knowledge and give support and guidance.
- With some financial resources and coordination capacity, there could be a more equitable and accessible process for matching freelancers with the right person to provide them with mentoring or one-to-one advice.
- Modular and stackable course offers from universities, particularly at postgraduate level, could open up learning opportunities for a wider demographic. This links directly to recommendations around professional development and progression in *The Good Work Review*¹
- There is interest within educational institutions to explore whether there could be a collaborative approach with the cultural sector to provide more structured support for creative students after they graduate.
- There is interest within the regional universities to explore how they could strengthen their relationship with freelance creatives in their locality.
- There could be advocacy within the sector to ensure that anyone providing entry level support checks whether it is an essential requirement of their funding for it to be targeted at a specific age group. Wider advocacy could take place to encourage funders to offer support with outcomes based on meeting needs rather than reaching people of a specific age.
- With a joined-up communication and PR campaign, backed by the shared resources of the sector, information about opportunities could be taken directly to the people that need to know about it. This can be both through mainstream communication like billboards and digital advertising, and through community connectors and partners. Paying for partners who are already embedded in communities, to connect people to the opportunities on offer, whose stories and lived experiences need to be better represented in the sector.
- There is a groundswell of people who really do want to make the sector more equitable, accessible and inclusive.

¹ **The Good Work Review:** Job Quality in the Creative Industries (2023) Carey, H, Giles, L & O'Brien, D

3. Conclusion and recommendations

The cultural sector is an interdependent and relatively fragile eco-system. It has the ability to adapt over time, but any sudden change to any part of the sector will impact all of it. Freelancers are the pollinators of the sector, carrying skills and ideas between organisations, networks and practices, always feeding and nurturing the whole. Without freelancers the sector would wither and die. The working lifespan of a freelancer can be 50+years. During that time they will potentially go through several stages of metamorphosis. Their needs will vary during that time, and there will be key moments when they need additional input in order to develop and grow, but this will be different for every person. There is no one-size-fits-all solution – every freelancer needs a range of inputs to nurture them, throughout their career, in addition to their core sustenance of paid work.

The system of support for creative freelancers that currently exists does not just support survival of the fittest; it supports survival of the best connected and most privileged. There are cultural connectors that reach out and pro-

actively break down the barriers of systemic marginalisation. Every part of the sector needs to create more robust systems and procedures that ensure information and opportunities are reaching beyond those who are already connected and networked in order to ensure a rich diversity of practice that will nurture the entire sector.

There is a wealth of support out there if you know where to look, and especially if you have the finances to pay for it. One easy way to make the existing system of support more equitable is to coordinate communication of the offers that already exist to make it easier to navigate. The analysis in this report and the resulting recommendations are for the entire sector to consider. They are not something that the WMCA can or should address alone.

A collaborative and regenerative approach to sharing resources and co-curating opportunities that are equitable, accessible and inclusive will benefit both freelancers and the wider sector.

a. Short-term actions

- Convene a meeting of representatives of the universities and colleges in the region to explore what role they can play in both supporting their students as they enter into a creative freelance career, and the creative freelancers in their local areas.
- Convene a meeting that invites everyone who has participated in the mapping process and the wider sector to explore the findings and recommendations from the mapping process. Develop a shared strategy and action plan for supporting creative freelancers in the region.

b. Actions that require funding and time to develop

These recommendations will need to be reviewed at the proposed meetings identified above.

- Use the regenerative and distributive models such as *Doughnut Economics*² to model any programmes of support that are developed.
- Use the database produced through this mapping process as the starting point for an online resource, listing support available for freelance creatives in the region.
- Pilot a cross region, cross sector process for curating a programme of training and development, building on and including existing / recent programmes, that have access, equity, inclusion, care and sustainability as core values. Involve freelancers in the design and delivery of this programme.
- Explore the feasibility for creation of a freelancer development fund, which enables individuals to apply for free places on training and development programmes, to pay for a mentor and/or to get access support.
- Create a platform that lists individuals who are available to provide mentoring and one-to-one advice in the region, with a sliding scale of fees, and fair pay to all freelancers providing mentoring and advice. Mentoring fees could be subsidised by the proposed freelancer development fund.
- Support more skilled and experienced freelancers to share their knowledge and join the proposed mentoring platform by delivering mentoring/ coaching training.
- Ensure sufficient resources are allocated to marketing and communication of any support offers. Ensure that this marketing is targeted to reach people who do not normally access these opportunities by working with partners who have direct connections to people who are under-represented and under-resourced in the sector.
- Pay partners, ambassadors, and community connectors to promote these opportunities.
- Organisations providing support and development opportunities to freelancers to have a sliding scale of fees and/or bursaries for opportunities, that includes support for access costs. This could be supported by the suggested freelance development fund.
- Where practical, include a barter system/skills exchange system for people who wish to give and receive support without the need for cash to exchange hands. This must always be negotiated fairly and be mutually beneficial - e.g. mentoring sessions provided in exchange for help with social media.
- Develop a train-the-trainer programme or toolkit that shares the best practice of organisations already doing great work to support systemically marginalised creatives.
- Work collaboratively across all artforms and areas of practice to build a more coherent, regenerative, equitable and inclusive creative ecology across the region.

² Kate Raworth (2017) *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*



Photograph provided by Alison Grade

1. Introduction and context

a. Scope

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) contracted Curiosity Productions to map support for freelancers in the cultural sector and creative industries in the region.

The main purpose of the mapping is to provide an overall picture of the support and resources currently available to freelancers in the region, and to identify potential gaps or opportunities. This report will inform a potential regional cultural strategy and help direct strategic decision making around development of any future support for freelancers.

The mapping captures support such as mentoring, training, seminars, information sources, networks, advocacy, workspace and equipment provision, micro-commissions for developing work, and funding. The mapping does not include employment of freelancers, or commissions for work that will be part of a program for a public audience, as this is considered a purchase of services, not support.

The research focused on existing support that has, is currently, or will in the near future be provided to freelancers in the West Midlands. This mapping focuses primarily on delivery within the WMCA area with some resources from across the wider West Midlands and nationally.

b. Background

The WMCA Cultural Leadership Board (CLB) was initiated by the West Midlands Combined Authority Board in 2019. CLB had its first meeting in February 2020 and its remit is to operate as an advisory board to the WMCA on all matters relating to arts, culture and heritage.













As part of its operations, the CLB has established a number of working groups, which focus on some of the key issues impacting the cultural sector. One of the working groups is currently looking at how the WMCA could play a role in supporting the cultural and creative sector freelancers in the area.

The WMCA appointed [Curiosity Productions](#) to carry out this mapping work in February 2023 following a tender process. Curiosity Productions are a multi-artform producing company based in Wolverhampton. They produce accessible and inclusive creative events and opportunities that nurture, develop and raise the profile of creatives, artists, and local communities. Creative Director Jenny Smith has been working in the cultural sector for 23 years, and has been freelance for 11 years. Jenny and Curiosity Productions have a commitment to supporting the personal, professional and practice development of creatives in the region, particularly those who are underrepresented in the sector due to systemic marginalisation.

West Midlands Cultural Sector

2,138

spaces hosting and supporting cultural and creative activities and initiatives regularly

-  **113** museums & galleries
-  **74** drama & dance theatres
-  **158** live music venues
-  **39** cinemas
-  **682** community spaces with cultural programming
-  **268** dedicated creative education spaces
-  **171** libraries
-  **28** artists studio sites
-  **13** makerspaces
-  **10** film/photo studios
-  **10,500+** Heritage sites and buildings
-  **117** of which are 'at risk'

16,320 people employed directly in the cultural sector
+ up to 50% freelancer headcount
= 24,480 potential employment

 **+20%** employment growth in the last 5yrs
 Relative **lack of diversity** amongst the cultural sector workforce

£1.1bn cultural sector's total economic footprint

 **22,700** jobs supported by cultural sector's activity (including indirect & induced impacts)
 **1.2%** of WMCA's economy supported by the cultural sector

28 million visits to the WMCA area attributable to culture

 **£2.3bn** visitor expenditure attributable to cultural sector
 **1 in 47** jobs in the WMCA area supported by cultural tourism

Wider Social Value Generated by Cultural Sector

-  Health & Wellbeing
-  Skills Development
-  Widening Access & Participation
-  Value of Volunteering
-  Attractiveness & Distinctiveness of Place

West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis³

c. Context

The economic footprint of the cultural sector in the WMCA area (excluding film, television and wider creative industries) is £1.1 billion. It is estimated that the cultural sector directly supports 16,320 employed jobs, with approximately 8,000 additional freelance roles. The sector also supports a further 22,700 jobs indirectly. A total of 28 million tourism visits to the WMCA area are attributable to culture – generating £2.8 billion of visitor expenditure (figures from 2021).

The wider Creative Industries and cultural sector is valued at £4.83bn GVA across the wider West Midlands region.⁴ The UK had an estimated 2.87 million creative industries and cultural jobs in the year to September 2020, including 1.83 million employed roles and 1.05 million self-employed. In the wider West Midlands for that year, there were 168,000 employed roles and 105,000 self-employed, with 21,000 employed and 20,000 self-employed in the cultural sector alone.⁵ The Musicians' Union stated that 85% of their members are freelance.

Significant features of the region are:

- Major performance organisations and venues - including Royal Shakespeare Company and Birmingham Royal Ballet;
- Film Birmingham, studio facilities, location services for high-end production and a 700-strong freelance database;
- Largest high-value designer-maker, jewellery and crafts cluster in the UK, (includes hand-crafting for automotive industry) in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham;
- Significant creative and digital cluster in Digbeth, Birmingham, one of the largest in the UK;
- Nationally significant games cluster centred on Leamington Spa, with more than 10% of UK gaming jobs.

“One of the defining features of the creative industries is a high reliance on freelancers whether that is in film, design, tech or the arts. 32% of the creative industries workforce as a whole is self-employed (including freelancers), compared with 16% of the UK workforce”

(Oct 2019 - Sept 2020, [DCMS](#), 2021).” - Easton, E., Beckett, B.⁶

³ [West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis 2021](#) by Hatch, We Made That and Tom Flemming Creative Consultancy.

⁴ [DCMS provisional figures for 2019](#) DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2019: Regional GVA - Headline Release - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

⁵ [DCMS Sector Economic Estimates](#): Employment Oct 2019 - Sep 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

⁶ Easton, E., Beckett, B. (2021) [Freelancers in the Creative Industries](#). Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, Available from: <https://pec.ac.uk/policy-briefings/freelancers-in-the-creative-industries>

In 2020, Arts Council England (ACE) published their Let's Create strategy which has a commitment to increasing support for individuals.⁷ They increased their budget for the Developing Your Creative Practice fund to £22.4 million for 2021/22. Across the WMCA area 39, National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) have made a commitment to supporting freelancers in the most recent NPO round for funding - April 2023 to March 2026. Several of ACE's Investment Principles Support Organisations regionally and nationally provide support for freelancers. ACE have added questions within their Project Grant application process to count how many freelancers are involved in the projects they fund. They are also planning to do a nationwide survey of freelancers, this piece of work is currently out to tender.

Many freelancers have portfolio careers and multiple income sources that sometimes include part-time employed work. The COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted the lack of support and protection for freelancers and self-employed workers and had a massive impact on the entire cultural sector. There has been an estimated 55,000 job losses (a 30% decline) in music, performing and visual arts, and significantly higher

than average numbers of people leaving creative occupations compared to previous years.⁸ The cost of living crisis, impacts of Brexit and limited available funding continue to present challenges to the sector as a whole and potentially have a disproportionate impact on freelancers whose work relies on funds available to organisations after all core costs have been allocated from budgets. Freelancers also present an opportunity for organisations to bring in specific skills and expertise on a flexible basis where they may have lost core staff with those skills due to recent financial challenges or wish to revitalise and diversify their programming to meet current challenges and audience demand.

In addition to the planned freelancer survey by Arts Council England, there are several other research projects focused on creative freelancers that are currently or about to take place. Most of these focus on the experience of freelancers and their working conditions. A list of research that has been referred to whilst carrying out this project is included in [Appendix C](#).

⁷ [Let's Create](#) | Arts Council England (2020)

⁸ [Cultural and creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre](#) | A jobs crisis in the cultural and creative industries (pec.ac.uk)



d. Definitions

i) Freelancers

For the purposes of this project ‘freelancers’ will be defined as anyone who makes some or all of their annual earned income from working in the cultural sector or creative industries as a sole trader or independent contractor. This could include people who are registered as self-employed for tax purposes, the sole director of a micro business, or someone on a fixed-term contract. This could be in addition to holding part-time employed role(s) within or outside of the sector.

ii) Cultural sector and creatives

This project uses a wide definition of the cultural sector to encompass:

- visual arts (including painting & sculpture)
- performing arts (dance, theatre & music)
- literature (including creative writing, poetry, storytelling and spoken word)
- film
- photography
- crafts
- digital arts
- museums, libraries, archives, heritage

- and the historic environment
- cultural festivals
- cultural education
- popular and grassroots culture

The activities of the CLB and WMCA also sometimes overlap with the wider creative industries based on the DCMS definition:

“those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”⁹

In this report the term ‘creatives’ is used to encompass anyone within the sector who applies creativity to their role. This includes artists, designers, producers, curators, technicians, project managers, programmers, stage managers, activists and cultural connectors.

iii) West Midlands

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area includes the following local authority areas:

- City of Wolverhampton
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Council

- Coventry City Council
- Warwick District Council
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- East Staffordshire District Council
- Lichfield District Council
- Wyre Forest District Council
- Bromsgrove District Council

When referring to the wider West Midlands in this report this also encompasses the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire in addition to the local authority areas listed above.

iv) Systemically marginalised

Systemically marginalised people are those who are more likely to have their opportunities and life choices limited by structural and institutional discrimination against their race, gender, sexuality, religion or disability. This will include, but is not limited to, those who identify

as deaf or hard of hearing, disabled, neurodivergent, LGBTQI+, and people who experience racism, including people of African, Caribbean or Latinx heritage, people of South Asian, East Asian, or South East Asian heritage, people of Middle Eastern Heritage, people of Romany or Irish Traveller heritage and people of Jewish heritage.

The WMCA and Curiosity Productions are aware that language about identity is complex.

We use the social model of disability¹⁰ that addresses the barriers put in place by social systems that disable people. We use the term disabled people to acknowledge that it is the physical and attitudinal barriers put in place by society that exclude disabled people, not their impairment.

There is much debate about the use of D/deaf. We have used the most recent advice we have been given which is to use the term deaf or hard of hearing.

Neurodivergent is a term used to acknowledge that neurological differences are normal variations rather than disorders. A person might define themselves as neurodivergent if they are autistic, dyslexic, experience ADHD or Tourette's.

We use the term racially marginalised to acknowledge that it is racism that limits people's opportunities, not their cultural heritage or skin colour.

LGBTQI+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and more. This also encompasses people who define as non-binary and prefer the pronouns they/them. We acknowledge that people have intersectional identities and that this can multiply and amplify their experiences of marginalisation.

v) Equity, access and inclusion

Equity¹¹ is used in this report rather than equality as there are different needs and starting points, therefore people need different levels of support and subsidy in order to receive the same benefit. Equality offers everyone the same support; equity provides more support to those who need it most.

Access is a broad term to encompass any measure that needs to be put in place to remove barriers and make an opportunity equitable. This can include:

- Removing physical barriers, such as ensuring level access to a space, or minimising the potential for sensory

overload.

- Removing financial barriers such as travel and childcare costs.
- Practical support provision such as an interpreter (BSL or any spoken language) or a personal assistant

Access is also about having a process in place to ask everyone involved in a project or activity what their needs are and what can be put in place to enable them to be their best.

Inclusion is the process of ensuring that a space is provided where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and everyone is valued, safe and cared for, and able to participate on their own terms.

⁹ [DCMS Sector Economic Estimates Methodology](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-sector-economic-estimates-methodology) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁰ [What is the Social Model of Disability?](#) | Shape Arts

¹¹ [Equity vs Equality: What's the Difference?](#) (globalcitizen.org)

2. Methodology

The analysis within this report is based on research carried out by Curiosity Productions over a period of 5 weeks in February and March 2023. A mapping framework was developed by Curiosity Productions with input from WMCA and the Freelancer Working Group of the WMCA Culture Leadership Board (CLB).

Jenny Smith carried out 27 interviews with individuals who deliver support to freelancers in the region, either as freelancers themselves or as part of their role within their organisation. In addition, a survey was sent out to contacts who did not have the capacity to meet within the timeframe of the project, and this was also shared through the social media channels of Curiosity Productions and WMCA. There were 14 responses to the survey and several people who also provided additional information by email.

The Curiosity Productions team also carried out online research, utilising their existing knowledge and networks, and following up from leads given to them by people they interviewed and by the CLB Freelancer Working Group.

Every type of support available to freelancers that has been identified during this mapping research has been compiled into a spreadsheet database. There is a link to the database in **Appendix A**. Examples of support identified through the mapping process have been highlighted in this written report to illustrate the variety of support available. Not every support offer is included in the written report. Whether a specific programme or offer is included in the written report is not a reflection of the perceived quality or value placed on any particular support offer or programme.

Curiosity Productions and the WMCA acknowledge that the database of support is not an exhaustive list. It is everything that the team were able to identify within the time constraints of this mapping project and is correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of publishing this report in March 2023. It must be noted that all support that was found through this research has been listed and has not been curated or assessed for quality. Facebook groups in particular may vary in quality and relevance.

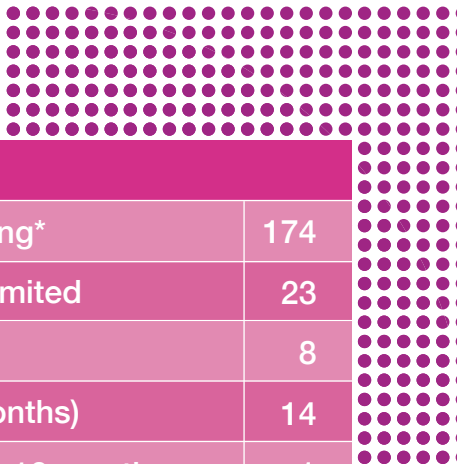
Curiosity Productions are very happy to receive information about any other relevant support that has not been included within the mapping database, or any amendments that are needed to items already listed. They will continue to maintain the database, as it is a useful resource for the freelancers and organisations that they work with. They will release an updated version when there have been significant changes.

One of the recommendations of this report is that further work is carried out to explore the feasibility of turning this database into an open access online resource that can be updated by the support providers. Additional resources would need to be in place in order to achieve this.

3. The data

The database in Appendix A lists all the individual identifiable support offers that the team were able to uncover during the five weeks of this project. The focus was on regional provision, with the inclusion of major national support organisations or programs where they served a significant proportion of the sector, for example unions. A small number of support offers have been included that are not sector specific, where they offered business skills and support.

There will be a lot of national support offers and sources of information that have not been included in the database, and it is likely that some regional offers have also been missed, but the team is confident that this mapping provides a good overview and snapshot of what is available. The database currently lists 220 offers of support that are available to creative freelancers in the West Midlands, delivered by 138 organisations, individuals or collectives. There is also a separate tab listing 33 Facebook groups. Some organisations have several data entries that list each separate support offer they deliver.



| Timeframe | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Current – ongoing* | 174 |
| Current - time limited | 23 |
| Future | 8 |
| Past (last 12 months) | 14 |
| Past (more than 12 months) | 1 |

*Ongoing includes annual repeated programmes

a. Where and when support takes place

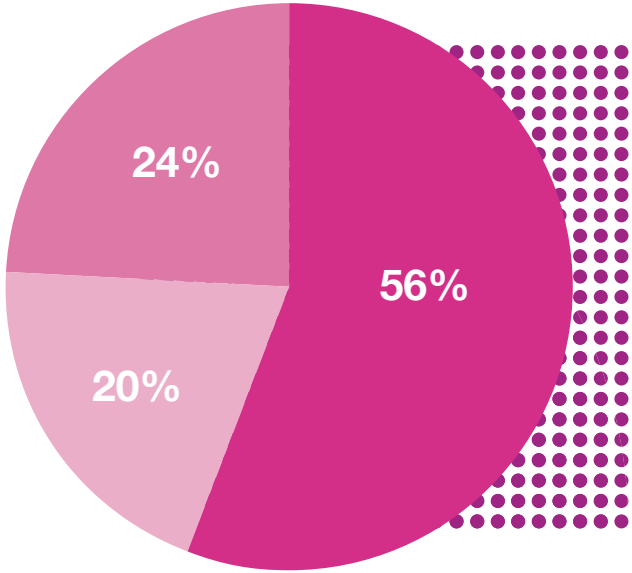
| Location - activity | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| National | 95 |
| Birmingham | 52 |
| Wider West Midlands | 15 |
| Coventry | 12 |
| Wolverhampton | 9 |
| Coventry & Warwickshire | 8 |
| Black Country | 6 |
| Midlands | 5 |
| Warwick | 4 |
| Greater Birmingham & Solihull | 3 |
| Walsall | 3 |
| Solihull | 3 |
| Dudley | 1 |
| Sandwell | 1 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | 1 |
| Shropshire | 1 |
| Staffordshire | 1 |
| WMCA area | 0 |
| International | 0 |

| Location - participants | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| National | 105 |
| Birmingham | 3 |
| Wider West Midlands | 69 |
| Coventry | 3 |
| Wolverhampton | 0 |
| Coventry and Warwickshire | 12 |
| Black Country | 7 |
| Midlands | 12 |
| Warwick | 0 |
| Greater Birmingham and Solihull | 1 |
| Walsall | 0 |
| Solihull | 3 |
| Dudley | 0 |
| Sandwell | 0 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | 1 |
| Shropshire | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 1 |
| WMCA area | 1 |
| International | 2 |

| Location - activity | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| East and West Midlands total | 125 |
| West Midlands total | 120 |
| WMCA area total | 103 |
| Black Country total | 20 |
| Coventry and Warwickshire total | 25 |
| Greater Birmingham and Solihull total | 58 |

| Location - participants | |
|--|-----|
| East and West Midlands total | 113 |
| West Midlands only total | 101 |
| WMCA area only total | 31 |
| Black Country only total | 7 |
| Coventry and Warwickshire only total | 16 |
| Greater Birmingham and Solihull only total | 7 |

Location of offers in WMCA area



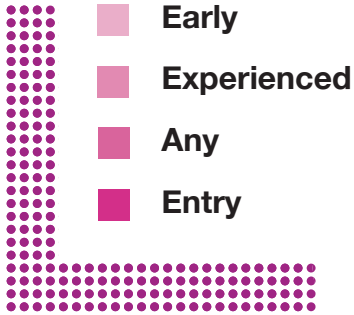
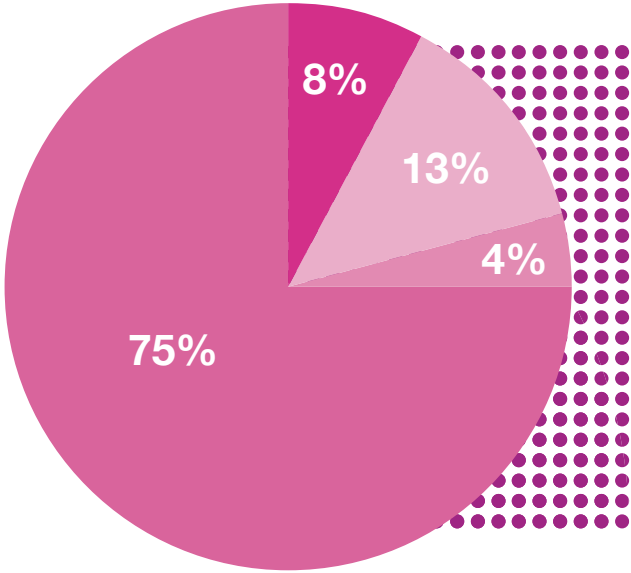
b. Who the support is for

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Freelancers | 134 |
| Anyone | 86 |

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Culture/ creative industries | 201 |
| Any sector | 19 |

| Career stage | |
|--------------|-----|
| Any | 165 |
| Early | 29 |
| Entry | 17 |
| Experienced | 9 |

Offers by career stage



| Targeted offers | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Racially marginalised | 16 |
| Systemically marginalised | 12 |
| Youth (under 25/30) | 12 |
| Disabled | 6 |
| Women and non-binary | 5 |
| Neurodiverse | 3 |
| LGBTQI+ | 2 |
| Working class | 2 |
| Deaf or hard of hearing | 1 |

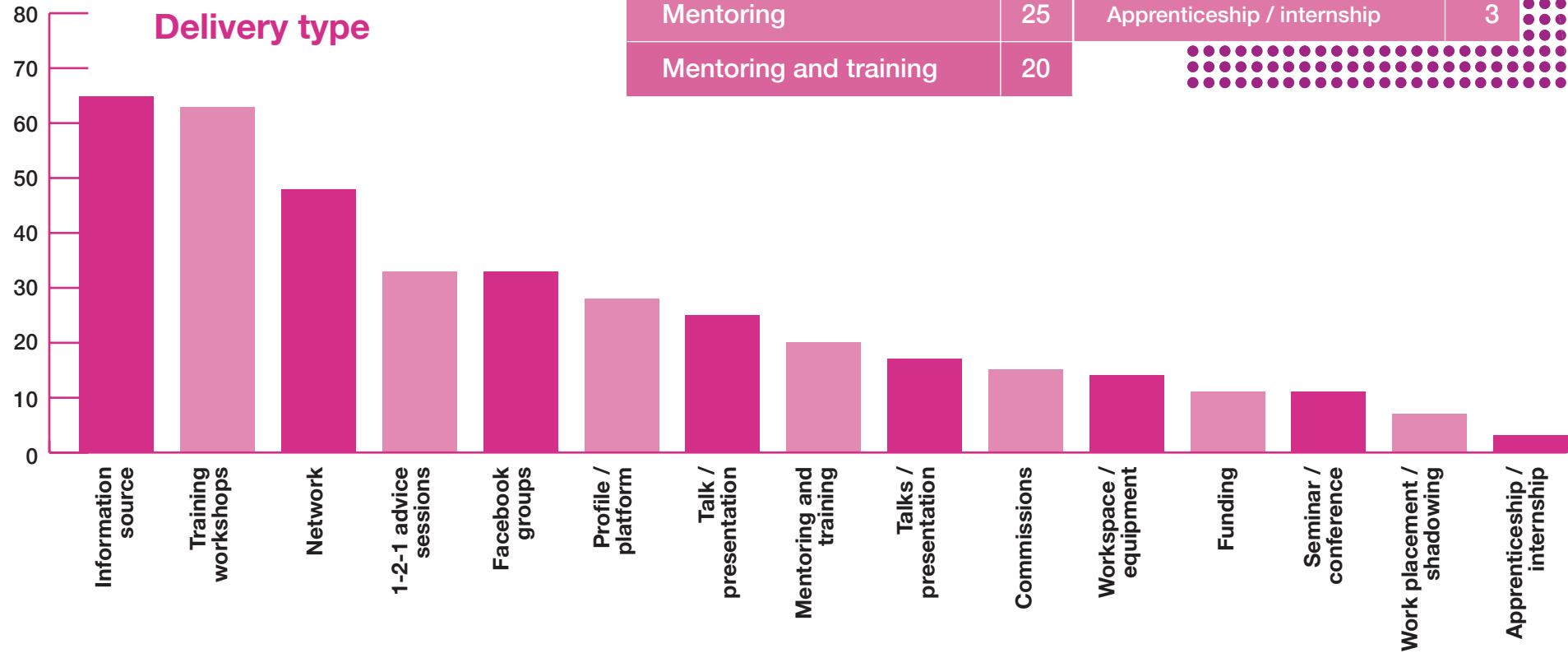


Targeted offers

Note on specific target groups - in addition to the programmes that have been identified and counted in this data there are many programmes that provide access information and/or support, and are pro-active in making their offers inclusive.

c. What support is offered

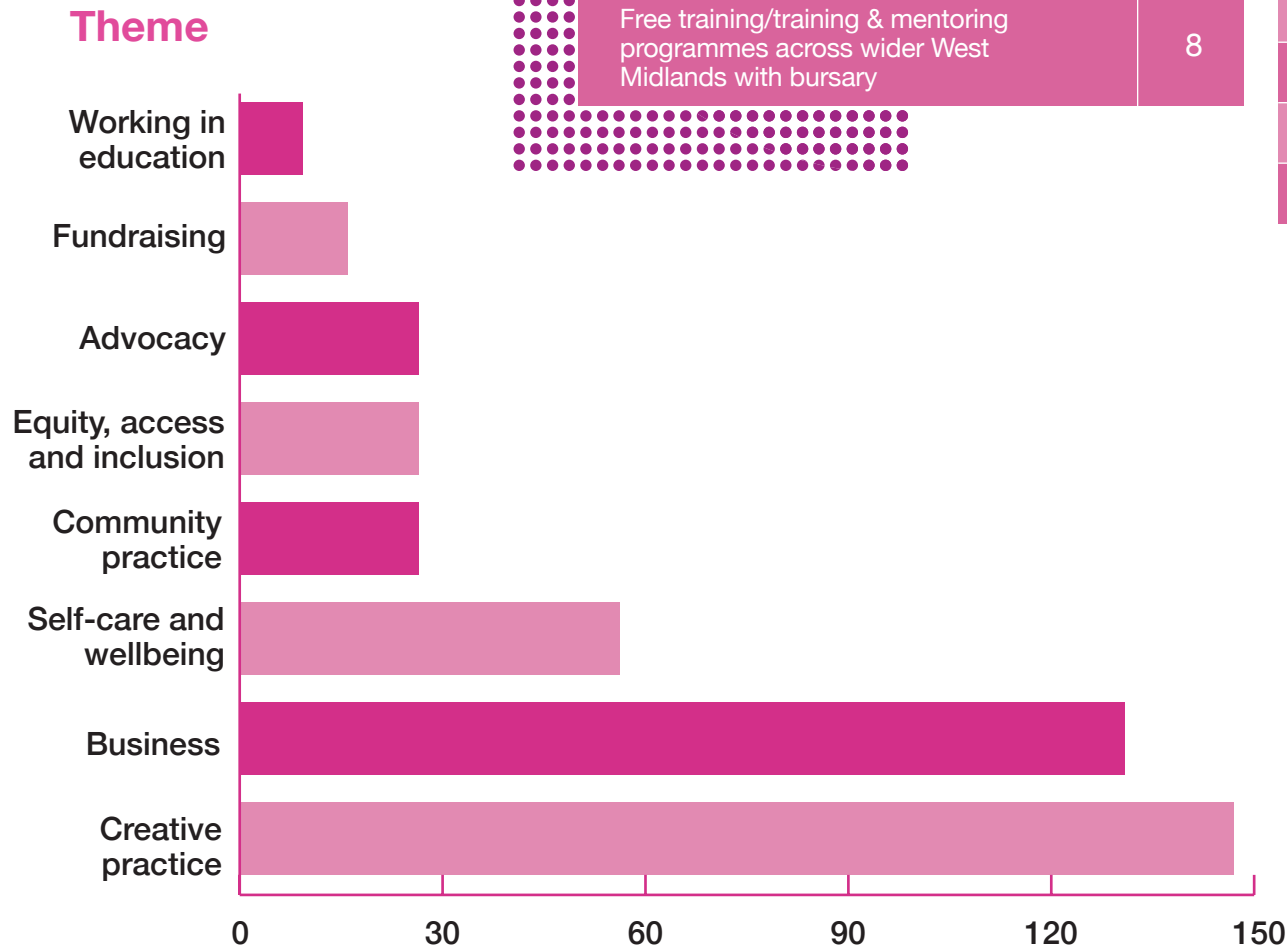
Note on 1-2-1 advice sessions - this is only the number of offers that stated publicly that they gave 1-2-1 advice. Many of these are tax and legal advice from membership organisations. There is also a huge amount of informal advice given across the sector that is not counted here.





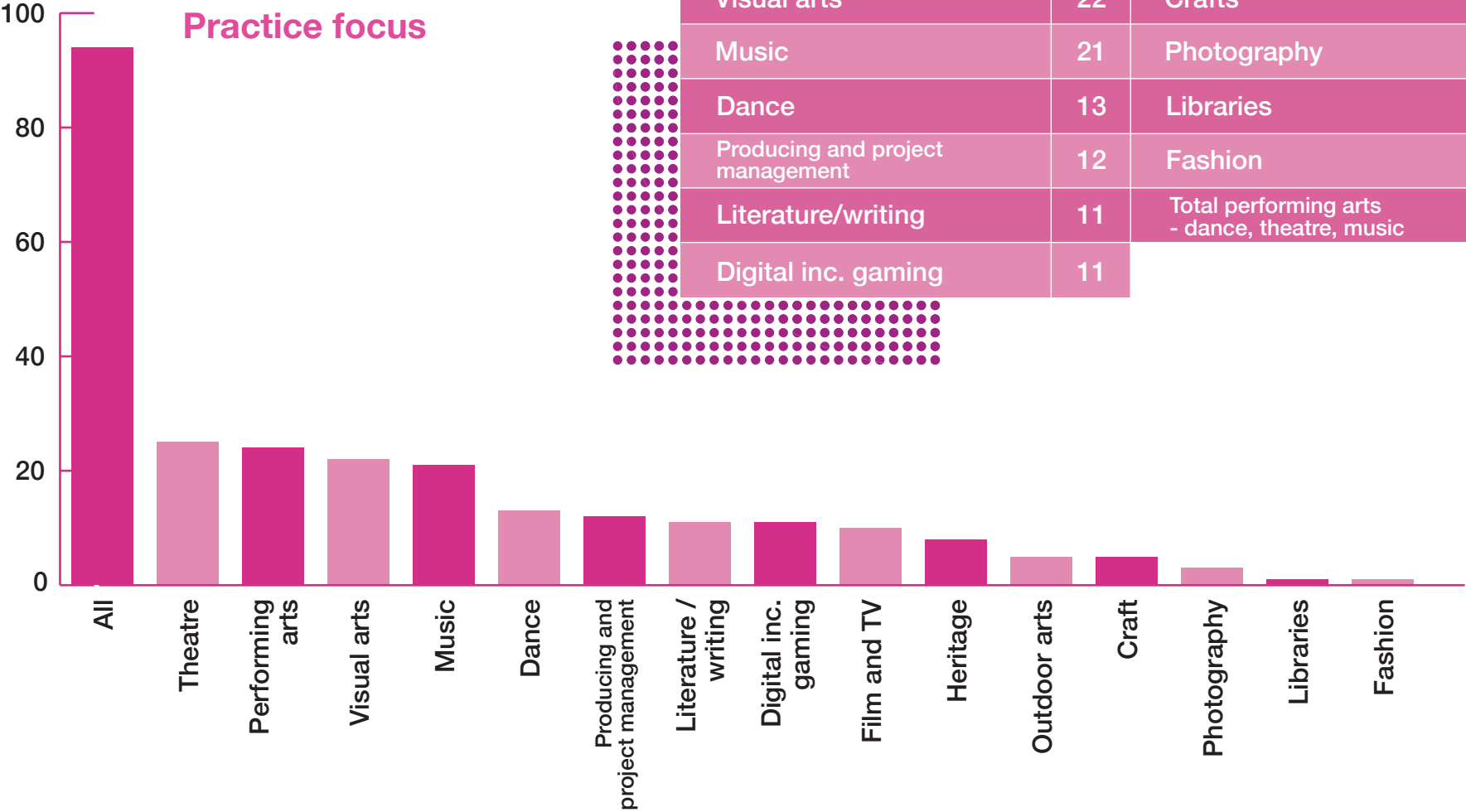
| Subsidised programmes | |
|---|-----|
| Total free or free option | 166 |
| Total free or free option Midlands (excluding National) | 100 |
| Free training/training and mentoring programmes across wider West Midlands | 38 |
| Free training/training & mentoring programmes across wider West Midlands with bursary | 8 |

| Theme | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Creative practice | 137 |
| Business | 122 |
| Self-care and wellbeing | 52 |
| Community practice | 24 |
| Equity, Access and Inclusion | 24 |
| Advocacy | 24 |
| Fundraising | 14 |
| Working in education | 8 |



*Note on practice data -The category 'All' is selected where an offer does not target a particular artform or practice, but is relevant to all creative freelancers. This will include offers that are not sector specific but are relevant to freelancers in general.

Practice focus



| Practice | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|---|----|
| All | 94 | Film and TV | 10 |
| Theatre | 25 | Heritage | 8 |
| Performing arts | 24 | Outdoor arts | 5 |
| Visual arts | 22 | Crafts | 5 |
| Music | 21 | Photography | 3 |
| Dance | 13 | Libraries | 1 |
| Producing and project management | 12 | Fashion | 1 |
| Literature/writing | 11 | Total performing arts - dance, theatre, music | 83 |
| Digital inc. gaming | 11 | | |



Curiosity Productions, photograph by Tod Jones

3. Findings

There are several types of support available to creative freelancers in the region. These range from national membership organisations and unions that charge monthly or annual fees, to regular or one-off training and development programmes. Training and development programmes cover a wide range of topics and themes, including creative practice, business skills and wellbeing, and often include mentoring support. There is a huge amount of adhoc one-to-one advice and mentoring given by professionals in the sector, often outside of any formal structure or program.

a. Membership organisations

There are several membership organisations that provide a wide variety of support to freelancers, most national, some regional. A key feature of these organisations is that membership voice is central and informs the activity and support offer.

i) National

Some of the biggest and most well-known membership organisations are the unions – Equity, Musicians Union, Artists’ Union England and BECTU. As well as advocating for their membership the unions offer benefits to members including public liability insurance, tax and legal advice, training opportunities and online information resources. National membership organisations such as Arts Marketing Association, a-n The Artists Information Company, GEM (Group for Education in Museums), ITC (Independent Theatre Council) and IPSE (The Association of Independent Professionals & the Self-Employed) offer many similar benefits to unions and some also have an advocacy role for their members and the sector they represent.

The obvious barrier to membership of unions and other national membership organisations for freelancers is financial. The Freelance Dance Artists survey report¹² by Karen Wood and Helen Laws highlights that only 38% of the freelance dance artists they surveyed were union

members. Some unions and national membership organisations do provide reduced rates or a sliding scale of rates for people on lower incomes and for students. Some also offer hardship funds to support members at times of need. The provision of public liability insurance at a discounted rate or free, often makes membership more cost effective for any freelancers who need insurance in order to deliver their work.

ii) Regional

A few of the regional organisations who participated in this mapping project have a paid membership structure, most as a strand of wider work. Benefits vary as much as the membership fees, all of which are outlined in the database in Appendix A. Culture Central is the only regional membership organisation that caters for individuals and organisations across the whole region and across all artforms and practices within the sector.

All of the regional membership schemes identified within this mapping process include a free membership option,

alternative free support offers, or the opportunity to apply for a free place if someone is unable to pay for membership.

Culture Central has recently revised their membership structure and has both a paid individual membership and free affiliate option. The paid option for individuals is lower cost than most national membership organisations, and benefits include training opportunities and online resources not available to affiliates.

CREW Birmingham does cover the whole region, despite the brand name, and is focused on the film, TV and performance sector. The main current offer to freelancers is a profile on the website and information about job opportunities. There are free and paid membership options. The organisation has plans to develop a range of additional benefits to paid members, including networking events and a smart membership card that provides discounts, has an NFC digital business card, and ID verification for equipment hire.

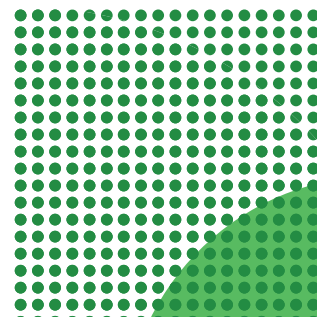
STEAM House Membership provides access to workspace, facilities, technical expertise, online resources, training and networking events at their venue in Birmingham, for makers, artists, and entrepreneurs.

EOP is Eastside Projects' membership scheme for visual artists. Activity is focused around their gallery space in Digbeth, Birmingham, with additional online training and resources, and group visits and networking with visual arts organisations across the country. Their membership is national (approximately 45-50% of members are from the West Midlands) and one of the benefits to regional members is the connections they make beyond the city and region.

FAN: Freelance Artists Network is the newest and lowest cost membership organisation in the region currently. They are just about to start recruiting members and are open to creatives of all artforms and practice, with a focus on the Black Country, but open to anyone in the region. They aim to raise the profile and advocate for freelance artists and creatives in the Black Country and beyond, find paid work for their members and develop members' careers.

¹² **Freelance Dance Artists and Employment Patterns:**

Survey Results (2022) Karen wood & Helen Laws



CREW BIRMINGHAM®

FILMING IN BIRMINGHAM JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT EASIER

THE BEST LOCAL TALENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

FIND YOUR CREW

FIND YOUR FACILITIES

FIND YOUR LOCATIONS

DISCOVER NEW TALENT

JOIN **CREW** BIRMINGHAM

CREW Birmingham website



Curiosity Productions, photograph by Tod Jones

b. Networks

All of the membership organisations listed above include networking opportunities, or have a network of interest at their centre. There are also networks in the region that do not charge a membership fee, often led by freelancers coming together around a specific interest, usually geography and/or artform or practice.

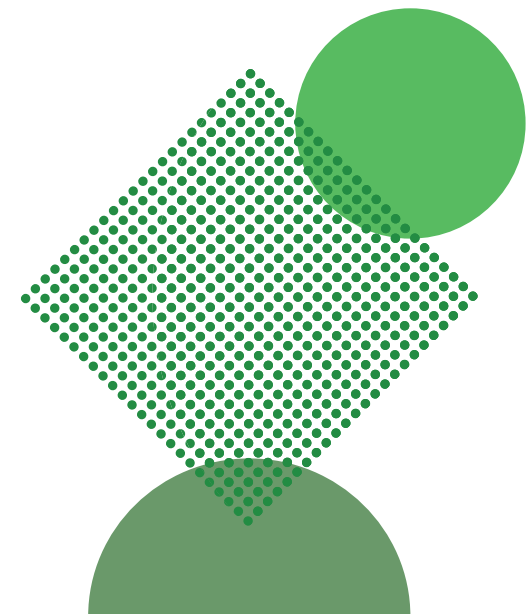
Facebook groups are utilised by many freelancers to network online, these vary in engagement and quality of information. Many Facebook groups centre around listing opportunities, but not all of them are moderated to ensure that work opportunities are properly paid or that training opportunities are relevant or of high quality. Open groups can be overrun by spam. Some of the closed and moderated groups are more effective and organisations such as CREW Birmingham began as a Facebook group network and continue to run a Facebook group exclusively for their members. A full list of the networks and Facebook groups found during this mapping project are in the database in Appendix A. As stated previously this is not an exhaustive list and it is very likely that there are many

more networks that serve a particular geography of the region or specific artform, practice or community of interest that have been missed. It must also be noted that the Facebook groups in particular may vary in quality and relevance.

Birmingham Dance Network is actually an arts organisation delivering projects, as well as a network for freelance dance artists. They do not have a formal paid membership structure, but do provide regular in-person networking events and deliver training and development opportunities. They also initiated and continue to be on the steering group of **Brum Pro Class** and sit on the Equity Dance Committee representing the dance sector in the region.

The Blast Creative Network (BCN) run by Multistory offers artists in the Black Country a free, annual programme of talks, workshops, reading groups, discussions and social events and is a space for mutual support, learning and knowledge sharing. It was set up to provide artists in the local area opportunities for critical engagement, collaboration and making connections

outside of formal arts education. It's a friendly place to meet other creatives from a range of practices who are based in Sandwell and the Black Country, experiment and test out new skills, and explore questions around contemporary arts practice.



c. Training and development programmes

There are a huge range of training and development opportunities available to creative freelancers in the region. All of the membership organisations have a programme of training available as part of the membership benefits, or at a reduced rate for members.

If freelancers have the resources to pay, there is training available for freelancers working in any part of the sector, at any stage of their career, particularly around business skills including finance, fundraising and marketing.

Many training offers delivered by national and some regional providers are available online, making them accessible to anyone with a reasonable internet connection and computer.

Thrively was a comprehensive creative business development programme for individuals who had the resources to invest in their development. The programme is currently on hold with no confirmed return date.

China Plate's training programme for emerging theatre makers and producers, **The Optimists** has been running for several years and has been a key development point for many producers. There is a fee but they also provide subsidised places for systemically marginalised practitioners. They are also developing masterclasses based on elements of the Optimists programme.

Writing West Midlands is the literature development agency for the region. They provide a wide range of training and development opportunities for writers in the region. They are very clear that the consistency of their offer is one of their key strengths. By repeating their training programmes with incremental developments informed by the writers they support, they maintain a high-quality offer that is relatively economical to run. They do not have to expend large amounts of time and energy inventing new programmes. This consistency also enables them to reach further as people are signposted to them and can access them at the points in their career when they need support.

Create Central run Bootcamps in partnership with WMCA for both existing and new talent in film and games.

They work closely with the sector to identify skills needs and focus the training on those needs. These opportunities then culminate in a real job interview for every candidate as they are training people for those identified opportunities.

Ludic Rooms support independent artists and community participants to experiment and play with technology in their creative practice.

Highly Sprung and **Keneish Dance** provide training in both performance and participatory practice, including shadowing opportunities.

There have been many high-quality one-off subsidised training programmes delivered in the region. 2022 in particular had a significant range of offers.

One of the highest profile programmes of 2022 was Culture Central's Convene, Challenge, Connect as part of Birmingham 2022 Festival. The Connect Freelancer Programme included Creative Life Story Mapping workshops with Friction Arts, mentoring, free Culture Central membership for a year and a bursary of £500 to support participation in the wider Convene and Challenge programme.



Newhampton Arts Centre, photograph by Janthra Photography

There are some very experienced and respected trainers in the region who deliver a range of training programmes.

Helga Henry and **Lara Ratnaraja** have delivered numerous leadership programmes, specifically for people who are underrepresented in the sector due to systemic marginalisation. They have had a significant impact on the career

development of many freelancers in the region. For example the RE:Present programme created a network of creatives that still keep in contact and collaborate 7 years on. In 2022, they delivered emPOWER in partnership with **OPUS**, developing the skills of local Producers who worked with OPUS to produce the Neighbourhood Festival Sites for Birmingham 2022.

OPUS are also planning to run their **Producing 102** programme again with a focus on inclusive practice. They also hold networking events for the freelancers registered as suppliers for them.



Highly Sprung, photograph by Hayley Salter

d. Mentoring and one-to-one advice

i) Mentoring

Mentoring is usually offered as a series of one-to-one sessions that have an agreed focus or set of learning or development aims for the mentee, that are often agreed in the first session. They are usually structured as coaching sessions, providing a facilitated space for individuals to discuss and explore their challenges and ideas, and receive support in finding their own solutions.

Mentoring is an integral part of many of the best training and development programmes that have and are being delivered.

There are very few organised programmes that are focused solely on mentoring or facilitating match-making between creatives and mentors.

Some of the membership organisations have mentoring programmes such as **GEM** who provide mentoring to their members who work in heritage engagement.

The National Centre for Writing has a mentoring programme for writers with a pay-per-session structure and an online database of mentors available through their programme.

Culture Central's mentoring programme is voluntary for mentors and free to mentees and runs on a relatively ad hoc basis. This may be reviewed as part of their new membership structure.

Creative Black County's **Fundraising Fellowship** is essentially a mentoring programme focused on fundraising skills, with a series of supporting training opportunities to bring people together and share learning. This programme is open to community organisations as well as creatives who work with communities in the Black Country. It is about to start delivery of a second round, following a pilot year in 2022.

Many experienced freelancers provide mentoring, but only have capacity to offer it as a paid service and have no central place to promote their offer. Therefore they rely primarily on word-of-mouth recommendations, which will only reach people who are already networked into the sector. Freelancers who participated in this mapping process

that provide mentoring are included in the mapping database. It is beyond the scope and capacity of this mapping project to list every freelancer in the region who provides mentoring. One of the recommendations of this report is to explore the possibility of developing a mentor database and/or a mentor match making programme.

ii) One-to-one advice

Advice is offered and provided in many ways across the sector, much of it informally.

All of the unions provide one-to-one advice on tax and legal issues, and some have helplines and provide a wider range of one-to-one support to their members.

Other membership organisations also offer one-to-one advice on a variety of topics relating to business and creative practice. For some this is an explicit membership benefit, and for others it is less formal and under the radar.

Almost every person who was interviewed as part of this mapping process offers one-to-one advice on an informal ad hoc basis. When asked to quantify what proportion of their time is taken up by providing informal advice and support,

answers ranged from one or two hours a week to a day or more a week, or 2-20% of their working time as a rough estimate.

For some people this support is integral to their role and an essential part of the service they and their organisation offer. This is certainly true for the local authority officer that was interviewed. 10-15 years ago, there was an arts development officer in almost every local authority, and the majority of them were available for anyone working in the creative sector who lived or were based in that local authority area to get advice and signposting. With repeated cuts to local authority funding, there are very few local authorities left with arts development officers who have the capacity to provide that direct support to individuals. Most who remain have limited capacity and resources, and roles that are focused on commissioning and/or events.

The people freelancers are now turning to are individuals within arts organisations as well as fellow freelancers. Again, it is word of mouth that enables them to find someone who will be willing to give up their time, so the same people will be approached repeatedly, as the people they help then signpost other people to them.

The topics of this advice are as varied as the creatives in the sector. Some is very practice-specific, for example Black Country Touring providing advice on how to work with rural touring circuits, or how to develop projects that are relevant to Black Country audiences. A lot of advice and support is around funding and can range from signposting about funding opportunities to giving detailed feedback on draft funding applications.

e. Funding and commissions

Arts Council England's (ACE) **Developing Your Creative Practice (DYCP)** is the primary source of funding support for freelance creatives. This is only available to people working within the disciplines supported by ACE: music, theatre, dance, visual arts, literature, libraries, combined arts, museums practice. Importantly, this funding is separate to Project Funding, which is also open to individuals. It enables freelancers to design their own development journey and potentially access some of the support on offer that charges a fee, such as training, mentoring and membership of support organisations.

The BFI Network provides short film funding and early development funding which includes both finance for early career film makers to create a film and a training and support programme.

Regionally there are a small number of organisations offering micro-commissions focused on supporting the development of creatives rather than just producing work to programme into their venues.

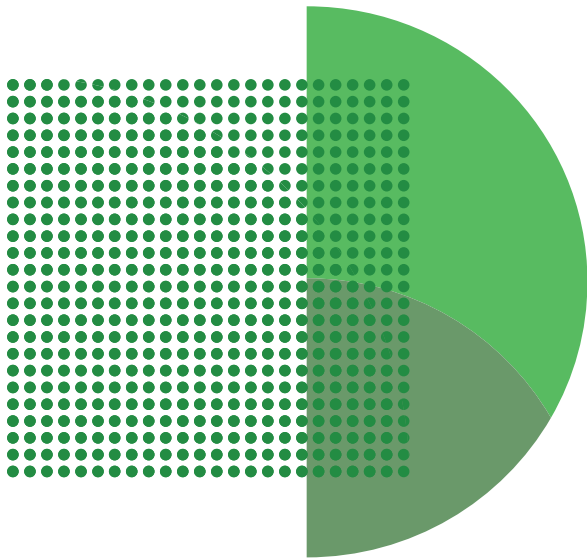
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council run Small Is Beautiful micro commissions of £500 which provide Solihull based artists with a testbed and platform to experiment and explore. They will also be running Short is Beautiful later in 2023 for film artists.

f. Practical support (workspace, equipment, platforms, producing, signposting to paid work)

The type of practical support offered to freelancers across the region is broad and varied. It is often given on an informal basis and therefore only received by the people who know who and where to ask.



Black Country Touring, photograph by Anand Chabra



i) Workspace and equipment

Workspace is always in demand and there is often more demand than the building-based organisations can supply. Space is also one of the biggest costs for freelancers. Dedicated studio or office space is a significant investment for any freelancer and only really possible in later career stages. It was outside the scope and capacity of this project to map all available creative workspaces and co-working spaces in the region. Artist workspaces are included in the [WMCA Cultural Infrastructure Map](#).

There are some models for providing free or subsidised space shared by people interviewed for this mapping process that are useful to highlight.

[Talking Birds](#) offer Nest Residencies to artists of any artform or practice. They provide free space, a bursary fee of £500 per week for up to two weeks, and a whole wraparound bespoke offer of advice and support, which can include access support, funding advice, regenerative & sustainable practice, signposting and brokering connections with other organisations within the Daimler building (Highly Sprung & Imagineer) and across the city and region. They are very clear that this is a reciprocal process, as

Talking Birds grows and learns through the residencies alongside the artists, and every resident artist becomes part of the Talking Birds flock. Their capacity to provide these residencies is reducing in the next financial year and they are constantly seeking funding to increase their capacity to offer this programme, as they are always oversubscribed.

Talking Birds also offer free space when they don't have any residency opportunities available, run a programme of support called 3rd Fridays with co-working space, networking, book club, panel discussions and lots of informal one-to-one advice, all free to access.

[Birmingham Hippodrome](#) have launched their Hippodrome Creatives programme which is free to join and enables creatives to book free rehearsal space and workspace at short notice (one week in advance). They are also developing this programme into a network with regular in-person meetings, and a strand of training and development targeted for racially marginalised creatives.

Arena Theatre, Friction Arts and MAIA provide free or low-cost space within the limits of their capacity. Arena Theatre provide space when they can but have

flagged a particular need for rehearsal space in Wolverhampton and the Black Country as they are booked up a year in advance and could fill their space ten times over with the enquiries that they get.

MAIA and Friction Arts both offer space and equipment as a reciprocal exchange, with artists who receive support feeding into their programmes and organisation.

“This work is underpinned by the practice of mutual aid - sharing resources in solidarity, not charity, where the reciprocal exchange is for mutual flourishing.”

MAIA

[Friction Arts](#) have an informal arrangement they call Cred Edge and ‘take skills swaps or other non-cash reciprocal agreements when money isn’t an option’ in exchange for use of their space and equipment.

[Asylum Art Gallery](#) in Wolverhampton provide free opportunities for visual artists in the Black Country to showcase their work alongside a wider programme of support and mentoring.



Talking Birds' co-working space

ii) Platforms

Some membership organisations offer an online profile and platform. **Create Britain** is a relatively new national online platform for creatives to promote themselves and their work, which is currently free to use.

The most comprehensive online platform in the region, with a focus on Search Engine Optimisation and enabling members to gain paid work as a result is **CREW Birmingham**.

Member profiles will also be a key feature of **FAN: Freelance Artists Network's website**. FAN also have an ambition to create in person showcase opportunities for members to raise the profile of creatives in the region.

Several organisations and venues in the region run scratch or work in progress platforms for performing artists.

Arena Theatre run scratch night events that provide a platform for developing work. They currently run ACT for theatre makers, PASTA for poets and storytellers and How've Yow Been Dragged Up? for drag artists. Due to limited funds, all of these platforms are unpaid for participating artists, although the venue does pay a fee to the freelance hosts and coordinators of these events.

FABRIC's **Black British Dance Platform** supports dance artists from the African and African Caribbean Diaspora who are based in England with an ambition to present work internationally.

China Plate's **First Bite and Bite Size** are platforms for new work from theatre makers in the region.

In the visual arts sector **Vivid's** Black Hole Club and planned Algo | Afro Futures programmes both provide a platform for sharing work. Eastside Projects' **EOP** programme includes exhibition opportunities.

iii) Producing

Whilst producing is primarily focused on managing the creation and distribution of creative work, the process of producing can often include a large amount of support and development for creatives, that can sometimes involve an additional mentoring role and often a pastoral care role. As with ad hoc one-to-one advice, this is often on top of or at the edges of any official paid role. Many producers are freelance and often get involved in projects before there is any funding available and provide unpaid support in the development of funding applications and project plans before there is even the guarantee of paid work. There are many

producers in the region who are also providers of informal one-to-one advice.

Moving from self-producing to collaborating with a producer can often be a significant development point for a creative or collective of creatives. It is beyond the scope and capacity of this mapping process to map all of the producers and project managers who are also providing wider support to creative freelancers, and map how many of those are freelancers themselves.

iv) Signposting to paid work

One of the key factors that forms a barrier to equity in the cultural sector is the way many paid opportunities are recruited. This is often due to the limited capacity of organisations to advertise widely and the quick turnaround/short lead-in times for projects.

Opportunities are often offered to people that the organisations already have a relationship with. If openly advertised, they are often promoted only on social media to people that already know and follow that organisation, and occasionally in sector newsletters.

There are cultural connectors in the sector who are pro-active in passing these opportunities on to wider networks and contacts. This generally falls under the

category of informal and unpaid support and is often the same people who provide free one-to-one support.

CREW Birmingham has made signposting to paid work one of the central missions of their organisation, sharing opportunities with members through their closed Facebook group and newsletters.

As discussed under **Networks**, there are many Facebook groups that list opportunities, but these are not always moderated so freelancers need to exercise caution and ensure opportunities are properly paid before applying.

g. Information and guidance

There is a huge amount of information and guidance available online and in published books. The database created through this mapping process lists some of the main regional and national resources, but there are many more out there.

Membership organisations put much of their resources behind their membership paywall, but if freelancers are able to pay for membership this is often one of the best routes to get relevant information that is

targeted at your artform or area of practice. Warwick District Creative Compact have compiled a free **online resource for creative freelancers in Coventry and Warwickshire**. Arts Council England are currently building an **online resource for creative and cultural practitioners** as part of their Let's Create commitment to supporting individuals.

There are several books about freelancing. Regional freelance consultant Alison Grade published *The Freelance Bible in 2020* which gives a step-by-step guide to starting out as self-employed.

Some libraries have whole sections dedicated to being self-employed or starting your own business. Staffordshire Libraries are running **Start-Up hubs** across the county where libraries offer a dedicated space, with start-up promotional materials, leaflets, business related reading books and information fact sheets. Birmingham Library are part of **The British Library's National Network of Business and IP Centres** and also provide access to a free version of grant finder.

Newsletters are an extremely helpful way to get current and relevant information, particularly about time limited opportunities. **Culture Central's**

newsletter was the most frequently mentioned source of information during the mapping process. Freelancers will need to sign up as **affiliate members** (which is free) to continue receiving the newsletter. Additional information and resources are available to paying members.

h. Care and Wellbeing

Some of the membership organisations provide counselling and/or wellbeing sessions on a range of topics as part of their membership offer. Unions in particular also play an active role in advocating for the rights and wellbeing of their members.

Some organisations such as More Than A Moment (MTAM) and MAIA have social justice, care and wellbeing at their heart. They are activists advocating for black creatives in the sector.

“Our mission for the West Midlands Arts & Culture Sector is to be the model for a national ecosystem of inclusion, creative innovation, belonging, sustainability, safety and joy.”

MTAM

The More Than A Moment Pledge that 90 West Midlands organisations have signed up to not only makes commitments to anti-racist action, it also promotes compassionate leadership and care within organisations.

Fresh seed provide HR consultancy to the Creative Sector with a focus on organisation psychology. They have been particularly pro-active in educating creative organisations about employing/contracting freelancers, advocating for better HR practice when working with freelancers, and have created a **free toolkit for employers**.

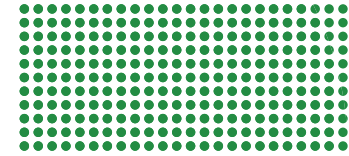
Wellbeing In The Arts provides low cost counselling to anyone working in the arts.

Several of the training and development programmes that have and will be offered in the region include a self-care and wellbeing strand.

Several people interviewed as part of this mapping project flagged that when supporting freelancers with an ethos of care and inclusion, then this needs to be budgeted into any programme or offer in terms of time and general capacity. When supporting an individual, they often bring their whole life into the room, not just their

creative practice. Time needs to be taken to ask about, understand, and support access needs. Sometimes a person will need to talk through personal issues as they are part of the challenge that is blocking their progress in their practice. Often being an artist or creative is completely bound up in who they are and their life, sometimes personal information and trauma is revealed without trigger warnings. People giving advice, mentoring and training will also sometimes need wellbeing support.

¹³ **More Than A Moment Regenerative Futures Report**
(2023) Elizabeth Lawal, Zarah Belgian, Loreal Stokes





Curiosity Productions, photograph by Tod Jones

4. Analysis – gaps, challenges and opportunities

a. Training and development programmes

There is a wealth of training and development available to freelancers in the cultural sector and creative industries in the West Midlands. All artforms and practices within the cultural sector have opportunities available, with many open to all artforms and practices. There is unsurprisingly a higher concentration (approximately 56%) of regional offers based in Birmingham. There is a relatively even split between online, hybrid and in-person opportunities and resources. Many of the online offers are information resources. There is a strong return to in-person training and networking events, having been solely online throughout much of 2020 and 2021.

The most consistent offers are largely only accessible if you are willing and able to pay for it, often through a regular membership payment.

There are some really great examples of subsidised training and development

programmes that have had significant benefits for freelancers. Some have been offered free to all participants or to people who either have low incomes and/or experience barriers to opportunities due to systemic marginalisation. Some programmes have also offered bursaries to compensate for travel, access costs and working time lost.

The challenge with subsidised programmes is that they are usually tied to specific time-limited funding, so only run once or for a short period of time. This does not reduce the value of the experience for the participants on those programmes, but it does represent a missed opportunity for the sector as a whole, as all of the time, energy and expertise poured into developing those programmes is lost when they end. Any learning on potential improvements for future programmes may be held by the (often freelance) individuals who created and delivered that programme, and there is no structure for feeding that learning into future iterations of training offers.

Short term programmes are also much harder to find and engage with, as they have a cut-off date for when you can apply and there is no clear future opportunity to apply for. They also miss out on the word-of-mouth signposting that is such a core communication channel for the sector, as anyone who took part cannot signpost someone else to the next round.

Consistent repeated training offers like China Plate's The Optimists, Writing West Midlands' Room 204 and Eastside Projects' EOP programme benefit from having people who have done their programme and have now been working in the sector for several years. Their participants often cite that programme as a key element of their career development and signpost other people to it. Those programmes also benefit from incremental developments over time based on participant feedback, and do not have to expend large amounts of resources 'reinventing the wheel' so they are able to deliver more and of higher quality to their participants for their budget.

The gaps

There is a need for accessible and affordable training and development offers that are consistently delivered on a regular, repeated basis across all artforms and practice areas, and across the geographical areas of the region. During this mapping process the only consistent regional repeated offers that were identified as free or subsidised for target groups, are all delivered in Birmingham and artforms served are visual arts, creative writing and theatre producing.

The challenges

The funding system is structured to encourage new and different projects, not repeat and build on things that have been done before. Arts Council England NPOs and IPSOs are the only organisations supported to provide consistent offers, but are still asked how their offer is new and different at each funding round. A case needs to be made that whilst a repeated training and development offer may be consistent and only developed in an organic and incremental way, each iteration will be supporting a new cohort of individuals to develop their practice and therefore provide a higher quality offer to the sector as a whole. It is also a much more economical and regenerative practice.

The opportunities

There is a huge wealth of expertise and many brilliant training providers in the region across all creative sectors and geographical areas, many of whom are practicing creative freelancers themselves, who have worked with various organisations and funders to deliver training programmes in the past.

There could be a collaborative approach across the sector and region to curate a training and development programme from all of the great work that has recently and is currently taking place, that ensures there is a consistent offer that fills any current gaps in regular provision in terms of artform/practice or geographical access.



b. Mentoring and one-to-one advice

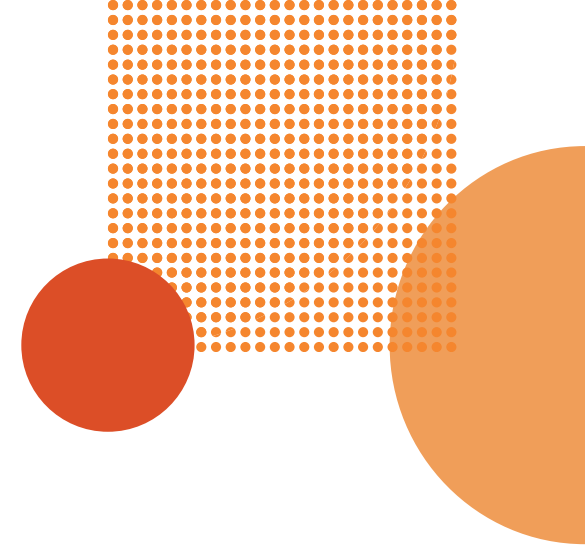
Mentoring is part of many of the best training and development programmes that have and are being delivered. Like those programmes, consistent access to mentoring that is affordable and relevant is very limited.

Many freelancers use ACE's Developing Your Creative Practice (DYCP) funding to pay for mentoring as part of their personal, professional and practice development within their projects, but there is no obvious route for finding a mentor beyond existing personal networks.

For many providing free informal one-to-one support, it is something they do because they care deeply about supporting fellow creatives within the sector. Many see the support they give benefitting themselves and/or their organisation as a mutually supportive relationship is developed. For some, particularly freelancers and part-time staff, it is a completely unpaid, unsupported and unacknowledged service that they provide to the sector that happens around and in-between their paid work. They do it

because they care, they want to give back if they have been helped in the past, they get to feel good about helping others, and it also often helps their practice or business as it strengthens their delivery, practice and network too.

The risk is that all of this extra, unpaid, unsupported time and energy could result in burnout. Many of the people providing this support are some of the best, most experienced, most open and supportive creatives in the sector, and it is important they are also supported to ensure they do not suffer as a consequence of their altruism and are not lost to the sector.



The gaps

Outside of membership organisations and formal training and development programmes, there is no clear route to finding a mentor or accessing one-to-one advice. This results in an inequitable system where only people with existing relevant networks get signposted through word of mouth to people who could help them. A lot of this support is given unpaid and therefore capacity is limited.



The challenges

So much of this support happens informally, under the radar, that it is difficult to quantify. As there is no formal structure it is only people who are willing to give up their time, and who are known in the sector to do so, that get approached, and therefore a relatively small number of people are holding this responsibility, which makes it a very fragile system.

Some of the people with the most relevant experience to share are freelancers themselves, who have even less capacity to provide free support as this means they are reducing their capacity to earn income themselves. They are also less visible and harder to find than organisations who often have a physical presence with a building or a clear public face and point of contact.

Even the organisations that provide this support are not always advertising it clearly on their communication channels, as it is so informal, and there is risk of being overwhelmed by demand if they promote the support they offer publicly.

The opportunities

There are many very skilled and experienced creatives in the region with 10-20+ years of experience, who are very willing and able to share knowledge and give support and guidance.

Employees of regularly funded organisations and some local authorities have some capacity to provide free support and many actively do this as part of their role, and acknowledge that this benefits their organisation as well as the freelancers they support.

With some financial resources and coordination capacity, there could be a more equitable and accessible process for matching freelancers with the right person to provide them with mentoring or one-to-one advice.

c. Universities and colleges

The majority of people who enter the sector will start their creative journey in education. There is not available data on how many graduates of arts and creative courses go on to work in the sector, and how many of those are freelance. Given that DCMS figures indicate that almost 50% of cultural sector roles are self-employed, any graduates that do go on to work in the sector have a high chance of becoming freelance or potentially have a portfolio career combining freelance and part-time employment.

The educational institutions that participated in this mapping process all provide modules within creative courses that focus on preparation for working in the sector and many include placements and residencies as part of their courses. These include aspects of freelancing. Alison Grade, Mission Accomplished, provides training for students at several universities across the country on the world of freelancing.

Universities across the region work in different ways to support freelancers and the wider cultural and creative sector.

The University of Warwick support freelancers through the **Creative Futures Incubator** with **1 Mill Street** co-working space in Leamington Spa.

STEAMhouse and **Eastside Projects** are both part of Birmingham City University and provide a variety of support to freelance visual artists, makers and designers.

Coventry University support **Daimler Powerhouse** which hosts several arts organisations and provides a variety of workspace and rehearsal space for artists.

Researchers at Aston University, Birmingham City University and Newcastle University have created an interactive map of live music venues in the **Birmingham Live Music Project** that has also provided data for the **WMCA Cultural Infrastructure Map**. They have also produced a series of reports on the live music ecology of Birmingham¹⁴.

The **Arena Theatre** is part of the University of Wolverhampton and provides performance platforms for theatre makers, drag artists, poets and storytellers, rehearsal space when possible, as well as a lot of informal one-to-one advice.

They are also part of **In Good Company**, which provides support to theatre makers across the Midlands (East and West) in partnership with arts venues that have strong links to educational institutions. Arena Theatre is the only West Midlands venue partner.

¹⁴ **The UK Live Music Industry in a post-2019 era: A Globalised Local Perspective (2022)** Rozbicka, Patrycja; Behr, Adam; Hamilton, Craig.



The gaps

None of the people within the universities we spoke to were aware of any programmes that directly support students once they finish their course of study. Generally, once they have graduated they are on their own.

The cost and time commitment for higher education and post graduate courses can be a barrier for freelance creatives.

The challenges

Universities and colleges are huge organisations. Any initiatives that are proposed and supported by individual staff members have to go through the bureaucratic systems. Universities in particular are working to a business model where students are customers and the bottom line is one of the highest priorities.

The opportunities

Modular and stackable offers, particularly at postgraduate level, could open up learning opportunities for wider demographics. This links directly to recommendations around professional development and progression in *The Good Work Review*¹⁵

There was interest in exploring whether there could be a collaborative approach with the cultural sector to provide more structured support for creative students after they graduate.

There was also interest within the universities to explore how they could strengthen their relationship with freelance creatives in their locality.

There is a recognition that this would not just be an altruistic act to support the sector, but that it would strengthen the institutions and improve the quality of their courses and the opportunities for their students. This in turn would result in positive reputation-building for those institutions, and increased income through future student recruitment and potential investment.

¹⁵ *The Good Work Review: Job Quality in the Creative Industries (2023)* Carey, H, Giles, L & O'Brien, D



d. Support at different career stages

This mapping project identified 46 specific offers for entry level or early career creatives. Of these, 17 are entry level and 29 early career. Entry level is defined as anyone who left full-time education within the last two years, and/ or is working towards their first couple of paid contracts or jobs in the sector. Early career is defined as anyone who left full-time education more than two years ago and/or has had two or more paid contracts or jobs in the sector.

Many of these programmes are targeted at a specific age group, usually under 25, some under 30.

Nine offers were specifically for more experienced creatives – Girl Grind’s Primeish is targeted at racially marginalised women aged 30+ and New Art Gallery Walsall’s studio residency programme is only open to artists ‘who have already built up a ‘growing record of practice’. Friction Arts also work with several older/more experienced artists to stretch and develop their practice. ACE’s Developing Your Creative Practice funding is also only really relevant for creatives

with an established practice, although criteria states a minimum of one year experience.

The other 165 offers are open to people at any career stage.

In addition to these formal support offers a huge amount of the informal support mentioned goes to entry and early career creatives. Many of the organisations participating in the mapping interviews employ entry and early career artists. Many create assistant or shadow roles within projects to provide learning and development opportunities for those entering the sector. When working with entry-level creatives, the organisations and individuals also provide new freelancers with advice and support, such as how to create an invoice, how to register as self-employed with HMRC, and lots of signposting to other opportunities. For established freelancers and small organisations working with entry level freelancers, this additional support, although given willingly, can really stretch capacity.

| Practice focus for entry and early career support offers | |
|--|----|
| All | 14 |
| Theatre | 10 |
| Music | 8 |
| Producing and project management | 6 |
| Performing arts | 5 |
| Film and Television | 5 |
| Digital inc. gaming | 3 |
| Outdoor arts | 3 |
| Dance | 2 |
| Literature / writing | 2 |
| Visual arts | 1 |
| Photography | 1 |
| Libraries | 1 |
| Fashion | 1 |
| Crafts | 0 |
| Heritage | 0 |

The gaps

Opportunities for entry and early-career creatives often target an under 25 demographic. This excludes anyone making a career change into the sector and anyone returning to the sector after a significant life event such as maternity and parenting or illness.

Most of the people providing informal advice and support are not clear on where they could signpost for some of the practical needs of the creatives they are supporting. They are often freelancers or small organisations themselves with little capacity to seek it out, so just provide the support themselves as that is quicker and easier in the short term.

A lot of organisations post opportunities on Facebook and many are shared on Facebook groups, but people under the age of 25 are much less likely to use Facebook as their main social media platform, therefore this is not the best place to communicate with young people entering or developing their early career in the sector.

The challenges

Opportunities for people entering the sector or very early in their career are the hardest to promote and recruit for, particularly for smaller organisations and freelancers with limited resources and capacity. Early career creatives are the least networked and quite often don't know what they don't know, or what support they might need, until they come up against a specific challenge.

Individuals who are systemically marginalised face even greater barriers to accessing support. Individuals who do not have an additional income source or financial support will have less capacity to take on very low paid opportunities like minimum pay apprenticeships or training that does not come with a bursary to cover time. All of this contributes to the sector failing to diversify the work that is made and the stories that are told. It is a major contributing factor to the lack of representation of systemically marginalised people on stages, screens, pages, in gallery spaces and on digital devices. It is part of the system that marginalises people.

The opportunities

There could be some advocacy within the sector to ensure that anyone providing entry level support checks whether it is an essential requirement of their funding for support to be targeted at a specific age group. Wider advocacy could take place to encourage funders to offer support with outcomes based on meeting needs rather than reaching people of a specific age.

As identified in the section above, with some financial resources and coordination capacity, there could be a more equitable and accessible process for sharing opportunities across the region and for matching freelancers with the right person or organisation to provide them with the support they need.

With a joined-up communication and PR campaign, backed by the shared resources of the sector, the information could be taken directly to the people that need to know about it. This can be both through mainstream communication like billboards and digital advertising, and through community connectors and partners. Paying for partners who are already embedded in communities, to connect people to the opportunities on offer, whose stories and lived experiences need to be better represented in the sector.

e. Support for systemically marginalised creatives

Through this mapping process there were 43 support offers identified that were targeted specifically for systemically marginalised individuals.

In addition, there are many organisations that have programmes that are open to all and have stated that they have measures in place to ensure that they are accessible and inclusive. Some offer access support costs and bursaries.

Organisations like **MAIA** and ¹⁶**More Than A Moment** have and continue to support and advocate for black creatives in the region.

DASH and **Deaf Explorer** support and advocate for deaf or hard of hearing and disabled creatives in the region.

BOM are running a development programme to support autistic adults to access and thrive in the digital and creative industries.

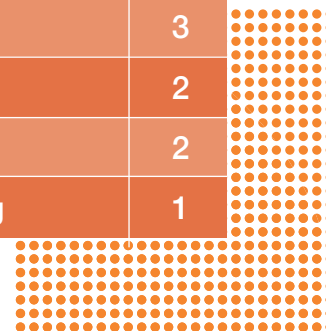
There is an informal network of neurodivergent theatre artists that was connected through the twitter account

@UseYourNous. The twitter account is now inactive, but the newsletter still connects the network, joining this network is only possible through word of mouth.

Cloud Cuckoo Land Theatre is led by and supports neurodivergent theatre and music artists, and has a core aim to make theatre for young audiences in Birmingham more representative of the children who live in the city.

¹⁶ *More Than A Moment began as a project initiated by Elizabeth Lawal and supported and promoted by Culture Central. It is now an independent organisation and continues Elizabeth's work around racial justice, whilst still maintaining the partnership with Culture Central.

| Targeted offers | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Racially marginalised | 16 |
| Systemically marginalised | 12 |
| Disabled | 6 |
| Women and non-binary | 5 |
| Neurodiverse | 3 |
| LGBTQI+ | 2 |
| Working class | 2 |
| Deaf or hard of hearing | 1 |



The gaps

Whilst some progress has been made over the last few years there is still discrimination and marginalisation in society and the sector. Whilst there are an increasing number of organisations that are taking an equitable approach to provide subsidised opportunities, sliding scales on fees, with access costs covered for those who need it, this is not standard practice for all organisations. Much of the work to make change is being done by people who also define themselves as systemically marginalised, and are also having to break down the same barriers for themselves.

As highlighted previously, people who already face systemic barriers are even less likely to have the resources and capacity to navigate and access the complex and relatively hidden support opportunities that are available.

The challenges

Many of the participants in this research stated that the people accessing their support often found out about what they offer through word of mouth, this is even more common for informal one-to-one support. People who know someone, who knows someone, get to find out about the opportunities and get signposted to the people who can help them.

A lot of the people providing support, especially the informal one-to-one advice, are deeply committed to equity, access and inclusion. They also largely lack the capacity to communicate what they offer to the people they most want to support, or who most need that support.

Vulnerable and marginalised people are more likely to have experienced trauma. Most people participating in personal and professional development need care and nurturing alongside the practical support. That takes time and energy which is often not budgeted into plans and projects.

The opportunities

There is a groundswell of people who really do want to make the sector more equitable, accessible and inclusive.

With a collaborative approach to sharing resources and coordinated communication, the whole process of how opportunities are communicated and accessed could be vastly improved.

A shared fund, that any support and development programme could utilise to provide access support for participants, could improve the access support provided by all programs.

A train-the-trainer programme or toolkit, that shares the best practice from organisations already doing great work to support systemically marginalised creatives, could improve the experience people have when they access opportunities.



FLEX: Cloud Cuckoo Land, photograph by Scott Johnston

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The cultural sector is an interdependent and relatively fragile eco-system. It has the ability to adapt over time, but any sudden change to any part of the sector will impact all of it. Freelancers are the pollinators of the sector, carrying skills and ideas between organisations, networks and practices, always feeding and nurturing the whole. Without freelancers the sector would wither and die. The working lifespan of a freelancer can be 50+ years. During that time, they will potentially go through several stages of metamorphosis. Their needs will vary during that time, and there will be key moments when they need additional input in order to develop and grow, but this will be different for every person. There is no one-size-fits-all solution – every freelancer needs a range of inputs to nurture them throughout their career, in addition to their core sustenance of paid work.

The system of support for creative freelancers that currently exists does not just support survival of the fittest; it supports survival of the best connected and most privileged. There are cultural connectors that reach out and pro-

actively break down the barriers of systemic marginalisation, but every part of the sector needs to create more robust systems and procedures that ensure information and opportunities are reaching beyond those who are already connected and networked in order to ensure a rich diversity of practice that will nurture the entire sector.

There is a wealth of support out there if you know where to look, and especially if you have the finances to pay for it. One easy way to make the existing system of support more equitable is to coordinate communication of the offers that already exist to make it easier to navigate. The analysis in this report and the resulting recommendations are for the entire sector to consider. They are not something that the WMCA can or should address alone.

A collaborative and regenerative approach to sharing resources and co-curating opportunities that are equitable, accessible and inclusive will benefit both freelancers and the wider sector.

a. Short-term actions

- Convene a meeting of representatives of the universities and colleges in the region to explore what role they can play in both supporting their students as they enter into a creative freelance career, and the creative freelancers in their local areas.
- Convene a meeting that invites everyone who has participated in the mapping process and the wider sector to explore the findings and recommendations from the mapping process. Develop a shared strategy and action plan for supporting creative freelancers in the region.

b. Actions that require funding and time to develop

These recommendations will need to be reviewed at the proposed meetings identified above.

- Use regenerative and distributive models such as Doughnut Economics¹⁷ to model any programmes of support that are developed.
- Use the database produced through this mapping process as the starting point for an online resource, listing support available for freelance creatives in the region.
- Pilot a cross region, cross sector process for curating a programme of training and development, building on and including existing/recent programmes, that have access, equity, inclusion, care and sustainability as core values. Involve freelancers in the design and delivery of this programme.
- Explore the feasibility for creation of a freelancer development fund, which enables individuals to apply for free places on training and development programmes, to pay for a mentor and/or to get access support.
- Create a platform that lists individuals who are available to provide mentoring and one-to-one advice in the region, with a sliding scale of fees, and fair pay to all freelancers providing mentoring and advice. Mentoring fees could be subsidised by the proposed freelancer development fund.
- Support more skilled and experienced freelancers to share their knowledge and join the proposed mentoring platform by delivering mentoring/coaching training.
- Ensure sufficient resources are allocated to marketing and communication of any support offers. Ensure that this marketing is targeted to reach people who do not normally access these opportunities by working with partners who have direct connections to people who are under-represented and under-resourced in the sector.
- Pay partners, ambassadors, and community connectors to promote these opportunities.
- Organisations providing support and development opportunities to freelancers to have a sliding scale of fees and/or bursaries for opportunities, that includes support for access costs. This could be supported by the suggested freelance development fund.
- Where practical, include a barter system/skills exchange system for people who wish to give and receive support without the need for cash to exchange hands. This must always be negotiated fairly and be mutually beneficial E.g. mentoring sessions provided in exchange for help with social media.
- Develop a train-the-trainer programme or toolkit that shares the best practice of organisations already doing great work to support systemically marginalised creatives.
- Work collaboratively across all artforms and areas of practice to build a more coherent, regenerative, equitable and inclusive creative ecology across the region.

¹⁷ Kate Raworth (2017) Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist



Arena Theatre, 14/48 Wolverhampton, photograph by Matthew Cawrey

Appendices

Appendix A: West Midlands Freelancer Support database

The database of support for freelancers collated through this mapping process is available to download as a separate document here:

[Mapping Creative Freelancer Support – CuriosityProductions](#)

Appendix B: Contributors to the mapping research

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this mapping process:

Alison Grade

Amy Dalton-Hardy

Arena Theatre – Neil Reading

Arts Council England – Nick Green

Aston University – Dr Patrycja Rozbicka

Asylum Artist Quarter – Hannah Taylor

Bertz Associates – Iris Bertz

Birmingham Dance Network – Karen Wood

Birmingham Hippodrome – Chris Sudworth

Black Country Touring – Frances Land

China Plate – Kristina Hall

Cloud Cuckoo Land – Katerina Pushkin

Coventry University – Peta Murphy and Karen Wood

Create Central – Sarah Wood

Creative Black Country – Parminder Dosanj, Sajida Carr, Yvonne Gregory

CREW Birmingham – Rose Wilde and Steve Davies

Culture Central – Anthony Ruck

Curiosity Productions – Chanphiphat Janthra, Isaac Boothman and Jenny Smith

Deaf Explorer – Rachael Veazey

Eastside Projects – Ruth Claxton

Emma Birks – The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Foleshill Creates – Dakasha Piparia

Fresh Seed – Sarah Brewster

Friction Arts – Sandra Hall

Grand Union – Cheryl Jones

Helga Henry

Hannah Barker

Highly Sprung – Sarah Worth

Keneish Dance – Keisha Grant

Ludic Rooms – Dom Breadmore

MAIA – Adaya Henry

More Than A Moment – Elizabeth Lawal

Multistory – Jess Piette

Musicians' Union – Ben Benson and Stephen Brown

Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces – Caroline Davis

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council – Lisa Cleaver

STEAMhouse – Ruth Claxton

Talking Birds – Philippa Cross

The Architectural Heritage Fund – Dr Kelcey Wilson-Lee

University of Warwick – Chris Bilton

University of Wolverhampton – Dr Pritpal Sembi

Warwick District Council – Johnathan Branson

West Midlands Combined Authority – Salla Virman

Wolverhampton Art Gallery – Penelope Thomas

Writing West Midlands – Jonathan Davidson

Appendices

Appendix C: Research and reports relevant to this report

| Title | Researchers | Organisations | Link | Dates | Information |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| What Do You Do All Day?’ | Chris Bilton | University of Warwick and Culture Central | | April – May 2023 | Research project recruiting for participants at the time of writing this report. Looking to shine a light on the way freelance creatives manage their time. |
| Redesigning Freelancing | Professor Helen Kennedy, Kadja Manninen, Dr. Costanza Bergo, Phoebe Kowalska, Dr Caitriona Shannon | University of Nottingham and Creative UK | | Research taking place at the time of writing this report. | Understanding the position of UK Freelancers in the Creative Industries. Focussing on: working conditions, challenges faced, locating what works well, scoping existing support that is currently available, and the potential for new support strategies to be put in place. creatives manage their time. |
| The UK Live Music Industry in a post-2019 era: A Globalised Local Perspective | Rozbicka, P., Behr, A., Hamilton, C. | Aston University – Birmingham Live Music Project | The UK Live Music Industry in a post-2019 era: A Globalised Local Perspective — Aston Research Explorer | January 2022 | Mapping the live music ecology of Birmingham |

| Title | Researchers | Organisations | Link | Dates | Information |
|---|--|--|---|---------------|---|
| The Good Work Review | Heather Carey, Lesley Giles, Dr Dave O'Brien | Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre | Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre The Good Work Review (pec.ac.uk) | February 2023 | The Good Work Review is the first examination of job quality across the entire creative industries. The Review is based on 40 separate indicators, from evidence submitted by 120 organisations, and focuses on issues including fair pay, flexible working, paid overtime and employee representation. |
| Regenerative Futures Report | Elizabeth Lawal, Zarah Belgian, Loreal Stokes | More Than A Moment | Regenerative Futures MORE THAN A MOMENT (mtamgroup.co) | February 2023 | Report on progress for the More Than A Moment pledge and the organisations who have signed up to it. |
| Freelance Dance Artists and Employment Patterns: Survey Results | Karen Wood Helen Laws | | Freelance Dance Artists and Employment Patterns: Survey Results | 2022 | Survey findings from 74 freelance dance artists and their contractual arrangements and working patterns from 2019-2021. |
| West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis | Hatch, We Made That and Tom Flemming Creative Consultancy. | West Midlands Combined Authority | West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis 2021 | 2021 | Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the cultural sector in the WMCA area. |



FLEX, Cloud Cuckoo Land, photograph by Janthra Photography



China Plate, Gin
Craze by April
de Angelis and
Lucy Rivers,
photograph by
Ellie Kurtz

