



**Authors'
Licensing and
Collecting
Society**

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

27 March 2020

Dear Chancellor

Re: New government measures regarding the self-employed, including authors, writers and freelancers

We are very happy to see that the Government has acted to support the self-employed at this time. These measures will offer peace of mind to many, but we hope that the Government will take further action to support this group in the short term – considering the fact that they will not have access to financial aid until June – and that it will continue to monitor the need to support self-employed and freelance workers at this time.

We recently asked for freelancers to be included in plans for an income guarantee. Many authors and writers – who form the bedrock of our successful creative industries – subsist on low incomes while often having second or third jobs to make ends meet; sources of work which have also widely dried up. Freelancers have lost huge amounts of income now as a result and with generous plans already on offer for full-time employees, it is a relief to see this necessary step towards equity for the self-employed.

We are thankful for this unprecedented move that will help millions of people and hope some additional measures may be taken to support those needing relief in the short term. Successive surveys of authors' earnings over recent years paint a stark picture, revealing a consistent pattern of steeply declining incomes. As a result, we would expect that many authors will be particularly susceptible to the financial hardship caused by the current crisis. We hope the Government will be open to further action to support authors and freelancers in order to bridge the gap between now and the time at which the scheme announced today would offer payment.

We hope that, in the delivery of this scheme, questions of eligibility will not disqualify authors who are deserving of these measures. Writers may draw their income from a variety of sources with infrequent payments and this can lead to their losing out to systems designed for simple, stable incomes.

It would be good to know, for instance, what authors can expect from the categorisation of majority or minority of income from self-employment under this scheme; what will happen with people who do not have three years of self-employment tax returns or who are newly freelance; and whether it would not be simpler, and more equitable given the £2,500 monthly limit, to take gross income into account, rather than net taxable earnings/profits.

We thank you for your efforts so far in taking steps to deliver these measures and offer our support in any additional efforts to support authors. We are in contact with our more than 100,000 author members, so if we can be of help at this time do not hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes and yours sincerely

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