



**UK
NEW
ARTISTS**

Navigating the Journey for New Artists


Symposium:

Breaking Down Barriers for Artists

Collection of testimonials +
results from interactive presentation

Friday 20th October 2023

Lincoln Arts Centre, University of Lincoln



UKNA Creative ThinkTank invites you to listen,
learn and perhaps find solace in these shared
experiences of fellow artists.

'Breaking Down Barriers for Artists' was programmed by Sarah Le Quang Sang (SLQS Studio), Hanna Hamdache, Ana Silvério, Hoyee Tse, and Gaynor Tutani from UKNA Creative ThinkTank. They invited David McLeavy to contribute to the conversation. With thanks to Michelle Bowen and the wider team at UK New Artists.



NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY FOR NEW ARTISTS

UK New Artists (UKNA) champions the next wave of creativity, supporting collaboration and intercultural dialogue, ensuring a vibrant and diverse creative future for the UK. They develop artists' practice through cross-art form opportunities and celebrate creativity at national and international presentations.

The 'Navigating the Journey for New Artists' symposium took place on 20 October 2023 during the UKNA 'Weekend Celebration of Creativity' across the city of Lincoln. This symposium was held in collaboration between UKNA and Lincoln Arts Centre (LAC) in a critical time. The sector finds itself in a post-Brexit and Covid-19 landscape, and working alongside a new arts strategy of 'Let's Create' from Arts Council England. LAC and UKNA discussed some of the key questions for new artists now, how new artists can go forward in supporting and sustaining their practice, and learning what we can do together, for each other.



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR ARTISTS

The Creative ThinkTank (CT) is an advisory group made up of artists from all disciplines across the UK. The group contributes to the development of UK New Artists to ensure that the organisation continues to develop and thrive, by ensuring that the voice of new artists is at the heart of what UKNA does.

As part of 'Navigating the Journey for New Artists' Symposium, UKNA Creative ThinkTank (CT) members Sarah LeQuang Sang (SLQS Studio), Hannaa Hamdache, Ana Silvério, Hoyee Tse, and Gaynor Tutani programmed 'Breaking Down Barriers for Artists'. They asked artists what barriers they faced as emerging artists, and if they had found any solutions or received any support to break these barriers.

The responses were transformed into a document, which was part of the interactive presentation given by the UKNA CT members. They were joined by invited guest David McLeavy, a Sheffield based curator, writer and producer .

Identified barriers fell into numerous categories, namely:

financial (income sustainability, studio cost, funding), gender, community (isolation/ lack of network), parenthood, space (lack of studio/ working space), disability, race, political agenda and age.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document summarises these findings and presents the results from the interactive presentation 'Breaking Down Barriers for Artists'. It is divided into two parts: 1 - testimonials collected from online call out; and 2 - results from Mentimeter interaction during the symposium in Lincoln, on 20th October 2023.

UKNA Creative ThinkTank invites you to listen, learn and perhaps find solace in these shared experiences of fellow artists.



Credits: Photo by Madara Vimba. David McLeavy, Gaynor Tutani, Sarah Le Quang Sang, Ana Silvério and Hannaa Hamdache.

PART 1:

Quotes from each barrier, its solution and UKNA Creative ThinkTank (CT) thoughts

Barrier: "Needing to have to work outside of my artform in order to pay bills to create my art, however that meant that I couldn't work on my art to start making money from it."

Solution: "I learnt how to write funding applications and work as a bidwriter for others in an artform different to mine, that helped me refine my skills for my own work and provided an income that didn't take out all of my time."

Barrier: "As a young actor figuring out my gender, I was uncomfortable about pigeonholing myself to certain genders of characters" ... "I didn't have the words to explain why I was facing different challenges in acting to my colleagues."

Solution: "I have recently started my own initiatives to teach voice skills and theater skills, specifically to trans-only groups. There is a massive amount of interest from the trans community that no one is bothering to seek out and uplift and put money towards. In the UK, we have to start our own initiatives and use our own voices, and build community and love and uplift everyone with even a slight interest in using their voice in front of an audience."

Barrier: Lack of funding for diverse pre-production and research costs.

Solution: Short term to save and sacrifice income to invest in these. Also signing up for newsletters for funding.

Barrier: "Coming from a low socio-economic background, it has been difficult to get paid opportunities in the arts that give artists the time and space needed to create work. Going freelance requires a certain set of knowledge and connections that I didn't immediately have after finishing university. I've also found it difficult to access local creative communities without having a studio space or knowing the right people."

Solution: "I've also found other ways to get to know local creatives through artist-led studios that don't require renting a studio space - for example joining collectives. Speaking to people in the sector and learning more about their career path has also been really helpful. Find ways to network with the creative community in your local area. - Keep an eye on opportunities from key sources. - Bank any project proposals that are submitted so that these can be used again/ edited if needed to submit to other opportunities. - Make sure that project proposals include money for expenses outside of the fee for your time. - Don't be afraid to get in touch with people in the sector to meet up and hear how they got to where they are and any tips and tricks that they are able to share with you. Finding a mentor is really invaluable if possible."

Barrier: "Barriers are only stepping stones that strengthen us and our stories - I wouldn't be who I am without them."

Solution: "I found mentors within the film industry. I reached out to filmmakers, I shared my work and did my best to gain their support. This led me to my first job as a post-production runner where I could shadow editors and understand this craft at a high level."

Barrier: "Parenthood. Navigating paid freelancing job and having mental space and time to focus on my artistic practice."

Solution: "I feel sometimes you need to surrender."

UKNA CT thoughts: Learning how to prioritise ourselves without feeling guilty, learning not to put ourselves down because we don't feel as productive as we would like to be or once were. Try to do something every day towards your dream, even if it's only a short amount of time. Ask yourself every day – What have I done today towards my professional dream?

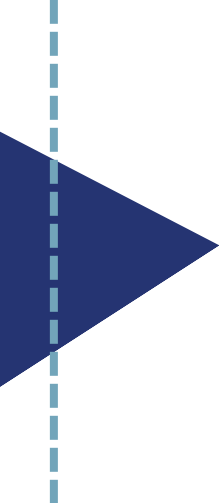
Barrier: "It's a very hustle-oriented/fight-or-fall industry where if you can't put yourself out there like the person next to you, or access certain necessities, then it becomes very difficult to make it work." ... "The pandemic was a surprising godsend of accessibility for me because everything went online. Suddenly opportunities and communities that had been completely shut off to me became open. As a lone artist working in an isolated rural village I've struggled to find that community you get at art school or as part of a communal studios where everyone supports each other and you learn and grow together. Some people find that through social media but I definitely feel very alone in everything I'm doing and disconnected from any sort of art community, which I also feel is affecting everything from the work I'm making, to making those steps in the industry."

UKNA CT thoughts: Maybe organisations providing different kinds of support for people with disabilities could help with access needs and reach further in their support. Organisations such as the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) networks may be able to provide support and advice about building a community and exposing your work or organising a hybrid residency to bring a group of artists into a rural location. www.ruraltouring.org

Barrier: "As a Chinese emerging artist [it] is quite difficult to get any funding for artistic practice. The art ecology is unhealthy in China, maybe [most] of it is about economy, but there is less activity [in] art space[s] and [from] artists."

Solution: "[Carving out time for an] artist residency to keep [art] practice [alive] and [to find] community."

Questions: "How to build a better community with the curators and critical writers who can know about your artist practices?" "How to find more opportunities to have funding for creations?" "How to consolidate relationships with other artists and explore new outlets to present your practices?"




UKNA CT thoughts: Use different platforms that hold the networks that you want to tap into. For example, Instagram is a really great place for sharing work, but also reaching out to fellow artists, curators and critical writers. There are different accounts that can be accessed for information on opportunities via Instagram i.e @starvingartistsopportunities.

Barrier: "Lack of exhibition space for emerging artists, especially as I am a more mature graduate."

Solution: "Reaching out to any venue which may have space and finding potential options through word of mouth or social media."

Questions: "What is a reasonable commission rate? Some venues don't have a way of collecting sales so it's difficult for the artist to be there all day everyday in case of a sale". "How can that be resolved?"

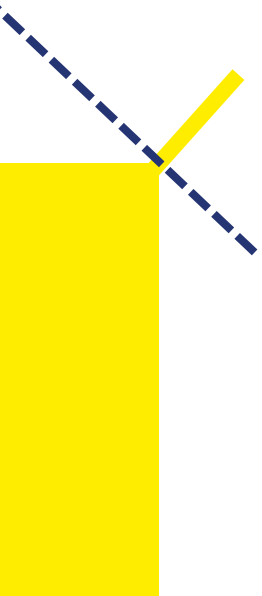


Barrier: "A lot of the barriers I have faced are due to the dominos of history and things outside of my control. Yes there is a lack of BAME representation in the arts in general (within London) - but how many BAME families push their children to go into the arts? Especially those from lower class/struggling backgrounds - who can't afford equipment, or the luxuries needed to facilitate optimum creativity."

UKNA CT thoughts: Forming a network within the BAME community, giving the opportunities for BAME children and youth with disadvantaged social background to get to know about the arts and having their peers and senior members from their community to share resources with them.

Barrier: "I think the problem starts in school, not having access to the same arts facilities and spaces as those who may have attended private schools or grew up in a creative environment."...
"Going to uni and experiencing imposter syndrome."

Solution: "I run The Working Class Creatives Database - a space for working class creatives to showcase their work, form a community and tackle classism in the arts. Having this support network has helped massively and solidified that the majority of working class creatives feel the same way."



UKNA CT thoughts: Regarding imposter syndrome, we have to all remember that all artists are learning and experimenting. There is not one single artist's journey that looks the same. You don't need validation from anyone else but you. Comparing yourself to others is not necessarily helpful, measure yourself based on your own progress. Believe in yourself and celebrate what you make.

Barrier: "Of course making work about the many layers of blackness is very important and needed however, I have an issue with organisations and opportunities that capitalise on this idea and then once the opportunity/ moment has passed there is no real follow up."

Solution: "[For one funding opportunity] there were no specific boxes I had to tick and allowed me to explore ideas I had without the pressure to present a certain outcome."

UKNA CT thoughts: neurodiverse friendly related resources on creating a budget as well as ways to design/ develop a project idea.

Barrier: "My biggest barrier was the way I was brought up convinced that art isn't a profession worth pursuing."

Solution: "Listening to your inner voice is the only voice worth prioritising above all the noise out there."

Barrier: "My biggest barrier to becoming an artist was myself... not understanding my calling."

Solution: "It was enlightening, someone giving you a new instruction manual on how to succeed if you can try to make some behavioural changes."

Solution: "I received help from many people and organisations! When I started my research about schemes, agencies, existing venues, funding bodies etc., I could see that the main pieces of information I was searching for were out there, but to find them was quite tricky because they were dispersed. Each hub, group, scheme or organisation running theatres produced their documents and tools with explanations and advice."

UKNA CT thoughts: Can artists come together as a working group and help each other out by exchanging knowledge about different systems? There is a brilliant resource that is available via The White Pube website, which is a collaborative funding library that artists have submitted their successful applications for funding to, to help others write their funding bids for projects.


Barrier: "Sustainably surviving on other jobs that either take up all your time so you can't focus on work or which are so part time to keep time to work that you barely get by."

Solution: "I've ended up prioritising producing which is Artist-adjacent, but not what I set out to do as an artist. I've often taken smaller opportunities to fit around this work but this has stilted my creative development." ... "An artists charter would be great which outlines a commitment from commissioning orgs and artists around fees etc."

UKNA CT thoughts: You can look at Artists' Union England that gives you different rates dependent on how long you have been working professionally as an artist:

<https://www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/rates-of-pay/>


Barrier: "Learning to balancing work load between freelance, practice and steady job - ensuring regular income and also having enough time to make own work."




Solution: "Planning such as agreeing work days with freelancing in advance. Only working jobs you find valuable to yourself (being selective when you can rather than just saying yes) Being open with work about your practice - prioritising it when you can."

UKNA CT thoughts: As an individual artist, the possibilities to apply for funding are small. Only a few funding organisations can provide an amount able to cover the actual costs of making art. Going to several small pots and structuring a larger project in a way that each funding application would be focused on covering the costs of a specific part of the project. Each part could be a smaller project of its own. If only one or two funding applications are successful, you can still do some funded work and add to your practice, making a future case.

Barrier: "The lack of a comprehensive online database where I could find information, tips and explanations was a barrier that required hundreds, if not thousands research hours and many mistakes. Another barrier was the lack of support for mothers with young children. I wasn't allowed into dance classes with a baby, even when the baby was small enough to crawl. Another barrier that I face is the lack of funding. The way the funding systems operate is a barrier for me because it generates cycles of financial and professional uncertainty."



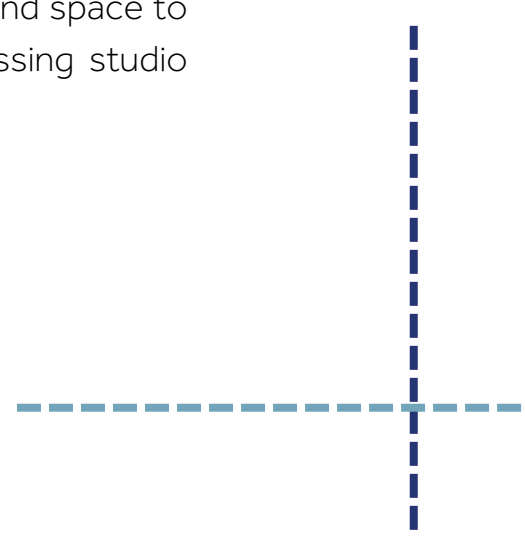


Barrier: "As a queer South Asian artist living in the North East I've had loads of barriers to work. This has included casual racism and homophobic remarks when I worked with a couple of organisations. I find it hard to find stable work as I'm often used as a tick box for most places on one off jobs (so they can say they've worked with a BIPOC or LGBTQIA person)."

Solution: "I've found the art community really supportive here and received some support in dealing with these barriers. It doesn't get me work but it does get me out of the house when I'm so depressed I don't want to go on."

UKNA CT thoughts: How do you deal with discrimination in terms of racism and homophobia in the arts world?

Barrier: "Calls which require you to have a fully fleshed out concept before even applying, even worse ones which require you to have a completed work before applying, rather than asking for expressions of interest, potential topics, and past work. The time and space to create works is never factored in. The cost of accessing studio space."



Solution: "I have received pretty much 0 institutional support to break these barriers. My main support network is a group of peers in an online chat. Mutual support, like sharing successful and unsuccessful funding applications, creating self-organised networks, and providing space to talk through applications, has been infinitely valuable to me."

UKNA CT thoughts: more articulation of ways in which it can be possible to maintain a practice as a working class artist.

PART 2:

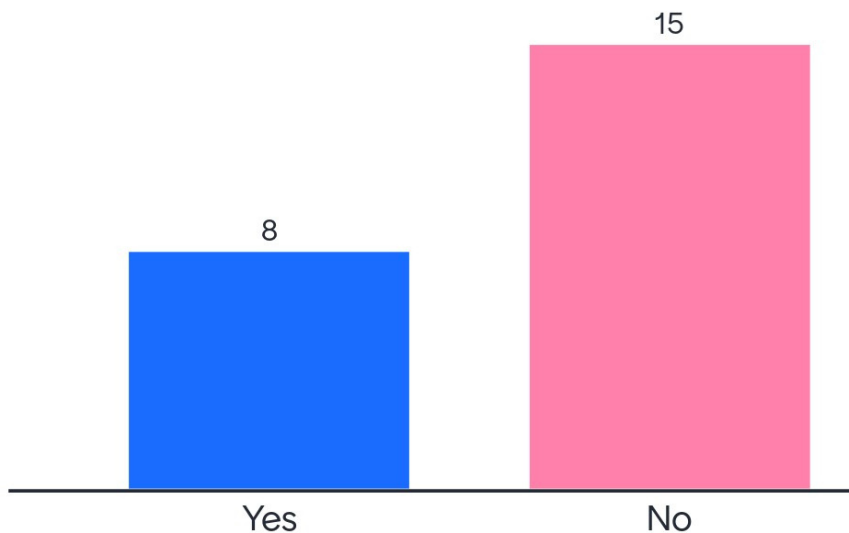
The logo for Mentimeter, featuring a stylized bar chart icon with red, blue, and green bars to the left of the word "Mentimeter" in a bold, sans-serif font.

Use one word to describe a barrier that you have faced as an emerging artist:

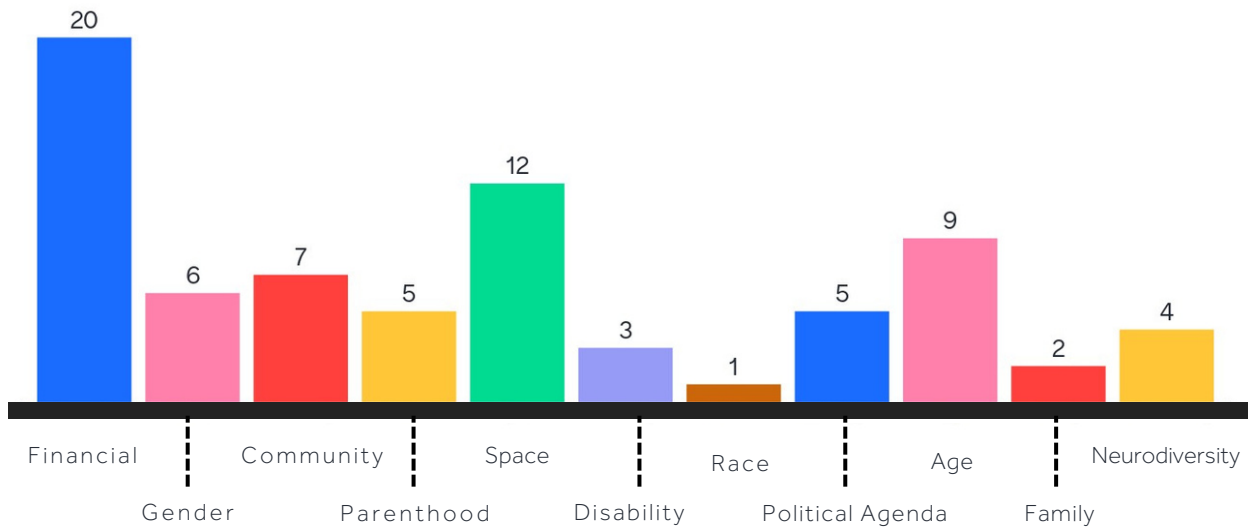
46 responses



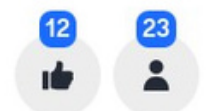
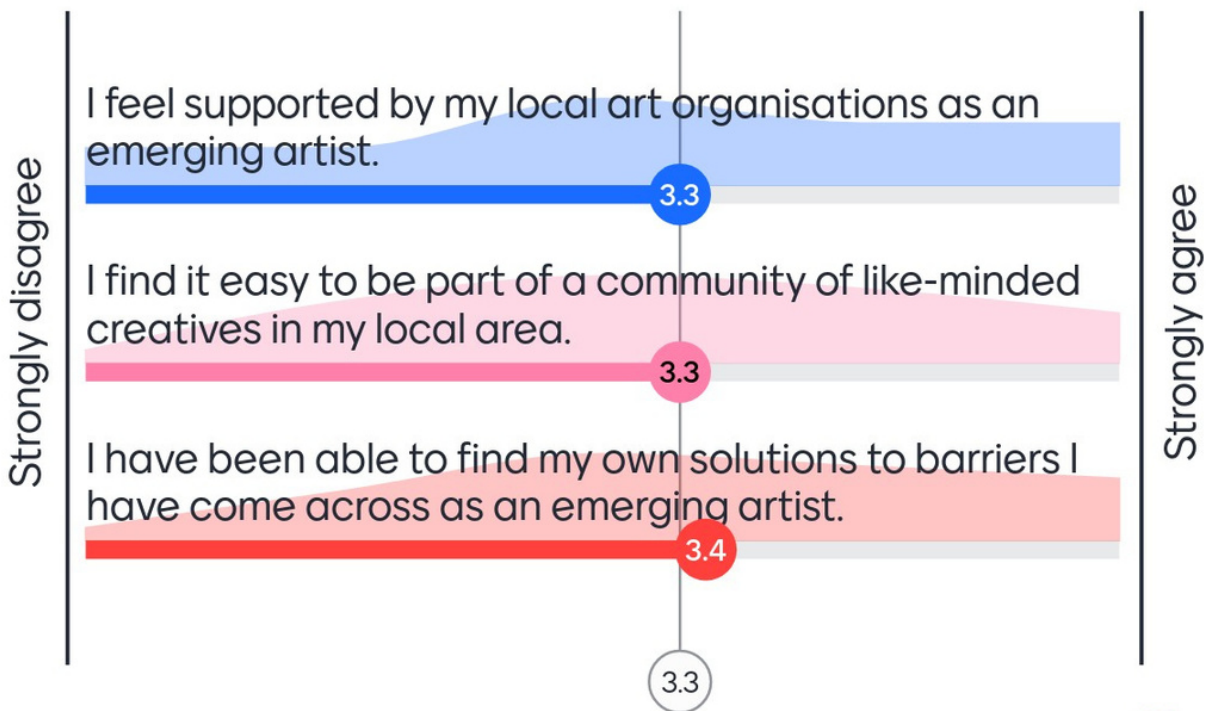
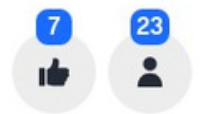
Have you overcome that barrier?



Out of the barriers already identified through our call out, which ones have you faced?



Do you agree or disagree?



What practical tips would you share with fellow emerging artists when it comes to breaking down barriers?

34 responses

Self Believe

look after your brain

Believe in yourself and become resilient. Surround yourself with other like minded creatives. If you find an organisation that support you like UKNA, stick with them!

Talk to others about your problems, ask opinions, seek information

Get involved in community activities

Adversity creates genius. Learn the game. It's easier to have a habit of creating than waiting for inspiration. Use a chip on the shoulder as fuel

Learn how to develop and audience and keep them loyal

If it drives you mad it's worth it

Accept that it's easy for people to say 'just do it' when they're not coming from where you are. This might not resonate

Be aware other may be feeling same

Champion care

Identify policy agendas, and where the money goes

Be kind to others

Support local

9



22



What practical tips would you share with fellow emerging artists when it comes to breaking down barriers?

34 responses

Patience

Networking and communication

Just do it

Time management: use part of your time to create art

Give a percentage of your week to do the boring stuff

Use your networks

Believe in your work. It's okay to fail but you have to try again.

Learn, practice, hustle

Just do it

Collaborate

Invest in local art creations

It's about who you know

Ask for help.

Make yourself useful

Listen

Advocate for yourself

Seek advice

Learn business skills. This is VITAL.

open communication with others

Go for it

9



22



Conclusion

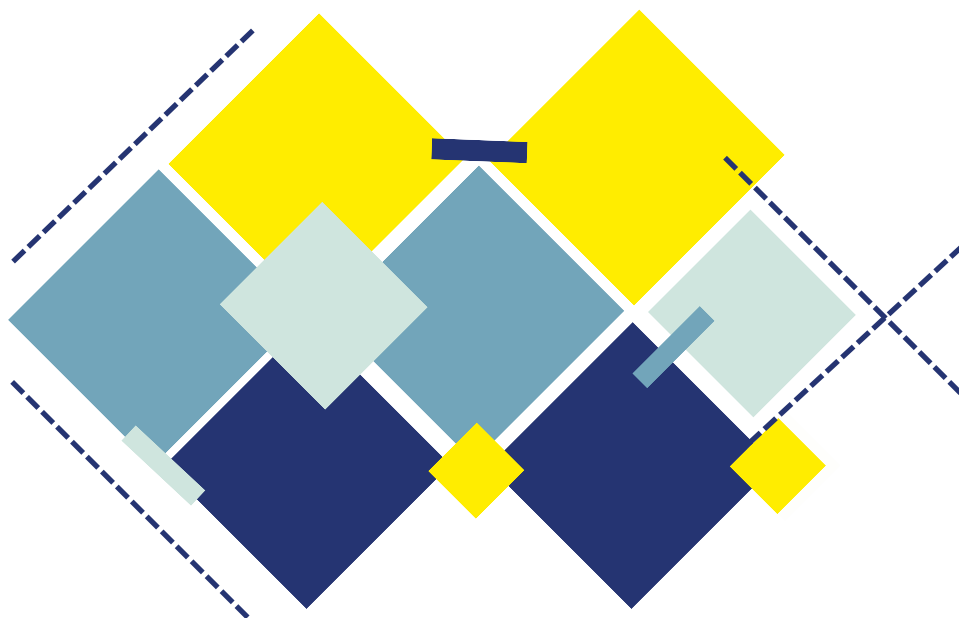
From thoughts shared by artists online, to those in the room at the event in Lincoln, (as well as our own experiences at the Creative ThinkTank) it is apparent that many of the barriers we face as emerging artists are shared. Whether financial, geographical, or time, there are major similarities in the blockades we come up against in our artistic practice. Although there are no easy answers, we hope that this document serves as a beacon of communal solace, one which offers an approach to community-sourced solutions and tips to support each other. We also hope that it will serve as a starting point for the discussion of these issues as systemic. We encourage you to continue to collectively think and pool resources, to come together and support one another.

Thank you again to everyone who helped in the creation of this document. We hope that this is a resource that can continue to support conversation and will be as useful to you as it has been to us.

A word from the Director of UKNA

"Our Creative ThinkTank has been an important and independent voice in the work of UK New Artists (UKNA). Having this important resource and data enables UKNA to advocate for our mission of supporting new artists, particularly during challenging times. The publication by UKNA's Creative ThinkTank provides us with the insight and understanding to create the right opportunities going forward and I hope that it shines a light for artists who may feel isolated by the barriers shared, reassuring them that they are not alone, and together we can be stronger. "

Michelle Bowen, UKNA Director





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