State of the Sector Survey: Funding ecosystem and earnings in 2023 and 2025

UK and Ireland Creative Health Sector

We're sharing here some results pertaining to the funding ecosystem and creative health earnings from a State of the Sector survey completed in autumn 2025 by 180 people working in the creative health sector across the UK and Ireland, conducted as a partnership between the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance, the Wales Arts, Health & Wellbeing Network, Arts, Culture, & Wellbeing Scotland, Arts Care (Northern Ireland), the Northern Ireland Creative Health Network, Réalta, and London Arts and Health. We're comparing these results to a similar survey conducted in 2023, but without partners in Ireland.

More results can be seen here: https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/uk-ireland-state-sector-survey-creative-health

Particular caution is needed in relation to these financial figures since respondent numbers are too low for a representative picture of a large and growing sector, but they may nonetheless be a useful snapshot.

The funding ecosystem: Where is the money coming from in creative health?

Total creative health income declared by respondents:

	2023 (UK)	2025 (UK & Ireland)
Total creative health income	£13.7m (133 respondents)	£14.1m (97 respondents)
Income for organisations declaring income over £1k	£13.3m (88 organisations)	£13.4m (54 organisations)
Income for freelancers declaring income over £1k	£582,000 (45 freelancers)	£642,000 (43 freelancers)
Average frelance earnings	£12,900 (45 freelancers)	£14,900 (43 freelancers)
Average organisational income	£151,500 (88 organisations)	£248,000 (54 organisations)

In both surveys, at least a third of the funding declared for creative health was from unidentified sources.

In 2025, around £1.5m each came from Trusts & Foundations, local authorities and ACE, and £1m from the NHS/HSE. The most significant shift since 2023 is **a 50% uptick in funding from local authorities, from c.£1m to £1.5m**. Conversely, figures for hospital charities' spending decreased by 43% to £455k. (These figures predate the announcement of NHS cuts in November 2025.) Commercial income has dropped by 40%, from £430k to £265k, which *may* reflect a general lack of spending power during the cost-of-living crisis. Lastly, whilst it remains a very small percentage of the funding landscape (just over 1%), business donations have increased fourfold, from £37k to £162k.

Sources of over £1m across a year for creative health

Total	Other / no description	Commissions or contracts (source unknown)	Trusts & Foundations	Local authorities or councils	Arts Councils	NHS / HSE
2025	4,764,000	1,706,800	1,555,500	1,550,000	1,503,500	1,008,300
2023	5,912,744		1,332,477	1,027,472	1,651,671	1,001,545

Sources of under £1m across a year for creative health

Total	Other lottery distributors	Individual donations	NHS Charities Together / Hospital charities	Commissions from arts / community orgs	Commercial / trading income	Business donations	Mayoral authorities (new category 2025)	Membership fees
2025	548,900	485,000	454,500		265,000	162,000	80,000	75,000
2023	625,692	330,603	795,920	558,247	432,328	37,900		27,738

A note on commissions: In 2023 we asked people to tell us about funded commissions from communuty arts organisations; in 2025 we asked for *all* commissions. It's hard to understand where the funding for commmissions is coming from – this will be rephrased in the next survey.

Freelance earnings

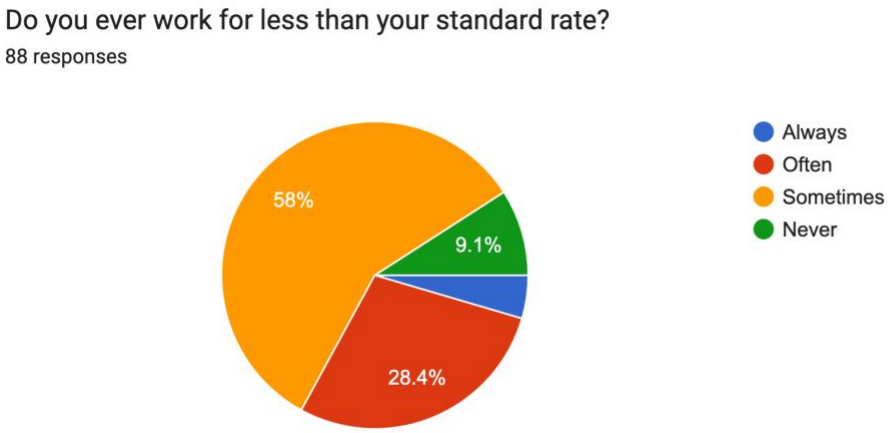
Of the freelance respondents, creative health work averages around half their freelance income (similar to 2023). Average earnings have increased however, from £11.5k to £15k.

	2023 (UK)	2025 (UK & Ireland)
Number of freelance respondents to survey	60	62
Number responding to finance questions	55	56
Earning 0 or under £1,000 from creative health work	10	14
Average earnings of those earning over £1,000 p.a.	£12,900 (45 valid responses)	£14,900 (43 valid responses)
Average % of income from CH work	52%	48%
Where CH work is 100% of income, average earnings (NB treat with caution – respondents very low in this category)	£15,000 (9 respondents)	£26,000 (6 respondents)

Standard day rates

2023

68.2% of the freelance respondents had a standard rate. The average of the 32 who gave their day rates was £314. Most people work for less than these rates at least sometimes. 9.1% never work for less than this.



2025

64.8% of freelance respondents had a standard rate. The average of the 33 respondents who gave us their day rates was £290 – this is a **fall of £20, notable given rising inflation and cost of living.** Most people work for less than these rates at least sometimes. Only 1.9% never work for less than this.

