

30 APRIL 2024, UNIVERSITY OF READING

THE FREELANCER EXPERIENCE: CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

Welcome to this national stakeholder workshop which gathers researchers, advocacy groups, sector organisations and screen professionals to discuss the significant challenges faced by freelancers today in the film and television industries, and the opportunities for positive change.

Over a third of broadcasters' workforces and 44% of film and video production workforces are self-employed. Yet against the backdrop of a slowdown in film, television and commercial production and commissioning, 68% of film and television workers are currently out of work (BECTU Feb 2024).

This workshop will examine proposed actions to address this crisis, reflect on existing good practices around recruitment and work cultures, and identify further sustainable interventions to create positive change. The workshop emerges out of the Screen Industry Voices project, which researches the lived experiences of industry professionals in the sector at this moment of volatile change.

WORKSHOP CONVENORS



Lisa Purse is Professor of Film at the Department of Film, Theatre & Television at the University of Reading, and Screen Industry Voices project lead. She has published widely on the ways in which digital technologies shape industry practices, cinema aesthetics and representation, and production cultures.



Sarah Byrne is Knowledge Exchange Fellow on the Screen Industry Voices project, and she is based at the University of Reading. Her research interests include event cinema and livestreamed theatre, and she has expertise in qualitative research in the creative industries.

PROGRAMME

09.00	Registration and refreshments at Minghella Studios, Whiteknights Campus
09.30	Welcome and Introduction
10.00	Session 1: The State of Freelancing
	Freelancers and the UK film and television industry slowdown <i>Rosie Carter and Jenny Tingle – BECTU</i>
	The mental and financial wellbeing of older workers in the UK film and TV industries <i>Rupert Lee-Jones – Film & TV Charity</i>
10.30	Session 2: Researching the Freelancer Experience
	The role of place in building and sustaining freelance careers <i>Amy Genders – University of West of England</i>
	The differential impact of COVID-19 on UK television workers <i>Jon Swords – University of York</i>
11.10	Break
11.30	Breakout Session 1: Mapping the Barriers to Change
12.30	Lunch
13.30	Session 3: Case Studies in Making Change Happen
	Parents and Carers in the Screen Industries <i>Jessica Levick – Raising Films</i>
	Supporting pathways for talent with disabilities <i>Nicole Steven – Channel 4</i>
	Supporting Freelancers <i>Dominique Unsworth – Resource Productions</i>
	Screen Academy Bradford <i>Ameenah Ayub Allen – Producer</i>
14.40	Break
15.00	Breakout Session 2: Mapping Pathways to Change
16.00	Plenary and closing remarks
16.30	Workshop ends

GUEST SPEAKERS



ROSIE CARTER *Research Lead, BECTU*

JENNY TINGLE *LDP Assistant National Secretary, BECTU*



The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union represents over 40,000 members who work in the UK's Creative Industries. The union negotiates with employers across the creative industries, not just on pay and conditions but on a range of issues that affect members' working lives: career development, contracts of employment, hours, leave, maternity, pensions and bullying and harassment. In February 2024 they published their 'UK film and TV industry slowdown: a sector in crisis' report, calling for better support for workers through and beyond the current crisis.



RUPERT JONES-LEE

Head of Impact and Research, Film & TV Charity

Rupert runs a department focused on research into the industry and its workforce, peer-to-peer community projects, internal evaluation and impact, and nations and regions engagement. His current focuses are: the next iteration of the Charity's 'Looking Glass' research on the mental health of the industry's workforce; a project about the impact on Arab, Jewish and Muslim industry colleagues of the situation in Israel and Gaza; and an ongoing project on loneliness among the industry's workforce. Previous projects include the research phase of the Charity's forthcoming £1m anti-racism project, 'Reel Impact', and work on a £3m COVID Emergency Relief Fund run with the BFI. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University.



DR AMY GENDERS

Senior Lecturer, University of the West of England

Amy's current work examines the role of freelance labour in regional production centres, and the cultural history of public service broadcasting, with a focus on the BBC in the nations and regions. She also co-founded the European Regional Screen Industries Research Network, which facilitates cross-national knowledge exchange concerning regional screen production and aims to forge a robust set of methodologies through which to conduct research into this area.

JON SWORDS

Senior Lecturer in Creative Industries, University of York

Jon has undertaken a range of research relating to the creative industries. His most recent explores the emergence and evolution of virtual production. With Dr Nina Willment, this project has included work with industry partners to understand how virtual production is changing how and where film and television is produced. This work has a particular focus on the potential environmental and diversity and inclusion impacts of virtual production. Jon has also undertaken research on working conditions for workers in television, and the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on TV freelancers. Jon's work on creative industries spatial policy has led to engagement with policymakers at local, regional and national scales.



JESSICA LEVICK

Founder, Raising Films

Since 2015 Raising Films has been carrying out groundbreaking research, building an online community, running training programmes, publishing resources and awarding the Raising Films Ribbon for best practice. Raising Films' work highlights that 1. Being a parent and/or carer in the screen industries is so often at odds with its working culture; 2. We are losing talent to this fact; 3. The burden falls disproportionately on women. We are a community interest company, founded by five people working in film and television, supported by an advisory board and industry ambassadors. Jessica Levick is an independent producer working across fiction and documentary, shorts and features; and a film exec at Channel 4 looking after approx. 200 of their legacy feature films, including TRAINSPOTTING and SEXY BEAST. She has one daughter who is 8.

GUEST SPEAKERS



NICOLE STEVEN

Creative Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Channel Four

My current role at Channel 4 is Creative Diversity & Disability Project Manager. Whilst working at Channel 4 I have helped create the disability network 4Purple which I co-chair. Over the past two years through 4Purple we have run a number of successful events and campaigns highlighting disability. The network is also a chance for people to communicate their concerns, ideas and personal stories to create positive change internally and externally for Channel 4.



DOMINIQUE UNSWORTH

Founder & CEO, Resource Productions

I have worked in film and television for 30+ years, starting as a runner in the 1990s for BBC, Sky and several studios, progressing onto researcher, assembly editor and camera operator, before setting up Resource Productions in 1999 and becoming an independent Producer. I secured my first professional film producing credit STAIN by Asham Kamboj in 2005 and went on to become Production Executive for the UKFC, B3 Media, BLANK SLATE in my 20s. Through this role I helped identify, develop and produce projects by diverse talent including Fyzal Boulifa (LES DAMNÉS NE PLEURENT PAS) and Mustafa Kseibati (DREAMING WHILST BLACK). From 2011 I produced exclusively through Resource Productions, finding and supporting under-represented filmmakers and regionally. Supporting more than c2700 underrepresented artists and filmmakers each year, I built up a full-time staff team and together we have produced 50+ shorts including commissions for Channel 4 and BBC.



AMEENAH AYUB ALLEN

Producer

Ameenah is a BAFTA-nominated and BIFA-winning producer and Screen Star of Tomorrow. She produced Sarah Gavron's critically acclaimed ROCKS, which earned 5-star reviews and seven BAFTA nominations, including Outstanding British Film and won both Casting and EE Rising Star, as well as five BIFAs, including Best British Independent Film. Most recently, she produced Carol Morley's TYPIST ARTIST PIRATE KING (2023) and co-produced Clio Barnard's Cannes selected ALI & AVA (2022), which was nominated for two BAFTAs and won two BIFAs. Other key credits include BRICK LANE (2007), ELECTRICITY (2014), MONSOON (2019) and ERASE AND FORGET (2017), which was nominated for the Original Documentary Award at Berlinale. Ameenah completed prestigious film business training and leadership programme, Inside Pictures, winning Most Likely to Succeed; Film London's Breaking the Glass Ceiling and currently BAFTA's Elevate (Producers).



About the Screen Industry Voices Project

Drawing on the expertise of University of Reading researchers, industry partners and advocacy groups, and the testimony of interviewees working in a range of contexts and at a range of levels, the project's 'oral history of now' is providing the foundation for bespoke interventions into current industry challenges in talent acquisition and retention, working and management cultures, and regional support for screen creatives at all stages.

The project is part of the Impact Accelerator Account programme at the University of Reading, which is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council from 2022 to 2025. The project is led by Professor Lisa Purse and is supported by Knowledge Exchange Fellows Sarah Byrne and Andrew Philip. To contact the project team, please email: siv@reading.ac.uk

<https://research.reading.ac.uk/screen-industry-voices/>