

# Employers welcome SMC guidance to tackle 'class crisis' in the creative industries

A new toolkit aimed at widening access to the creative industries for people from working class backgrounds has been launched today in an attempt to tackle a 'class crisis' in the sector.

The [Socio-economic Diversity and Inclusion: toolkit for the creative industries](#) – developed by the Social Mobility Commission in partnership with businesses across the creative industries – offers practical support and guidance to creative employers on how to identify and remove invisible barriers that arise at every stage of the employee journey.

According to new research, just 27% of the creative industries workforce comes from a working class background, compared with 39% of the wider UK workforce. For the 'advertising & marketing' and 'music and performing arts sub-sectors', the percentage of the workforce from a working class background falls to just 23%.

The unique structures of the creative industries workforce are cited as driving this imbalance, with factors including the high numbers of 'professional' jobs within the sector, an entrenched reliance on freelance workers as well as an abundance of unpaid internships creating additional barriers to entry for those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Disproportionate numbers of those in senior roles who attended private school or Oxbridge may also have served to perpetuate understandings of cultural 'fit' and accepted behavioural codes within the creative industries, presenting an additional barrier to those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Employers and industry groups from across the creative industries' sub-sectors have welcomed the toolkit. Those who have contributed or endorsed the toolkit include: The BBC, BFI, UK Screen Alliance, Youth Music British Fashion Council, Museums Association, British Institute of Interior Design and the Publishers Association.

Responding to the release of the toolkit, Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

A working class background should never be a barrier to a successful career in the creative Industries. We want to increase access to opportunities across the board as part of our plan to level up. This new toolkit will help support creative firms become more inclusive and give people the chance to forge a successful career in these exciting sectors.

Caroline Norbury, CEO, Creative Industries Federation, said:

If creativity is to shape a better future for all, then it has to reflect the diversity and breadth of experience found across the country. Ensuring opportunities exist for creative individuals to thrive, no matter their background, is an important step towards achieving this. The Social Mobility Commission's toolkit is a critical resource for addressing the unacceptable imbalance of socio-economic backgrounds found in the UK's creative industries

Farrah Storr, Social Mobility Commissioner and Editor-in-Chief, Elle UK said:

It's been great to see so many within the industry collaborate on the development of this toolkit. For the whole creative sector to remain vibrant, it is vital that we tap into the full potential of the whole population, not just a privileged few.

The creative industries create the culture of the nation, which in turn necessitates full participation from the entire nation. As organisations adopt the actions set out within this toolkit to make socio-economic inclusion a reality, we will become an industry that is both rich in diverse viewpoints, experiences and stories as well as an industry that is built to last.

Heather Carey, from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and Work Advance said:

As we rebuild following the Covid-19 pandemic, it is vital that we widen access to opportunities created in high-growth, high-skill parts of the UK economy, like the Creative Industries. Our research provides definitive evidence on the causes of class imbalances and sets out an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of change to enhance social mobility into the Creative Economy. Government and Industry must seize this moment, as we emerge from an unprecedented crisis, to address the long-standing inequalities in the Creative sector and to grasp the potential offered by diverse talent in the UK to cement our creative excellence and competitive advantage, globally.

The Social Mobility Commission is hosting a public launch event on Monday 11 October, to be chaired by Farrah Storr, SMC Commissioner and Editor-in-Chief of Elle and featuring a discussion with industry insiders: Jamie Gill, CEO ROKSANDA and Executive Board, British Fashion Council; Della Hill, Creative Lead at Literature Wales and Emily Jones, Senior Producer at Sage Gateshead. [Register for the event at SocialMobilityWorks.org](https://www.socialmobilityworks.org)

Heather Carey from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre will

present the findings of PEC's new research report: [Social mobility in the Creative Economy: Rebuilding and levelling up?](#)