

IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND ARTS SECTOR

Findings of survey of artists and arts organisations

Arts Council of Northern Ireland, April 2020.

Contents

1	Summary	2
2	Introduction	3
3	How severe do you expect the financial impact of the coronavirus to be on you or your organisation?	3
4	Estimated impact on income	4
4.1	Individual Artists	4
4.2	Arts Organisations	5
5	What has or is likely to be the impact on your organisation as a result of the Coronavirus?.....	7
5.1	Organisation Word Cloud	7
5.2	Impact on Organisations	7
5.2.1	Activity	7
5.2.2	Income	8
5.2.3	Employment	9
5.2.4	Additional / unanticipated costs	11
5.2.5	Closure and insolvency	11
5.2.6	Community and Outreach work and audiences	12
6	What has or is likely to be the impact on you, as an artist, as a result of the Coronavirus?	13
6.1	Artist Word Cloud	13
6.2	Impact on Artists	13
6.2.1	Visual Artists	13
6.2.2	Writers and playwrights	16
6.2.3	Other artform areas	17
7	What is or is likely to be the impact on the community / sector you support?	18
8	Concluding Comments	20
	Appendix 1 – Survey questionnaire	21

1 Summary

- The web-based survey was open for 16 days between 26th March and 10th April 2020 during which time it generated 329 responses. Sixty per cent of responses were from individual artists / freelance workers, with a further 37 per cent from individual arts organisations.
- Based on a response from 152 artists (77 per cent of artists questioned) the average loss of earnings over the three-month period between March and May was estimated to be £3,756.
- Based on data from 108 organisations (89 per cent of all organisation respondents), anticipated income loss over the three-month period was expected to total £3.97m, an average of £36,714 per organisation. This varied significantly depending on the scale of the organisation.
- Those organisations dependant on earned sources such as the box-office income seem particularly vulnerable to financial losses.
- Asked to quantify the anticipated financial impact on a scale between 1 (not severe) and 5 (very severe), the average response from arts organisations was 4.15 and artists 4.33.
- The immediate closure of arts venues and organisations has had a direct and immediate impact on the provision of all services with the cancellation or postponement of: public facing classes, workshops, local and international touring and work within schools, outreach (and community engagement work)
- This places at greater risk vulnerable groups in society including older people with dementia and young people with poor mental health and wellbeing. It has also compromised the ability of some artists, working in inter and intra community contexts, to build relationships with participants through their creativity, potentially compromising important peace building work.
- The inability of arts organisations to deliver planned activity will have a severe impact on their ability to recruit and retain artists contracted to deliver services. In a minority of cases, artists contracts have been honoured, but most have been terminated.
- Evidence demonstrates a severe and immediate economic impact on artists, the consequence of their inability to create and deliver activity in a range of education and social settings. Respondents relied on their income as artists to support themselves and dependants with some already seeking financial help from family and friends to make ends meet.

2 Introduction

This survey was designed by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to determine the anticipated and actual financial impact of the coronavirus on artists and arts organisations operating in Northern Ireland.

The web-based survey was open for 16 days between 26th March and 10th April 2020 during which time it generated 329 responses. Sixty per cent of responses were from individual artists / freelance workers, with a further 37 per cent from individual arts organisations (Table 1).

A much smaller proportion of responses (categorised as 'other') were received from individuals with other connection to the arts including lectures, teacher and backstage technicians.

Table 1: Survey responses

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Individual Artist / Freelance Worker	198	60.18%
Organisation	121	36.8%
Other	10	3.04%
Total	329	

A copy of the survey used can be found in Appendix 1.

At the time the survey opened, government support for sole traders and businesses was still to be announced in detail, so some responses may have been made without this knowledge.

Findings from the survey are intended to provide a snapshot of the difficulties facing the sector and provide a narrative of the hardship faced by individual artists and organisations alike.

In most cases, financial impacts, in terms of anticipated loss of earnings / income were estimated, based on likely activity over the period specified. No evidence was requested to validate claims made.

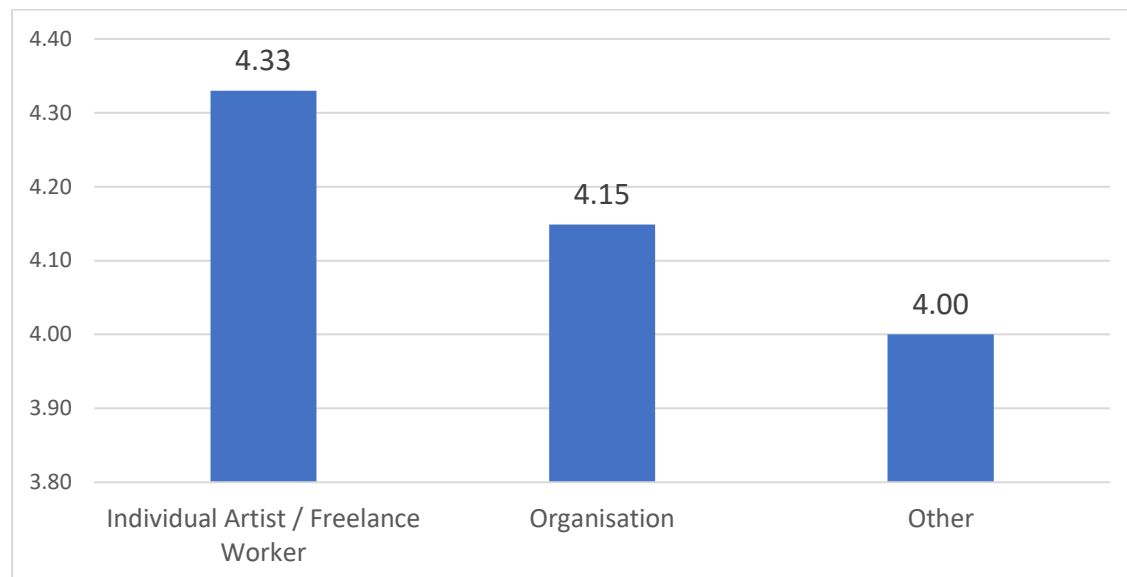
The Arts Council would like to extend its thanks to those who took the time to complete the survey. Findings will be shared with decision-makers in the Arts Council and our parent Department, the Department for Communities to help determine responses to the crisis.

3 How severe do you expect the financial impact of the coronavirus to be on you or your organisation?

All respondents were asked to quantify how severe they anticipated the financial impacts would be either on them (as artists) or their organisation on a scale between 1 (not severe) and 5 (very severe).

As can be seen in Figure 2, all three groups anticipate the coronavirus will have a severe impact on their finances, with artists anticipating the greatest impact. The mean for the entire sample was 4.15.

Figure 1: Perceived severity of financial impact on responding artists and organisations



4 Estimated impact on income

4.1 Individual Artists

Individual artists were asked to estimate what the financial impact was likely to be on them as individual artists / sole traders over the three-month period between March and May. Based on a response from 152 artists (77 per cent of responding artists) the average loss of earnings over this period was estimated to be £3,756.

Most respondents stressed that the estimates provided were not evidence based, reflecting only a rough calculation based on planned activity over the short to medium term.

For several artists, the seasonality and 'last minute' nature of employment made it difficult to estimate the financial impact with any degree of certainty. Some respondents chose not to respond to this question because of this.

Table 2 shows that the largest single proportion of artists (just over a third), anticipate losing between £2,000 and £3,999 over the three months to the end of May. These artists anticipate losing, in total, £140,700, an average of £2,654 per practicing artist.

Table 2: Anticipated income loss by range for individual artists (n=152)

Range	Number of artists	% of artists	Sum of loss by band (£)	% loss of income by band
£1 to £1,999	44	29%	46,830	8%
£2000 to £3,999	53	35%	140,700	25%
£4,000 to £5,999	32	21%	152,410	27%
£6,000 to £7,999	11	7%	67,500	12%
£8,000 to £9,999	2	1%	16,000	3%
£10,000 +	10	7%	145,000	26%
Total	152		568,440	

Of note is the financial cost born by a relatively small number of artists who earn most of their annual earning over this period. Ten artists (7 per cent of the sample) estimate losing £145,000 over the three months. This equates to £14,500 per artist.

4.2 Arts Organisations

Arts organisations were asked to estimate what they estimated the impact on their income was likely to be in terms of lost earnings and grant support to the end of May 2020.

Based on data from 108 organisations (89 per cent of all organisation respondents), anticipated income loss over the three-month period is expected to total £3.97m, an average of £36,714 per organisation.

As can be seen from Table 3, there was significant variability in anticipated losses across the sample, with nearly two-thirds of organisations (58 per cent), anticipating losses totalling £453,893 or £7,204 per organisation.

Table 3: Anticipated income loss by range for arts organisations (n=108)

Range	Count	% of organisations	Sum	% of income loss
£1 to £19,999	63	58%	453,893	11%
£20,000 to £39,999	19	18%	476,060	12%
£40,000 to £59,999	9	8%	397,000	10%
£60,000 to £79,999	5	5%	345,000	9%
£80,000 to £99,999	3	3%	243,693	6%
£100,000 +	9	8%	2,049,472	52%
Total	108		3,965,118	

A relatively small proportion of arts organisations (8 per cent) anticipate they will lose £2.05m in income to the end of May, this represents 52 per cent of the sample and equates to £227,719 per organisation.

This sub-set is largely comprised of large and medium scale venues that rely heavily on box-office and other earned income sources such as class fees as a source of revenue and who are particularly vulnerable given the seasonality of their income.

Several organisations stressed their reserves were unlikely to be able to sustain them financially over the period of the crisis despite the anticipated reductions in programming costs.

The immediate closure of arts venues and organisations had a direct and immediate impact on the provision of all services with the cancellation or postponement of public facing classes, workshops, local and international touring, work within schools, outreach (and community engagement work), choirs, university programmes, summer schools, Irish language courses, fledah, gallery programmes, stage productions and rehearsals.

“Our education and engagement programmes have been affected. Creative Child was only partially delivered before schools first started to ban external visitors and then close.”

“Our greatest concern is the prospect of cancelling our summer programme entirely. July and August are the focus points for our artistic programme with 230 young singers, 32 freelance musicians and welfare staff.”

“We have cancelled a production that was due to take place in Dublin in early May. Almost 50% of the grant funding for it had already been committed in fees and development work.”

“We have cancelled all activity including classes. If they are not resumed, we will have to re-pay registration fees.”

“The impact has been immediate and will be long-term. We have incurred loss of income from cancelled 'buy in' events.”

“The USA tour has had to be discontinued...this has had a double impact - loss of fees for 50% of the tour and additional costs to get the cast and crew home. We have postponed, or lost, our next project, a NI/regional tour for schools.”

“All events have been cancelled until the end of June (18 events) creating a shortfall in income of over £30,000.”

“All the arts festivals we have been working on have been cancelled.”

“We will lose a whole season of artistic programming. Loss of workshops, meetings and shared community programming.”

5.2.2 Income

Sixty-six per cent of respondents described the loss of income as the main consequence of the postponement or cancellation of activity. Organisations described the loss of earned income in the following areas:

Box-office (ticket sales), membership fees, course fees, bar sales, book sales, rent from tenants, artwork sales, training fees, workshop fees, room bookings, commercial income, donations, venue hire and merchandise sales. Festival and venues stressed the impact the shut-down will have on marketing and sponsorship income.

Anticipated losses were expected to be far greater than those saved through reductions in programming and core costs in areas such as marketing and publicity.

“[The organisations] business model relies significantly on income generated through our long-established Creative Learning Programme. At the time of writing we do not envisage being able to generate comparable income until earliest Autumn Term (as of September 2020).”

“The loss of fees from members could cost us between £300 and £600 per month. We have had to refund class fees up to £400 already. We can't generate any income until the lockdown is over.”

"We have lost significant revenue due to tenants being closed and events cancelled. This equates to approx. £2,000 per month and could result in staff reductions if continued."

"Loss of income through ticket sales, bar sales and sponsorship."

"Loss of income through membership, loss of employment for freelance artist, loss of shop sales."

"All our commercial income has stopped overnight. This is how we fund our office manager. Therefore, we will be dependent on the governments support..."

"We have lost out on events organised by Belfast City Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Council and Newry Mourne and Down Council."

"We have lost income from guarantees from local council venues and promoters."

"Loss of income through booking fees and reimbursement of deposits. Not enough revenue to cover rent, electricity or insurance costs."

"We have lost significant sponsorship revenue for our fleadhs, we feel these businesses will not be in a financial position to help in the aftermath of this crisis."

"It is likely we will either have to cancel, postpone or radically change the delivery of the EastSide Arts Festival and potentially the C.S. Lewis Festival. We have already been notified one of our sponsors (private business) has pulled out and others are likely to follow."

"We have not been able to access new corporate sponsorship for the 20/21 season or renew existing contracts given the severe impact Covid-19 has on the corporate sector."

"We are now closed, have lost vital income through ticket sales and associated footfall sales (Cafe Bar/ Venue Hire/ ancillary spend)."

Three organisations pointed to the impact the drop-off in income has and will have on their trading arms: commercial subsidiaries set up to become more sustainable and reduce reliance on grant funding.

"[Our] trading operation supports our overheads and unfunded salary costs and therefore is vital to future sustainability. Our reserves will have been utilised in Q1 to maintain working capital and cash flow."

"One of the greatest impacts for us moving forward will be the devastating impact the Coronavirus outbreak has had on our trading arm. The agency's order books have emptied overnight with all events cancelled. This place the agency in an untenable position and its 3 staff members in a very vulnerable position."

5.2.3 Employment

The inability of arts organisations to deliver planned activity will have a severe impact on their ability to recruit and retain artists contracted to deliver services. In a minority of cases, artists contracts have been honoured, but most have been terminated.

The ability of organisations to re-engage artists post crisis, will very much depend on demand for their services, with some anticipating this will not be until the autumn at the earliest.

"The COVID 19 uncertainty means that we are not certain in terms of securing appropriate required funding for 20-21 which will have an impact on [our ability to] ...provide new contracts to artists and facilitators, to continue with delivering planned projects with hard to reach young people and their communities."

"Lots of cancelled events that had been scheduled for freelance performers."

"We cannot commit to paying freelance staff without income to counterbalance. [This will] impact on recruitment in September, even assuming we can begin activity as normal in the autumn. It may lead to the organisation contracting fewer freelance staff, if we don't have the members to support that need."

"Freelance artists associated with installing the gallery programme has had to be stood down. Until the gallery opens again, we do not need their services."

"If we can't run events, we will lose income but crucially we won't be able to pay artists for the work we normally do which will lead to loss of income across dozens of artists and other arts organisations, local venues and some business partners."

"There are massive financial implications for our organisation... but also the impact it has on our musicians, many of whom have witnessed their entire livelihood evaporate in the past couple of weeks."

"We are still planning on honouring artists contracts despite the cancellation of events."

"We remain committed to paying contractors/freelancers according to their contracts so that the artists that we work with are not out of pocket."

"The singers are working on the music [for the next production] but they are not under contract so cancelling the show will result in a loss of earning for them plus the pianist and members of the creative team."

"We have had to cancel many sessions for our freelance artists resulting in a massive loss of earnings for them."

"We have lost opportunities to retain and recruit tutors due to the cancelled events."

"Our USP is social connectivity and our glorious building that people feel welcome and at home in. The impact will be significant for our network of tutors (over 200) who work regularly [in the venue] and we are scenario-planning on how we best engage and support that network."

"We have had to cancel our production, which had a cast and creative team of 17 (mostly freelance artists) and look likely to cancel or postpone our production in June/July with a cast and creative team of 19."

In addition to the recruitment of artists, organisations are having to consider laying off or furloughing core and front of house staff.

“We have had to furlough¹ 14 front of house staff for an indefinite period.”

“The loss in income may lead to staff reductions if the shutdown continues, we will have no alternative.”

“The loss of income from festivals will invariably lead to staff being laid off.”

“The Company office closed, and 6 freelance staff have been given month notice.”

5.2.4 Additional / unanticipated costs

Ten per cent of organisations (n=11) referred to the additional costs associated with enabling staff to work remotely and deliver creative content on-line.

“We are having to increase spend on IT to enable staff to work from home.”

“The staff team is currently working remotely and there may be additional administrative expenditure to enable this.”

“We have incurred additional IT expenditure to allow for home working arrangements.”

“We have had to purchase equipment necessary to run online classes.”

“We have incurred more expense relating to technology.”

“[We are] working with our facilitators and other organisations to try to ensure that, over the next few weeks, we can deliver a comprehensive creative arts programme online.”

“[We] are working hard to transfer services on-line (as much as we can) and there will be additional costs associated with web-development to make services accessible.”

5.2.5 Closure and insolvency

Four per cent (n=4) referred to the possibility of having to close, if financial assistance was not forthcoming.

“This is likely to put us out of business.”

“We don't know if our organisation will survive given all projects have ceased and we still have overheads to pay.”

“[We] are an independent charity that is not core-funded by ACNI. We rely on ticket sales income to pay our core costs... we will be facing insolvency in two months if we do not receive any financial assistance.”

“Our organisation is likely to close. We can't remain open without income.”

¹ A **furlough** is a temporary leave granted to employees, often due to prevailing economic conditions. These involuntary furloughs may be short or long term, and many of those affected may seek other temporary employment during that time.

5.2.6 Community and Outreach work and audiences

Twenty-three per cent of organisations (n=25) noted the impact the outbreak will have on their education and outreach programmes, a large proportion of which were to be delivered in schools to support or enhance the delivery of core-curricula activities.

Other organisations highlighted the vulnerability of many participants reached through community projects expressing concern that the inability to deliver this vital work would further compound conditions and break daily routines, so important for those with dementia.

“Our education and engagement programmes have been affected. [One] was only partially delivered before schools first started to ban external visitors and then closed. We were working in 15 nurseries schools.”

“Our refugee awareness programme has also been affected. The programme has been developed but we haven't been able to run the pilot sessions in schools. We do hope to be able to postpone until the autumn but are awaiting confirmation from our funder that this is acceptable.”

“Our year-round programme delivery to [older people] will be delayed and leave in even greater isolation those that are already isolated. We will try and figure out other ways to connect.”

“Complete cessation of community events and educational programme. Loss of income from scheduled community productions until August.”

“[The local Council] has cancelled our Peace IV project that we were facilitating with two schools in Randalstown.”

“Cancelled projects: All of our in-person workshops are cancelled, including a pilot day at the Playhouse in Derry and... a four-school project including cross-community and cross-border collaboration.”

“We have had to postpone the next stage of development of our special educational need's initiatives with special educational needs schools. This was a mentoring programme for students exploring educational and career opportunities in the Arts.”

“As a community arts organisation the main impact will be on the community who rely on our service. Many of our participants suffer ill health and the impact of our vital services being closed will have a big impact on the mental health of the community musician.”

A significant proportion of artists responding to this survey were unable to work because they could not access studios which they rented or had bought from a commercial provider. This had undermined their ability simply to create art. Those who were able to work spoke of the difficulty accessing materials to work with and for some, the break in earning meant they may not be able pay rent on their studio.

"I have lost my studio place, the only space for me to work and make artwork."

"My studio has been shut down. I no longer have a place to work."

"The studio I work in is now closed, so I simply can't produce work to sell."

"I was beginning a new batch of screen-printed work which has been put on hold until the studio opens again."

"Accessing suppliers for materials looks to be increasingly difficult."

"[I am] very worried about keeping my studio premises and covering simple living costs."

Compounding the inability to create, artists have been unable to generate income through the sale of their work, a significant proportion of whom sell through galleries, direct to the public / commercial sector through commissions or via commercial retail outlets. The cancellation of UK and international art fairs has also severely limited ability to reach new markets and network.

"Several exhibitions have been cancelled; others are looking uncertain. Gaining paid commission work looks increasingly challenging."

"The cancellation [of the London Ceramic Art Fair] has had significant impact on sales and the potential connections with collectors and galleries"

"The galleries are closed, so I have no income. There will be less money about in general for buying art in the long run."

"[The] shops which sell my work in physical retail spaces are closed."

"All of my arts projects have been cancelled or postponed therefore I will not have an income from my freelance work. My Solo Exhibition and my Group Exhibitions have been cancelled too therefore no sales in the offing."

"I am unable to complete commissions and... procure new commissions."

"All retail outlets in Northern Ireland, Ireland and England that stock my work have closed for the foreseeable future."

"I am especially dependent on gallery sales generated through tourism. This market has now closed."

"I am a ceramic artist and sell my work at St George's market, Belfast, every Sunday. As the market is closed for the foreseeable future, my income has stopped."

"No trade shows, art fairs, open studios or craft fairs which I rely on for a major part of my income."

"I had organised 3 x exhibitions in Denver University, Los Angeles and Salida Colorado to take place 20 March to 15 April. Having spent approximately £1400 on exhibition costs and flights, the trip has been cancelled."

Teaching in schools, colleges and universities represents an important component of many artists portfolios, this too has also stopped with only a minority of lectures continuing online.

Formal teaching or lecturing is often combined with facilitation work delivered by artists within communities as part of outreach work managed by arts organisations. Artist facilitators develop strong relationships with participants, some of whom rely on this engagement to maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

“I can't teach or do my outreach work anymore.”

“The cessation of numerous art classes that I facilitate/tutor for several community groups, art groups, day centres, social education centres.”

“I work primarily as a community-based artist, so all my work has been cancelled until the crisis is over.”

The inability to travel has had an impact on artists own career development and the cancellation / postponement of international cultural exchange opportunities has restricted opportunities to showcase the work of Northern Ireland artists and form cultural links with other countries around the world.

“I have had to cut short my 6-month Fellowship in Rome. I had not even completed half of it.”

“Invitations to visit China and India for cultural exchange workshops have been cancelled or potentially postponed.”

6.2.2 Writers and playwrights

Verbal artists including writers, playwrights, spoken-word artists and arts facilitators also spoke of the financial strain they face, especially as many have created multiple streams of income from their literary work all of which seem to have been impacted upon.

Public facing workshops generated a significant proportion of income for several respondents, a number also referred to workshops facilitated for other verbal artists – to support skills development.

“Most of my paid work (workshopping and events) has been cancelled. This includes 26 events in the diary as well as all the things that were in the pipeline.”

“I was facilitating several workshops a week and was particularly relying on the income. Just over a week ago, all workshops were cancelled and hence all my income... The stress caused by the uncertainty of this has been overwhelming.”

“As freelance literature and verbal arts coordinator for Community Arts Partnership, loss of income as a result of reduction in organisation's programmes/ funding and cancellation of events and programmes.”

“Workshops that I facilitate have been cancelled, so I've lost some income.”

Artists rely heavily on face-to-face engagements, and public interface with communities, to promote our work and practices.

“I am disconnected from live audiences and groups which is, by and large, how I sell my books, and generate an audience for my own work.”

“I can't read short stories at festivals or do public events.”

“Our last two performances were cancelled, and we had very few attendees at the ones that were still held, due to the virus scare. Four booked future live events have been cancelled.”

“I was writing for performance in this year's Book Festival in the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast - now I am not sure if it will go on now.”

“Events that would promote my work (spoken word events and my book launch for example) have been cancelled.”

“I am by trade a self-employed writer and I ordinarily generate my monthly income from poetry readings, panels, workshops (including library workshops), festivals, prison work, and book touring... All my work, bar one or two pieces of commissioned work which can be completed remotely, has been postponed or cancelled.”

“Some examples of recent cancellations include readings for St Patricks Festival (Axis Theatre), Listowel Writers Festival Kerry and National College of Art and Design.”

“Three large facilitation projects have been cancelled - these make up about 25% of my income for the year. Two play readings have been cancelled. One development week has been postponed for an unknown amount of time.”

Authors have also traditionally used book launches as platforms to promote, not just their book, but themselves and their wider work. This process is particularly important for early career artists, still working to create a profile and following. A number of book launches and tours have also been affected.

"I have a new book coming out in the coming weeks and no idea how to promote it as I normally would."

"My book can't be launched or toured."

"Delay in book publication. Lack of desire to write. Emotionally drained with no motivation."

"My work for the foreseeable future has been cancelled, leaving me with a severe loss of income and uncertainly as to how to rebuild a professional profile."

6.2.3 Other artform areas

The situation is just as acute for those working in other artform areas and the wider creative industries, with the inability to work resulting in reduced income or redundancy.

"Loss of technician work, particularly cash-in-hand small jobs for organisations that boosted my income."

"As a self-employed freelance dancer, the pandemic has resulted in all performance, teaching and choreographic work cancelled or postponed indefinitely. These are my sole sources of income."

"I am a freelance children's drama teacher and have had all bookings for the year cancelled."

"I provided a range of design services from set design to posters and graphics. All my work lined up from mid-March onward has completely fallen through."

"All community artwork immediately cancelled and lack of sales of any art/craft work in current crisis."

For freelance and self-employed artists reliant on their income through the arts to support themselves the situation is critical, leading to difficulties paying rent and **supporting** dependants.

"I have had to ask my family for help paying my rent this month."

"Compromised mental health as a result of above."

"No income. Living on savings at the minute. Have paused mortgage. Mentally, its a struggle. I can't go get a temporary job as I'm caring for my parents. I feel forgotten."

"Inability to pay house rent within the next two months. Unable to cover house bills and utilities as I do not have large reserves or savings. Still responsible for payment of studio rent."

"The indefinite nature of this postponement has left me with no income in the immediate weeks and months, and a sheer terror as to how I am going to manage in the longer run, as a single parent of three children."

7 What is or is likely to be the impact on the community / sector you support?

Responses to this question demonstrated the diverse range of settings artists and arts organisations operate in and articulated the impact stopping engagement will have on vulnerable groups within Northern Ireland society.

Children and young people in schools, care homes, hospitals, youth clubs

“The loss of schooling for Irish medium educated children will have real repercussions linguistically.”

“I work in hospitals as a Clown Doctor and cannot enter the wards to visit very ill children.”

“I will not be completing work on a fantastic project involving post-primary students; an all-female piece of development work that has been planned for over a year.”

“The focus of my work is on young people. The need for them to physically engage with each other, at a time when peer affirmation is important for social development, is crucial. I can’t do this work anymore.”

Older people

“Complete stop on outreach work. Children and elderly affected the most. Their mental health is going to suffer.”

“One of the projects [I am working on] is a reminiscence project with elderly people in nursing homes - the very people more likely to be at risk... and those who will suffer so much from not having their families, let alone artists come in to facilitate creative, fun, stimulating activities with them.”

Mental health and wellbeing

“[There has been] virtually a complete end of contact with community groups, numerous people who are socially isolated, individuals with mental health issues who derive much benefit and support from their creative outlets and the social connections that arise from these.”

“Groups I facilitated can no longer meet therefore there is an impact on their mental health - leaving people without the local support they need.”

“I worry that the lack of project work will compromise the mental health of previous groups and individuals I worked with.”

Minority ethnic communities

“People from local communities (all over NI) who will not have access to multicultural outreach events which I am normally working at as a performer.”

People with disabilities

“One of my projects is focused on autistic self-advocacy in healthcare settings, and in that capacity, I can say that Coronavirus is an existential threat to my community.”

“I would be worried about how disabled people in the community will suffer as a result of no contact or art workshop therapy.”

LGBTQ

“Cancellation of ten planned performance and writing workshops for early queer students about to enter third level education in September.”

Communities and social isolation

“There will be a reduction in engagement with peers, community members will be isolated from support networks and there will be a reduction in group creativity and empowerment. Lack of personal development through connection with others.”

“Reduction in outreach work, cancelled an exhibition that was to feature work from a group I worked with over several months in Donegall Pass.”

“The smaller towns [we] reach out to will cease to have any theatrical interaction and be left with Netflix and online content. The loss of theatre as a live medium means stories aren’t being told and shared.”

“I work as a dancer in healthcare, it may quite a while before I can enter such spaces, which can lead to social isolation for individuals living alone in the community.”

“It will be difficult as a one to one approach within the theatres provides great opportunities to communicate and strengthen community spirit.”

Respondents also spoke of the longer term impact the close down will have on audience’s willingness to engage with the arts and the disproportionate impact reduced outreach will have on deprived communities.

“The audiences will lose their connection and engagement with the work and the organisations and it will be much harder to bring them back in the galleries and the theatres.”

“Outreach work will be cancelled and the less privileged will be hit by this. Art and creativity are essential during difficult times, but it is the first thing that gets overlooked and lost.”

“I am worried this pandemic will push people further away from live theatre and live events.”

8 Concluding Comments

Evidence indicates the financial impact of the coronavirus and subsequent lockdown will be considerable with significant implications for some organisations on their ability to trade and artists to earn a living wage, many of whom rely entirely on their income as artists to support dependants.

Organisations with restricted reserves and those reliant on earned income sources (for example box-office income) are particularly vulnerable. Large organisations have furloughed some front-of house staff to reduce core expenditure, indicating that a long-term shutdown may lead to permanent job losses.

Some organisations have chosen to deliver services on-line, incurring additional costs as a consequence but maintaining some contact with customers. This was unlikely to yield the same level of income as face-to-face services and was thought by some to compromise artistic integrity.

The closure of arts venues, theatres, community art facilities, galleries, schools and community hubs has severely restricted the ability of organisations to deliver community outreach and public facing services, vital for the wellbeing of vulnerable groups in society and for artists (working as facilitators) to earn an income and develop their artistic practice.

This has compromised the ability of some artists working in inter and intra community contexts to build relationships with participants through their creativity, potentially compromising important peace building work.

Arts organisations have not been able to recruit artists to deliver services as part of festivals or productions, pointing to the need to postpone or cancel existing contracts. Some producing organisations identified potential longer-term consequences with recruitment levels post-shutdown likely to be lower due to restrictions in demand and the need to restrict programme expenditure.

A significant proportion of visual artists have been unable to work since the shutdown as access to their studios has been cut-off. This has had a creative impact and further compounds the economic consequences of their work not reaching markets due to the closure of galleries and retail outlets.

Appendix 1 – Survey questionnaire

1. Your name
2. In what capacity are you responding to this survey?
 - Organisation
 - Individual Artist / Freelance Worker
 - Other
3. What has, or is likely to be the impact on you, as an individual artist, as a result of the Coronavirus?
4. What has or is likely to be the impact on your organisation as a result of the Coronavirus?
5. If, as an artist or organisation, you anticipate your income to fall as a result of the Coronavirus, please estimate by how much to the end of May 2020.
6. What is or is likely to be the impact on the community / sector you support (e.g. reduction in outreach work).
7. What steps (if any) have you been able to put in place to mitigate these impacts?
8. How severe do you expect the financial impact of the coronavirus to be on you or your organisation?
9. What additional support would be helpful / needed at this time?
10. Anything else you want to tell us?