



Emergency Grant Programme: Survey of Individual Artists

Findings from a dedicated survey of artists and creatives in receipt of grant support under the Arts Council's Covid-19 Emergency Support Programme



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1.0 Key findings

£11.3m

Distributed to individual artists / creatives as part of the Arts Council's Covid-19 emergency programme. This represented **44%** of all funding distributed to both artists and arts organisations.



1,030

Responses to the survey (11th–31st May)



Responses were received from artists / creatives working across all creative industries categories, with the largest proportion of responses from those working in 'music, performing and visual arts' (**76%**).



97%

sustained loss of earnings as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. **76%** lost more than half their income.



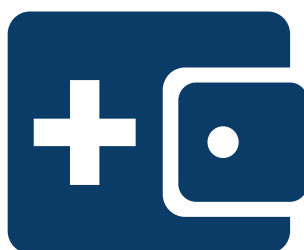
48%

used emergency funding to purchase equipment that increased the quality of their work.



90%

stated that their grant contributed to maintaining their creative skills in the absence of work. **59%** did not need to seek employment outside the sector as a result of funding.



84%

stated that grant support had relieved immediate stress. However, **50%** were less optimistic about their longer-term financial security.



Artists demonstrated a high level of hardship and social disadvantage at both an individual and household level as a direct consequence of the pandemic. This was compounded for those living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland.



£12,960

the average loss of artist's earnings as a result of the pandemic.



49%

of projects targeted young people. 39% targeted older people, where a project component to the work was specified.

77%

developed new artistic content and **72%** new skills as a result of the funding.



2.0 Introduction

This report presents a summary of findings from a survey of individual artists in receipt of Emergency Programme funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) between June 2020 and March 2021.

The survey was designed by the strategic development team to determine whether policy objectives developed to support arts and culture organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic have been met. In this instance, the policy objective was to:

- Stabilise viable organisations and venues within arts, heritage, culture and language sectors to enable them to survive, adapt and renew;
- Protect skills/jobs to adapt and build back better and
- To enable publically-funded organisations to identify opportunities to increase access, participation and capacity for people and communities most disadvantaged and socially excluded in society.

Findings from this survey will help to establish how effective the programme has been and support future programme design.

The extent of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the arts and culture sector in Northern Ireland was so significant it required us to make changes to our own strategic framework: Inspire, Connect, Lead (2019–2024)¹. In particular, the balance of support committed to over the past 18 months had to be reviewed.

The Emergency Programme represents a key policy response by the Arts Council, in partnership with the Department for Communities, ensuring that our supports have remained aligned to the needs of the sector, the priorities of government and the ambitions of wider NI society.

Supporting tables and survey template are available via these links.

This is one of two reports examining the impact emergency funding has had on the arts / cultural sector in Northern Ireland – the other looks at the impact funding had had on **organisations** and can be found on the Arts Council website.

Supporting tables (Artists)

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Tables-Artist.xlsx>

Survey template (Artists)

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/SMR-ACNI-Artist-Questionnaire.pdf>

Arts Council website:

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/>



¹ ACNI Strategic Framework: Inspire, Connect, Lead (2019–2024)

3.0 About the artist support programmes

A total of £26m was distributed to arts organisations and individual artists / creatives between June 2020 and March 2021.

This report focusses on the grant support distributed to individual artists and creatives over this period. This comprised 2,869 awards totalling £11.3m (44%) of the total emergency funding.

Further details of each individual programme / scheme can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

Artists Emergency Programme

Award Decision May 2020

224

Number of grants awarded

£547,320

Total

Individual Emergency Resilience Programme (1 and 2)

Award Decision Oct 2020 and Feb 2021

2,645

Number of grants awarded

£10,751,994

Total

Grand Total

2,869

Number of grants awarded

£11,299,314

Total

4.0 Methodology



The Arts Council of Northern Ireland appointed the independent research company Social Market Research (SMR) through a targeted procurement process in April 2021.

SMR reviewed and cleaned the recipient database, applying a unique identifier to each record. This ensured data would be anonymised, removing any risk of disclosure. SMR also supported the Arts Council to refine the survey instrument by incorporating dedicated routing and filtering.

The survey was **designed to gauge the opinions of grant recipients at an overall emergency funding programme level, not at an individual scheme level.**

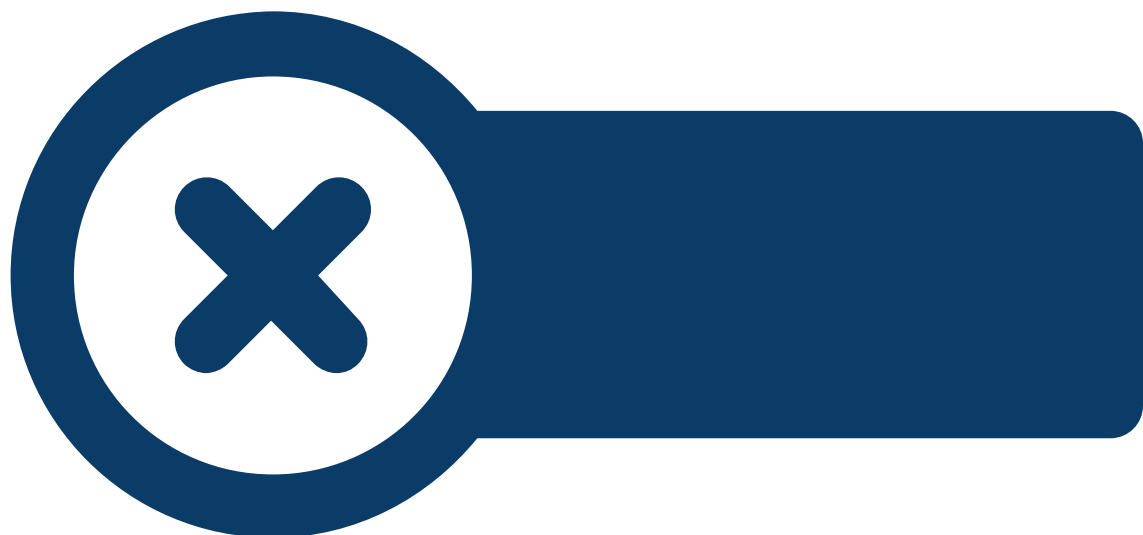
After coding, the survey was scripted before being uploaded onto the SNAP survey platform for testing and piloting.

The survey link was emailed to all unique individuals who accepted and were in receipt of one or more grant awarded (n=2,294)

The initial invitation to participate was emailed on 11th May 2021, with subsequent reminders issued on 18th May 2021 and 25th May 2021.

The survey was closed on the 31st May 2021, **generating 1,030 completed returns which equates to a response rate of 45%**. Given the high response rate and that all key groups were proportionally represented in the achieved sample, it was decided not to weight the survey data.

An anonymised data file was forwarded to ACNI by SMR on project completion. The survey, including all data handling, was implemented in accordance with GDPR requirements, with relevant permissions for data use managed through the survey instrument. Only complete responses are used in this analysis.



5.0 Findings

5.1 Survey characteristics

Over two thirds of respondents received funding from the Individual Emergency Resilience Programme (Round 2) which closed in February, 2021

14%

Artists Emergency Programme

44%

Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme 1

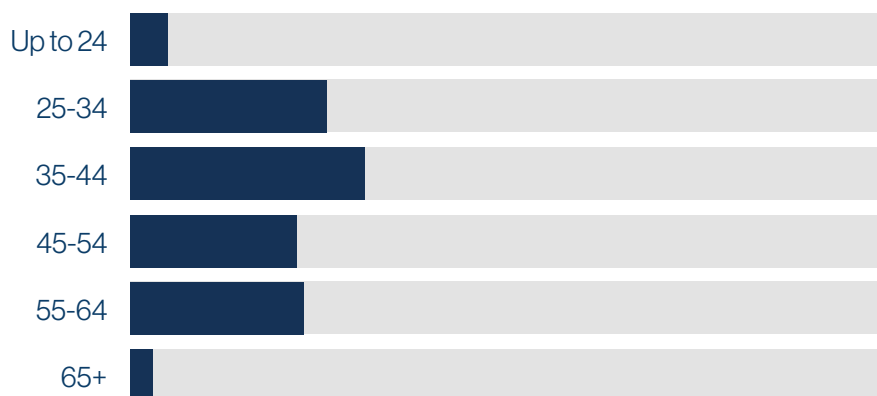
68%

Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme 2



Almost three in every 5 participants were male (including transgender men)

The majority of respondents (**57%**) were aged between 25 and 44 years old



15% of survey respondents had a health condition that limited their daily activity to some extent

Funding support reach

Emergency funding support reached a much wider constituency of creatives than is normally the case for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland – helping to support those working in film, TV and photography, advertising and marketing and museums and galleries.

Over three quarters of artists / creatives responding to this survey worked solely or partly within the sub-sector music, performing arts and visual arts.

76%

Music, performing and visual arts

20%

Film, TV, video, radio, and photography

13%

Other

8%

Crafts

3%

Publishing

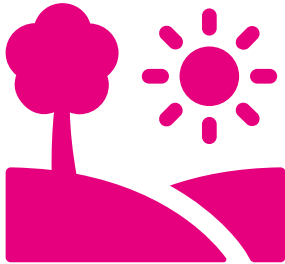
3%

Advertising and marketing

Where respondents were based...

27%

Rural



73%

Urban



The location data described is based on postcodes provided by artists at the application stage. In the majority of cases these relate to where artists / creatives live. Thirteen postcodes could not be mapped either because they were missing or inaccurate.

Local Government District

5%

Antrim and Newtownabbey

10%

Ards and North Down

6%

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon

38%

Belfast

5%

Causeway Coast and Glens

9%

Derry City and Strabane

3%

Fermanagh and Omagh

9%

Lisburn and Castlereagh

5%

Mid and East Antrim

5%

Mid Ulster

7%

Newry, Mourne and Down

Deprivation

18% of respondents lived within the 20% most deprived areas of Northern Ireland

Based on NISRA's Multiple Deprivation Measure (2017)

5.2 COVID-19 financial impact

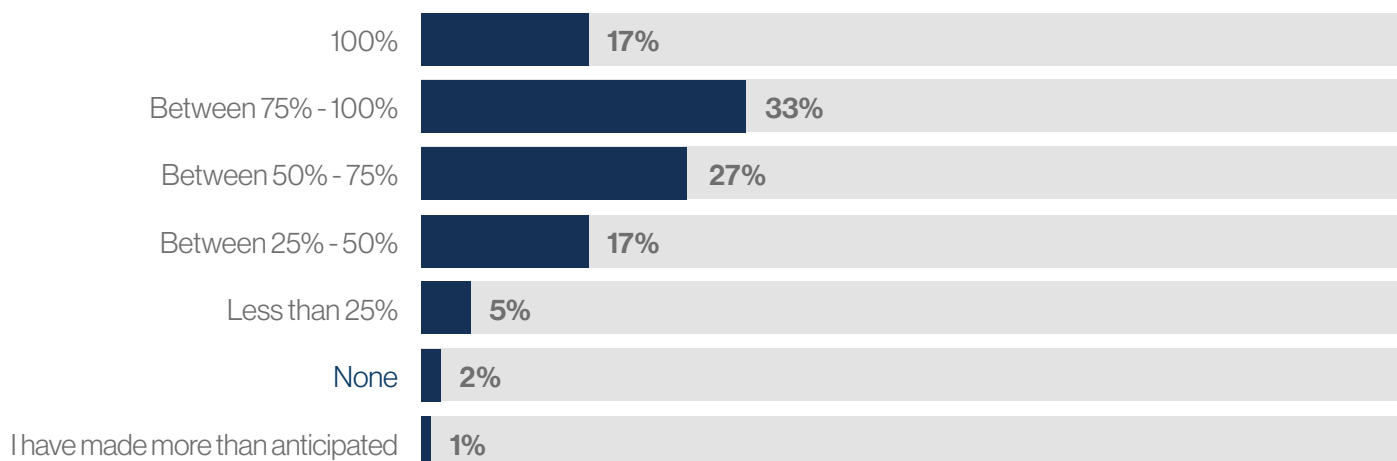
A series of indicators were developed to establish, in broad terms, the extent of hardship felt by artists as a result of the pandemic.

Findings demonstrate that artists and creatives were under significant financial stress prior to receipt of emergency funding and that, for artists living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland, these stresses were magnified.

I had to completely remove any non-essential spending	74%
I had to cut back on luxuries	39%
I had needed to receive universal credit	27%
I had been unable to make rent / mortgage payments	24%
I had struggled to meet basic food costs	22%
I had struggled to pay for heating	21%
Prefer not say	8%
I was unaffected	1%

Income lost as a result of the pandemic

97% of respondents sustained some loss of earnings as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, with **76%** losing more than half of their income. Half (**50%**) lost more than **75%** of their income.



Loss of earned income

Average loss of earnings at an overall level was £12,960 per individual artist. Losses were, on average, greater for men (£14,802) than females (£10,133).

The combined, cumulative loss of income for all respondents was £12.8m. Extrapolating this to all 2,294 artists / creatives in receipt of emergency funding, would mean lost earnings totaling £28.5m

	Average loss of earnings (£)	Sum of lost earnings (£)
Male (including trans men)	14,802	8,673,944
Female (including trans women)	10,133	3,749,356
Non-Binary (e.g. androgynous)	11,591	127,500
Prefer not to say	12,136	267,001
Total	12,960	12,817,801

Percentage of total income in 2020/21 provided through Covid-19 Emergency grant from ACNI and other sources

Emergency grant support provided by ACNI and other government or philanthropic sources made up between 50% and 100% of lost annual income, for almost half of respondents.

100%	6%
Between 75% - 100%	20%
Between 50% - 75%	21%
Between 25% - 50%	29%
Less than 25%	24%

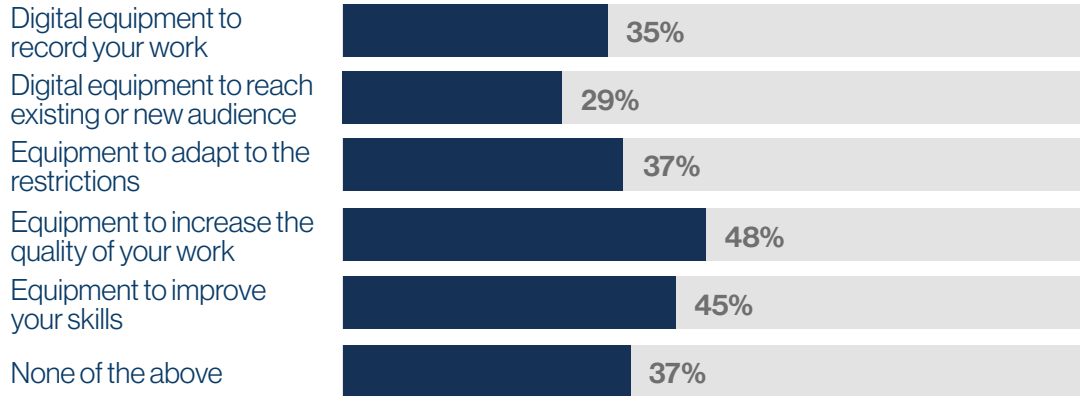


5.3 Project activity and outputs

Covid-19 Emergency funding received

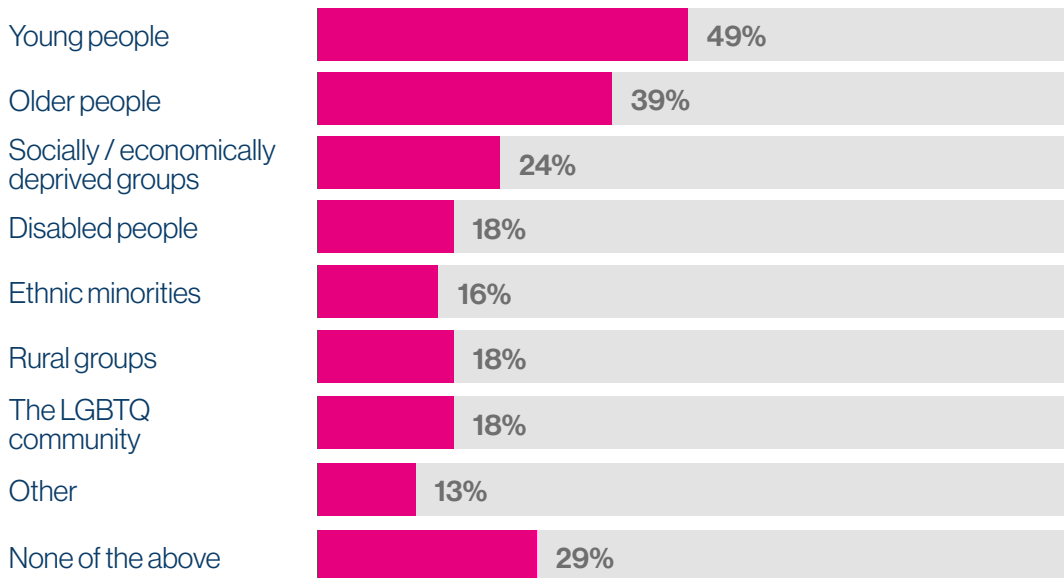


Equipment purchased



Targeted groups

Findings only relate to respondents in receipt of funding for project based activity (n=462).



Project design focus

Where emergency funding was used to develop and deliver projects, isolation / loneliness and mental health / wellbeing were the most frequent themes addressed.

40%

Mental health and wellbeing

35%

Isolation and loneliness

14%

Older people

12%

Peace & Reconciliation

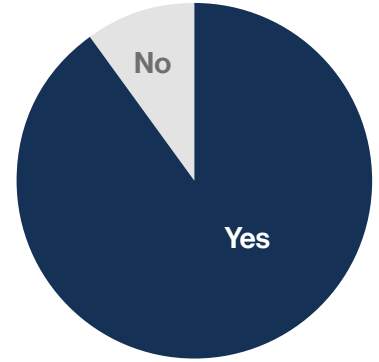
Benefits of ACNI emergency funding support

In the absence of work and as a result of the emergency grant support **90%** of artists / creatives were able to maintain their core creative skills – protecting the creative talent, so vital for enhancing education, health and the economy.

5.4 Grant impacts and future prospects

Covid-19 Emergency funding received

9 out of 10 respondents said the emergency funding protected their careers in the creative industries.

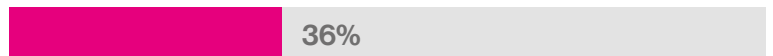


Employment status (at May 2021) and considered impact of not receiving grant support

I am still trading as a creative practitioner



I would have ceased to trade as a creative practitioner without emergency funding



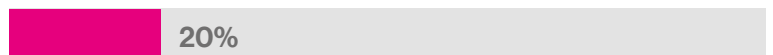
I would have suffered financial stress to maintain my creative career without emergency funding



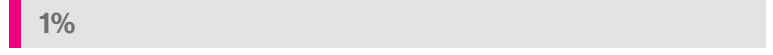
I would have sought employment in other areas without emergency funding



I would have needed to apply for universal credit without emergency funding



None of these statements apply to me



Over three quarters of respondents (**77%**) stated that grant support allowed the development of new artistic content that they can use in the future



Impact of grant on financial security and creative futures

84%

My immediate financial stress has been relieved

83%

I have developed new skills to help me adapt to the new operating environment

82%

I have adapted / developed my creativity in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

50%

My medium to long-term financial security has improved

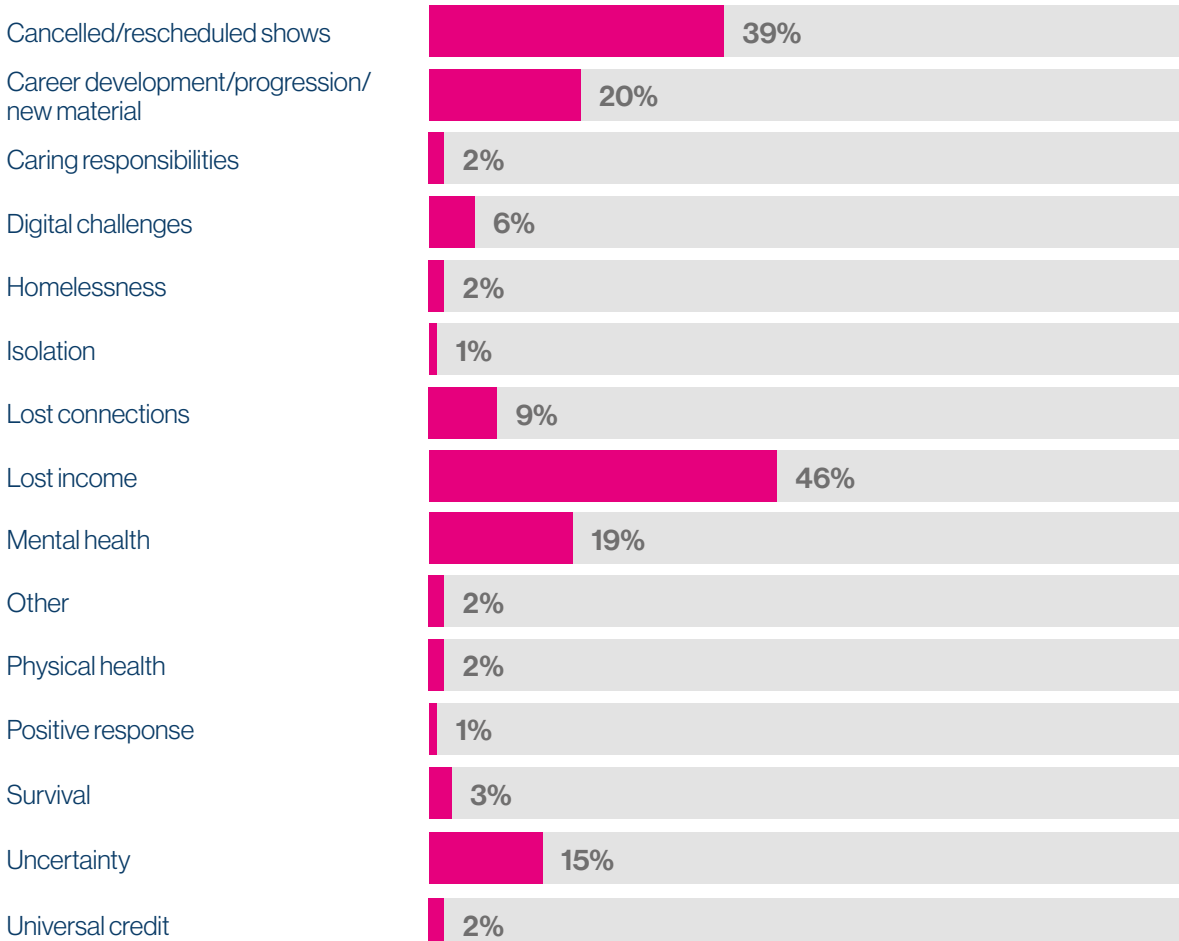
63%

My future career as a creative professional is more certain

58%

The funding has allowed me to form new creative partnerships

Self-reported impact of Covid-19 and related restrictions - core themes



Artists surveyed were asked whether they would like to tell us anything further about the impact of COVID-19 and the related restrictions they have had on them and their work. Here are some of their responses:

"It has absolutely decimated the sector. In a highly skilled profession...When Covid hit, all touring, theatre, session work, and live performance stopped, and is still stopped. I went from earning a comfortable living in an exciting and vibrant field to moving home with my parents and receiving Universal credit."

"The restrictions and the pandemic placed a **huge weight on me mentally**, making it **extremely difficult to access creativity**. This directly **impacts my ability to make work**."

"My work **ceased literally overnight** and in fact even though restrictions have begun to open up (Indoor Hospitality etc.) Music/ Entertainment/Singing & Dancing is still not permitted so I still cannot work or make a living and still do not know when I will be permitted to."

"I have not been able to do any directing work, I had shows cancelled and I lost out on opportunities for touring and profiting on shows I had been building up for years. **It has set me back a number of years in my career trajectory**."

"The pandemic had a devastating impact on my professional practice. The support was a fantastic lifeline that kept me afloat in the challenging times. **I am now worried about the post pandemic climate for work**. I anticipate it will be some time before things can return to normal."

"When the studios closed and my classes stopped, especially as when I couldn't support myself financially at about the time of the holidays, **I lost my sense of identity and fell into depression**."

"My industry has been decimated. I have now had to seek employment outside of the entertainment industry. I have built up a successful 15 year career and am now having to contemplate leaving the industry and all I've known professionally, for good."

"It caused all my work that I had built up over many years to disappear overnight. **It felt like we didn't matter. That our industry didn't matter**. Also, that despite many thousands of pounds spent training, the many personal sacrifices made to devote our lives to the arts, the message was that we were "not viable" - despite the fact that throughout this year, many have turned to film, TV, music, to help cope with this difficult time."

6.0 Appendix

6.1 Individual programmes / scheme

Artist Emergency Programme

Number of grants taken-up	224
£ sum of awards made	£547,320
Timeframe	Between April and May, 2020
Funding sources	Creative Support Fund (DfC) and National Lottery
Programme aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To support proposals from artists to research, design and deliver presentations of specific showcases, performance(s) and/or other forms of public presentation aimed at groups and communities otherwise facing barriers to the arts; and2. Engage the arts sector in employment by providing individual artists, creative practitioners and performers with financial support to create work and make a vital contribution to the well-being of communities.

Individuals Emergency Programme (Rounds 1 and 2)

Number of grants taken-up	2,645
£ sum of awards made	£10,751,994
Timeframe	Open for two rounds between September 2020 and February 2021.
Funding sources	Initially supported by the Department for Communities and Northern Ireland Screen, and subsequently under the NI Executive Barnett Consequential allocation
Programme aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To sustain and build artists creative, professional and technical skills; and,2. To enable artists and the wider creative sector to adapt to the new market conditions that emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

6.2 About the Arts Council's Strategic Development Function

The Art Council's strategic development function is aligned to supporting and delivering its five year plan and annual business plan.

We use a programme of research to understand how art and culture impacts people's lives. Through research and evaluation, we produce evidence and intelligence that supports art and culture organisations to improve their practice and to demonstrate the impact they are having.

Designated as a producer of Official Statistics, we produce a range of annual and stand-alone reports to inform art and culture policy and demonstrate alignment to government's key targets as set out in the Programme for Government.



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July 2021