

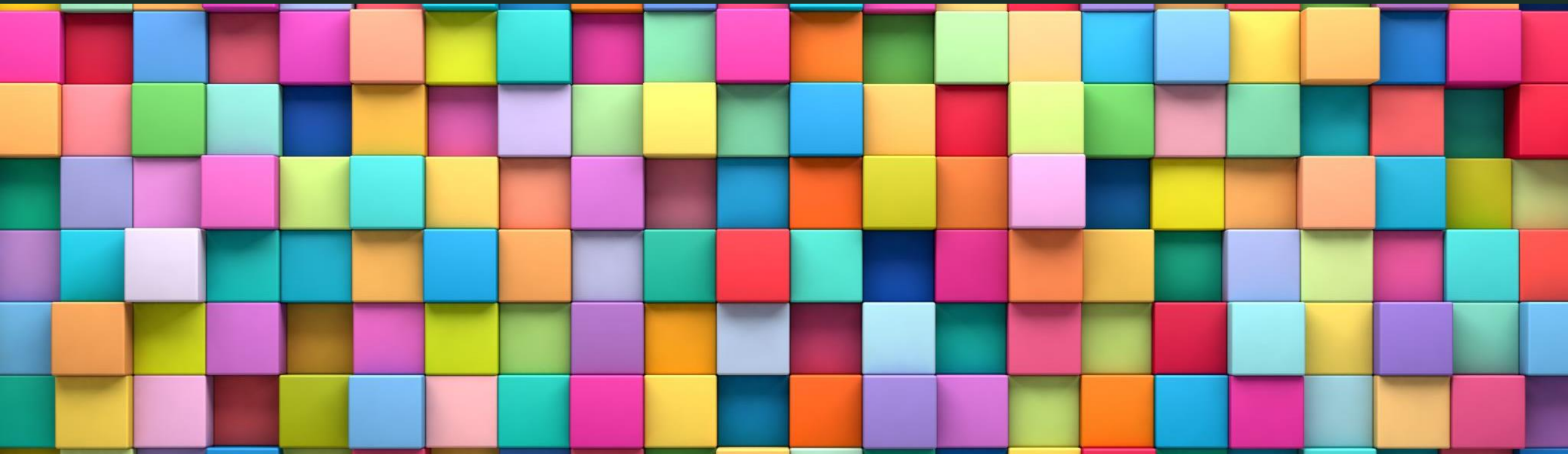
Activist Burnout and Networks of Solidarity:

Freelance creatives' response to the COVID-19 pandemic

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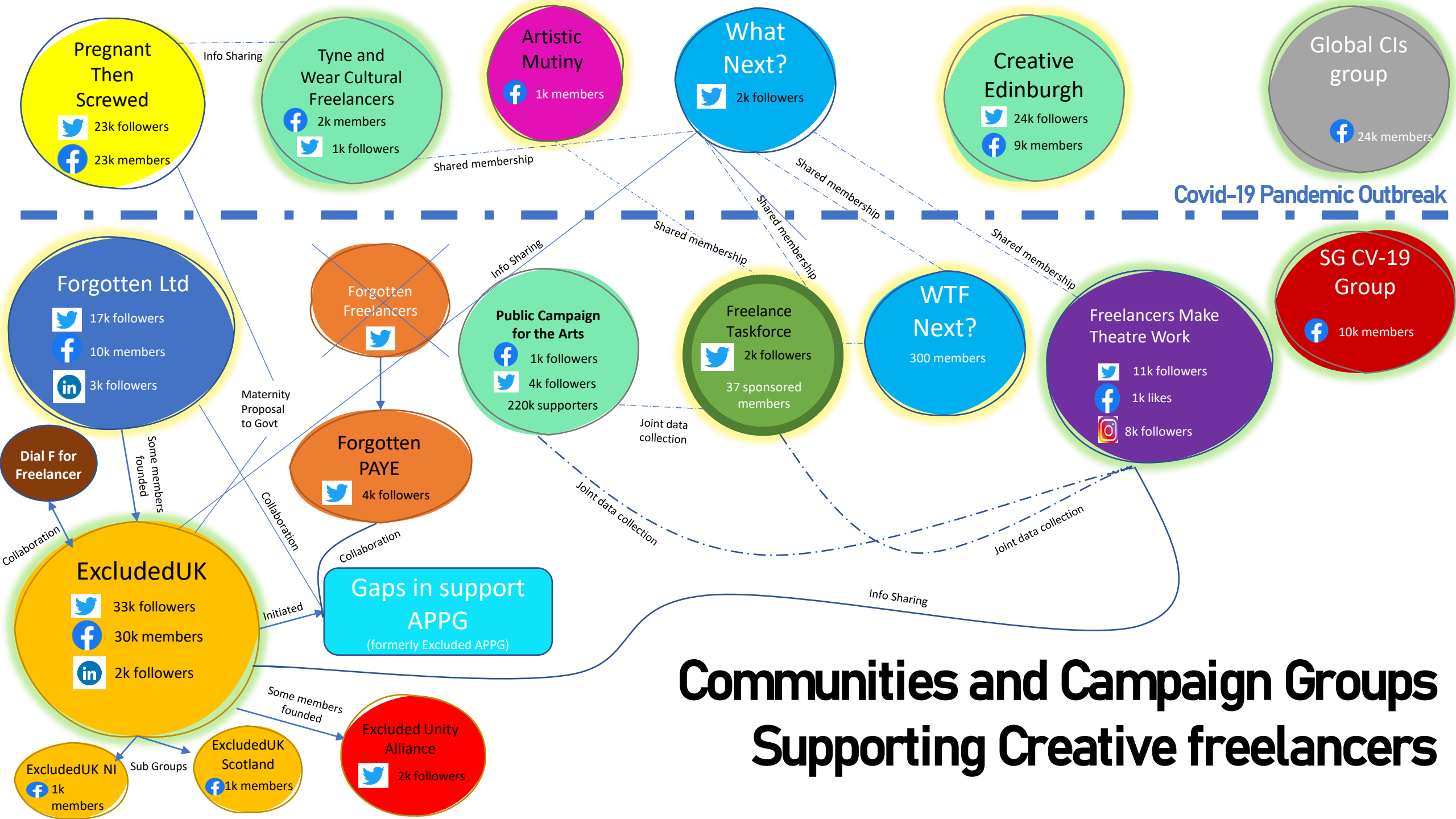
The Crisis

- ~32-47% of Creative Industries workforce is freelance (>70% in theatre) (e.g. PEC, 2021)
- Government support for self-employed workers not well suited to creative freelancers
 - PAYE exemption (AKA the 50% rule)
 - Additional jobs in areas hard hit by COVID (e.g. hospitality)
 - SEISS awarded on profit - many not very profitable
- UK Government support for creative industries tended to be targeted at (large) organisations



"The Government has confirmed that organisations which meet the criteria around financial need and viability, and cultural significance or levelling up, can apply for funding towards cultural activity as well as core costs.... it's also important to be clear that while this funding will provide critical support for the cultural ecology, its focus is not on freelancers."

ACE Chief Executive, 31st July 2020



Networks of Solidarity

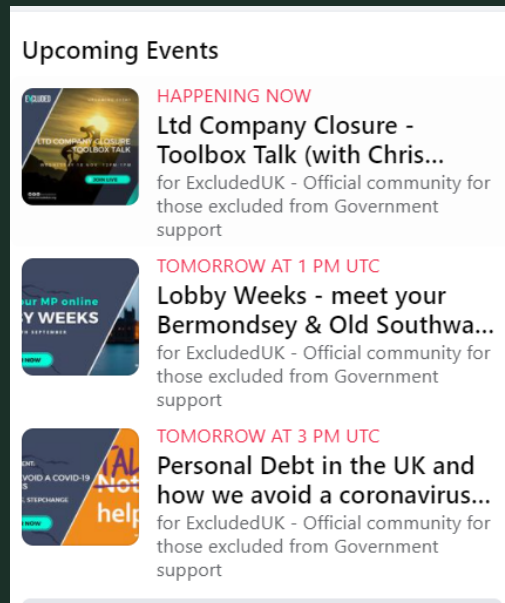
- The most important functions of the communities were mutual support and building solidarity (within and across worker communities)

- Signposting help and services
- Emotional support
- Mental health initiatives
- Job sharing
- Gifts

- External community outcomes:

- Pressure on government to provide arts rescue package (4 communities involved)
- Largest APPG in UK parliamentary history (1 community involved)
- Invitations onto government roundtables (UK and Singapore) and organisation boards (theatre)

Upcoming Events



The screenshot shows a list of three upcoming events for the ExcludedUK community. Each event has a small thumbnail image on the left and text on the right. The first event is 'HAPPENING NOW' and is a 'Ltd Company Closure - Toolbox Talk (with Chris...)'. The second event is 'TOMORROW AT 1 PM UTC' and is 'Lobby Weeks - meet your Bermondsey & Old Southwa...'. The third event is 'TOMORROW AT 3 PM UTC' and is 'Personal Debt in the UK and how we avoid a coronavirus...'. All events are for the 'Official community for those excluded from Government support'.

HAPPENING NOW
Ltd Company Closure - Toolbox Talk (with Chris...
for ExcludedUK - Official community for those excluded from Government support

TOMORROW AT 1 PM UTC
Lobby Weeks - meet your Bermondsey & Old Southwa...
for ExcludedUK - Official community for those excluded from Government support

TOMORROW AT 3 PM UTC
Personal Debt in the UK and how we avoid a coronavirus...
for ExcludedUK - Official community for those excluded from Government support

Yes I see a lot of you are simply perplexed why you were rejected for SIRS, and I have been helping a few members off site plus my own freelancers on this, which has given me an opportunity to study & analyse HOW the authorities decide who gets SIRS.

I didn't want to post this until I was like 80% sure of my findings. I'm not a 100% certain but I'm pretty sure I've broken their pattern and have figured out some things, which I thought I'll share to help those who are frustrated with the whole SIRS system.

Burnout

Managing negativity and anger

“They’d be asking like, ‘Nic, how do you manage?’ Because most of them would have died out in like a couple of months when conversations go way south, maybe get angry, and then it becomes toxic. I think the word is toxic. Once a community becomes toxic, the good people leave.”

Tensions over leadership and representation

Excluded Unity Alliance believe the time is NOW to **UNITE** all **EXCLUDED** groups of people to make a stand to show the country the hurt and suffering that being excluded from support has caused.

We are **raising funds** to enable a safe and legal event to occur which will pay tribute through a **Silent Stand** to those who took their own lives and generate much needed press coverage and renewed MP interest into the hardship that continues to prevail for many through being unfairly excluded from support.

Workload

“I felt a great sense of responsibility to read every single thing that was there, and also to go out and look for information to share that was useful” – 16 + hours per day

Emotional Stress

Emotional weight of hearing and helping members who had developed addiction issues, been made homeless and attempted suicide due to the effects of the pandemic.

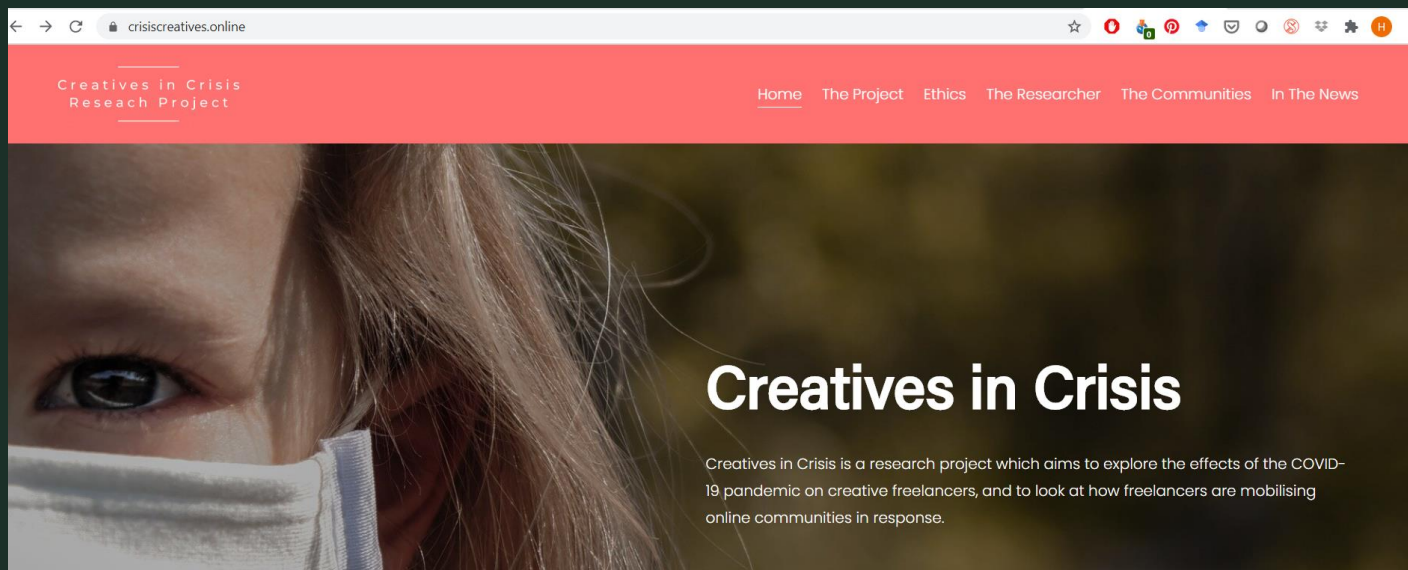
Exhaustion

“there have been times with my own mental health where I’ve said to my husband I can’t do this anymore, I can’t deal with other people’s problems, I’ve got enough of my own at the minute, and then somebody will say, can I just say thanks for you being here you know, it just makes me be able to get up in the morning”

Insights on solidarity and burnout

- Civil society response to the pandemic was immediate and massive in the creative freelance community
- Communities emerged incidentally, launching their founders as de facto representatives of 1000s of people, feeding directly into policy making up to the national level
- The solidarity provided through the communities created a space of mutual emotional, financial support as well as being a critical source of information
- The workload demands on founders were considerable, and the emotional stress led many to exhaustion and some to step down





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