

RESPONSE FROM DIRECTOR GENERAL, BBC, LORD HALL TO KEITH MASSEY

Subject: RE: FREELANCERS & THE BBC

Date: 8 April 2020 at 15:29:36 BST

Dear Mr Massey

Thank you for writing and I regret that it is in these difficult circumstances. I wanted you to have the BBC's response on this important issue and I am sorry for the time that has taken. I'm sure you will appreciate that I needed to ensure we had the facts before replying, especially given that this is a rapidly-changing situation.

I can assure you that the BBC, along with all public service broadcasters, is committed to supporting the freelance community at this challenging time. We are acutely aware of the vital role you and your colleagues play in our industry. It is true to say that the global success and reputation of the UK creative industries depends on you and your colleagues. That's why I and the other CEOs of the UK's public service broadcasters wrote to the Chancellor the week before last to urge him to work with us to produce a package of measures for freelancers in our industry. We have all since signed a letter to the Culture Secretary, along with PACT, calling for freelancers to be made eligible for additional Government support.

We are all very mindful of the challenging situation that self-employed freelancers find themselves in. We understand that the Government support may not be available until June for self-employed freelancers, and know that may leave some people without an income in the meantime. To help, we are urgently considering measures to support all our freelance workforce, particularly in light of the clarifications the Government provided to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme over the weekend. We will be giving effect to these measures as soon as is practicable.

In the meantime, if you know of anyone that has an urgent and pressing need and works primarily on BBC programming, can you ask them to email bbchr@hremms.bbc.co.uk and mark it COVID19 so it will get to the right people to ensure we can best support you.

We have also committed to donate £500,000 to the Film and TV COVID19 Emergency Relief Fund, in partnership with the BFI, to help support workers across the UK's film and TV industry facing hardship in this unprecedented situation. The funds will come principally from BBC Studios, with contributions from public service commissioning teams, including BBC Content.

We do of course still have an essential requirement for freelance resource during this period, particularly in our News operation, and we are actively seeking freelancers available for opportunities to register on our off-air database, BBC Talent Cloud: <https://bbctalentcloud.co.uk>

I should also draw your attention to the programme of training and development events ScreenSkills is running at the moment – and they also have advice on how to apply for bursaries for those seeking funding.

We continue to work with the other PSBs – and I'm personally speaking with their CEOs – to try to find a sector-wide way of providing further support to freelancers. I hope that we'll have more to say soon.

We are in this together – and I know that we will continue to work together again during, and after, this situation has passed.

I will be responding similarly to other letters I have received on this matter. I would be happy for you to share this response with your members so that they are aware of the BBC's position and the support that is available to them.

Best wishes,
Tony

Tony Hall
Director-General