

Raising Films

RESPONSES FROM THE RAISING FILMS COMMUNITY TO THE RAISING OUR FUTURES INITIATIVE

About Raising Our Futures

Launched at the beginning of lockdown in the UK (March 2020) Raising Our Futures asked one central question; when the current coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis is over, what will the film and TV landscape look like?

The initiative encouraged the film and TV sector to consider how the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic might help shape a better, fairer, safer and more inclusive future for the industry. Ideas, thoughts and suggestions from the Raising Films community were shared through a dedicated page on the Raising Films website.

@ritaosei - Director, Writer, Producer

A future where the creativity, ideas, work, ethics, methods, as well as the support from Black, Asian and women of all ethnicities is equally valued, appreciated, celebrated and rewarded.

Line Producer

To finally have a proper crew pay structure & T&Cs for low and mid-range budgeted projects. Major motion picture rates are sorted and agreed, but the sub \$30m films have been left in the wilderness for too long and the effects are not just financial, but also through the crew's approach to productions (inherited through crew working on MMPs). The work climate before Covid-19 had become horrible to work in for many reasons. With a real influx of money coming into the UK like never before, we all know it has morphed the industry and has now twisted it to a rather unhealthy industry to work in - as we have seen by the large numbers of non-technical crew leaving the industry and/or having mental and stress issues.

Speaking as a line producer having just produced a mid-range budgeted film before the pandemic, I have never before had so many issues with crew and the systematic bullying towards the production team and towards myself. The 'bullying' would manifest itself in many different forms across various departments because of a culture that is now steamed through financial. My honest opinion to resolve this growing issue across the industry is to finally iron out a fair rate structure including and especially a T&Cs that all can agree upon both employer and employee alike. The current pseudo-unionised approach of each department looking after their own does not work pure and simple. BECTU can say what they want but it just doesn't work as they just don't see the big picture nor do they care to. By installing a rate card either tiered in line with a budget range or through another fair system, whilst incorporating a T&Cs (for working conditions) for all to adhere to, will by its nature allow for a better working environment - one that can nurture and enhance talent behind the camera.

To add, producers should also be put in a healthier position to make films - an agreed percentage of the budget for their pay and for financiers/ completion bond companies etc. to stop with getting producers to defer fees to complete finance plans and so on! It's just bollocks!

In all honesty, I know that is a pipe-dream and wish you the best in trying to get about change in the industry, but we all know once this pandemic is over the 'be kind' trend will disappear and it will all revert back to old dog-eat-dog industry. Cynical I know but whilst these issues continue to be pushed to one side in favour of the MMP by all including the powers that be (financiers, public bodies like BFI etc.) we will just plod along. More than happy to lend a voice if needed in future!

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@sarahleighactor - Actor

For actors to be asked for self-tapes (or Zoom audition!) in the first-instance - this benefits actors who have caring responsibilities, but also keeps costs down for all involved. It's working ok right now. Then have the recalls in person, if applicable.

@bennwiebe - Head of Production at HF Productions & Producer at Sybo Games/Sybo TV

I implore Future Us to be more inclusive, more international, and more impacting. Our industry has long thrived on a country club style of thinking that is built around exclusivity, and that just isn't representative of most of the stories we are telling and that need to be told. To be more international is to come to the existential realization that perhaps this crisis is reminding us all of: the only war that matters is this Great War we are currently fighting, between life and death for us all. There is no place for people to be treated as 'other' in this new landscape. Not that it was acceptable before. But now we have a chance to embrace en masse the beauty of inclusivity as we engage people to champion humanities stories from all walks of life, and to be more impactful. It's not enough to say you created some awareness. Like the people who leave a theatre and never conversation about what they've seen, the real challenge of impact is to engage people to become action drivers to build conversations based on what they've experienced. I know we can do more. Be more. I have championed stories as a [film festival director](#), [producer](#) and [social impact specialist](#), and I am beyond ready to find more allies to tackle this mission together. There is such an opportunity we have here to use our platforms to support so many good works and powerful stories that are out there, and to be good stewards in this place. I am excited and encouraged for Future Us by the camaraderie and rallying I have witnessed so far during this time. It is when we must all come together to deliver creative solutions, using our out-of-the-box style that makes us beautiful creators.

@chordia22 - Producer

I'd like to see a fairer system that rewards the risk that producers and investors take. Under the previous system, there was little incentive or reward for development financiers or equity funders, as there was a raft of entities in between taking % cuts. Those taking the early risk were very rarely able to see any reward. Structures that fairly distribute revenues between all parties should be considered. Whilst exhibition and distribution can come with large costs, a more even split that keeps the entire system going is needed. Indie films can't pay 65%+ rentals as well as 20%+ to sales agents, 30%+to distributors and cover all the costs and expenses in between.

I'd also like to see the creation of a streaming service specifically for indie films that can commission films rather than buy them once completed. A global entity this size could offer overhead deals to production companies, allowing producers to hire a staff and pay themselves a salary. Although this might make scoring a big payday difficult for producers, it would provide them with a secure salary and allow them to keep developing and producing new indie films. Anyone setting this up would need deep pockets and the ability to manage productions in multiple territories, but it would be a good contrast to the current crop of streaming services. Film is no longer about creating hits that make millionaires overnight. Instead, we can create great films and pay everyone a fair wage that keeps the system sustainable.

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Drama Director

My wish would be a set number of hours in a working week. The current European working directive of 38 hours is waived in most TV and film contracts and although you are allowed to reject it legally, without losing the job, it is not encouraged or even that well known. People are scared of losing work or rocking the boat. As new working practices emerge post pandemic, it is vitally important that crew, including directors, are not forced to do more hours for the same pay or less under the guise of 'it won't get made unless you agree to this'. For many years we have been encouraged to believe this line until it has become standard. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that mental health and safe working conditions are to be valued. Some things should be above putting a price on. It is an investment by us for us. Maybe Raising Films, BECTU Scotland, Directors UK Scotland and the Producers Alliance could combine their rich experience and build a coalition that could help safeguard, encourage and celebrate our skill, and stem, for once and all the gradual eradication of our rights and working practices.

Screenwriter

For women to be able to continue to work in the film and TV industry if they have a family. The challenges many women with families face to make this work are near impossible and they are often forced to choose between their family and career whereas in other employment sectors there is much more flexibility. There's a reason there are so few female writers and directors and more should be done to accommodate the balance of their working lives.

Writer

A future where writers are valued. Where time, also early development is acknowledged. Where meetings and events take into account caring responsibilities. Where meetings are honoured and not cancelled willy-nilly and last minute with no acknowledgement of the cost that might have for the other party. Where different stories are valued, over Names and Known Quantities. Where women and 'other' aren't seen ask 'risks'. Where we redefine what the word risk means. Where not telling new stories is a risk we cannot afford to take - where more of the same is the real threat to society. Where telling stories with Value has a value. Where the Next Big Thing isn't always young and sexy, but also older and more experienced or holding different experiences. Where difference is cherished.

Techie switching to trauma informed race and gender equity

Movies and books that model more equitable futures and show some of the hard work it will take for us to get there.

Costume Supervisor

No more unpaid prep/wrap time for costume! No more weekend work unless absolutely necessary - and a memo from production as to they we are working weekends. Overtime paid in one-hour increments - not half hour.

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@snowcatcinema - Independent cinema manager/programmer

I run a single-screen, 68-seat cinema. Two things make small-scale, independent exhibition a challenge.

1) Minimum guarantees: the practice of charging a minimum guarantee license fee reduces the likelihood of risk-taking in programming. Knowing that 20+ tickets have to be sold just to cover that and room hire is a constant stress. Screening less well-known or marketed films that attract a small audience often ends up costing me money, something that can't be done too often. I generally only screen each film once (many repertory titles) so have no opportunity to pick up a larger audience across several screenings. There is simply no need to charge for DCP replication and delivery when other distributors are now making content available to download as standard. European distributors are terrible culprits for requesting off-putting minimum guarantees, commonly €300-€500 for a single screening, from my own copy of the film on BluRay! Would happily pay a higher split without guarantee. Unpopular events leave neither party out or pocket, popular events make money for both. Cinemas have an easier time being profitable and are able to develop and take more risks with programming.

2) Long waits for short runs: with a single screen that's only normally open three or four days a week it's impossible to screen in first week of release, especially films from distributors expecting exclusivity. We are located two miles outside Cardiff and, although many people are happy to wait to see films with us, we also lose a lot of business to other cinemas - especially the film buffs who want to see things as soon as they can. The worst-case scenario is that we screen films that have been big hits but, by the time we put them on, they're exhausted. Then the minimum guarantee issue kicks in and we make no money from films that have made the chains loads! For the distributors I don't know what difference it makes if we screen twice during an opening weekend or twice six weeks down the line - they potentially make less money from us in the latter scenario. Our chances of profit are stifled. If this is simply down to agreements with the big chains then that's not at all helpful for those of us whose main drivers are interesting programmes rather than concession sales :(

TV Documentary Producer (Arts & History)

Pay transparency. Paid overtime. Work life/family balance. Elimination of push/stigma for Producers to be all singing, all dancing self-shooters/soundies in addition to their normal already taxing job.

@SaoirseCrean - Research and Development

I wish for more remote working opportunities to open up work in the regions as well as London. I'm from Liverpool and currently working in research and development from home, interviewing contributors on Zoom, WhatsApp messages, regular video calls and phone calls with my boss, and using Google Docs so they can see me writing Live and can give input. It's working really well. And having meetings with commissioners via Zoom means they don't have to travel across the country and creates a level playing field for everyone in the industry no matter where they're based.

@KateSeymour20 - Assistant Location Manager

It would be wonderful to have shorter hours that are more family-friendly. Part of the problem of finding childcare is finding someone who will be there when we are not, which is often 14-16 (or more) hours a day. More flexible arrangements as well would alleviate this problem to benefit both fathers and mothers. Another hope would be a greater provision for childcare at the studios - and eventually on set if on location.

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@midnightmovies

I wish for extended and better paid parental pay/leave. Covid-19 is a LOT like the early days of parenting (especially if you're breastfeeding); it's difficult to go anywhere other than a short walk about your neighbourhood (if you can manage that), you can't see people and do things, your mental health suffers and your time / space has changed. I guess where it differs is that no one puts things online for you to do and no one checks in on you because everyone else isn't going through the same thing. The government can step up and support industry now - furloughed at 80% pay... well, SMP isn't 80%, and it's well below the poverty line, too. And it isn't even for a full 52 weeks. Parental leave is kind of a joke imho, 39 weeks? I'm at that point and there is no way I could go back to work now. I'm still breastfeeding, which means I am needed by my son every day, and almost all day, and night. There are other reasons I can't leave him yet - and don't want to, either! - and I don't believe I should have to. To be honest, given how things are, I don't imagine I will return to work in this industry at all. Because I choose my family and my mental health and this pandemic has showed how everyone is keen on accelerating not slowing down capitalism and it's too much and not enough.

About Raising Films

Raising Films exists to support parents and carers working in the UK screen industries by challenging the demands these industries make on them. Raising Films provides a communal voice through publishing testimonials, surveys, reports and interventions, and works with industry partners and the wider film and television community to ensure solutions are enacted, by lobbying, providing information, educating and signposting. Raising Films also works with the Film & Television Charity to provide financial support to parents and carers through the Family Support Fund. Raising Films calls on the UK screen industries to better serve its parent and carer members, to increase their number, and to aspire to the best possible practice so all voices can be heard. Raising Films is a community interest company, founded in 2015, by five people working in film and television and now expanded to a core team of three part-time members of staff plus an advisory board and industry ambassadors.

The legacy of Raising Our Futures can be found via www.raisingfilms.com/raising-our-futures

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