**Lianna Etkind and Melanie Iredale**

**Tacita:**  Hello and welcome to the WorkWise for Screen Podcast created to help our screen industries better look after all the people their businesses depend on.

**Keith:** And stay on safe legal ground. It's part of a growing collection of practical resources and guidance that you can dip into without it taking you forever or costing you anything.

It's supported by the BFI awarding National Lottery funding.

**Tacita:** We'll be talking with people across production, distribution and exhibition, animation, VFX and gaming about the challenges to wellbeing we face when deadlines and budgets are tight and how most importantly, to improve things.

We are your hosts, Tacita Small from the Small HR company, the HR for entertainment one.

**Keith:** And Keith Arrowsmith, the legal one, a creative industries solicitor and program director for WorkWise for screen.

**Tacita:** Welcome to the WorkWise for Screen Podcast. Let's set the stage for today's conversation, exploring what fair pay really means and why it's the foundation of a more inclusive and sustainable industry.

**Keith:** I think for me, we've got fair pay for the people who we work closely with our colleagues to make sure that they feel secure in their job and able to concentrate on their job rather than worrying about the rent or the money to pay for their bills and expenses.

But we also have that relationship with the people who are slightly further apart, and that might be the cleaner that's a subcontracted service that somebody else is providing to my business. Or it might be the security team that's subcontracted and they may well be freelancers or they may well be people who are on short-term contracts. Or they might be employed. So we don't really have a transparent kind of relationship and no one wants to talk about money.

It's not part of our day to day in the UK. I think other countries have very different attitudes to salary and discussions.

**Tacita:** Yeah. I like the way that you framed that around fairness. So regardless of where or how you're paid, are you being paid well? Are you being paid correctly for the role that you are performing?

And let's always ensure that you're not being underpaid. So that can transpire in many forms, I suppose, when it comes to how many hours you're doing, whether or not you're qualified overtime, how often you get paid I suppose as well. What is written down in those particulars, those terms and conditions, and why?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Tacita:** So where is that rate being set and what was the rationale behind that rate in relation to that job?

**Keith:** And of course, it's not just about the amount that hits your bank account because it's also about, do I get paid for my holidays? Do I get paid for if I'm sick? Do I get overtime? Yeah, all those extra points that start building up a picture of what do I think is fair for my working day? It gets really sophisticated really quickly, and I think that's why there's a justification for having a minimum wage.

**Tacita:** Yes.

**Keith:** And it'd be lovely to hear more about how that translates into the screen sector.

We are joined by Lianna Etkind. She's the partnerships and communications manager at the Living Wage Foundation. Now, that's a charity that campaigns for Fair Pay and aims to tackle in-work poverty by promoting the real living wage. She's explored the challenges of low pay in the creative industries where a third of roles fall below the Real Living Wage.

We're also joined by Melanie Iredale. She's the director at Reclaim The Frame. An intersectional feminist charity that works to champion marginalised perspectives in cinema. They're also a Real Living Wage Employer that advocates for fair pay and gender equity in the screen sector, especially for women and non-binary workers.

**Melanie:** Hi, thanks for the invite to be part of this. So my name is Melanie Iredale. Pronouns she/her, and I'm the director of Reclaim The Frame.

**Lianna:** And I'm Lianna Etkind, I'm a Partnership and Campaigns Manager at the Living Wage Foundation. And, and what brought you to your organisations? Was it something about the industry or something about the equity? What’s the little spark for you?

**Lianna:** So, I started working for the Living Wage Foundation two and a half years ago, but I'd been involved in campaigning for a living wage for quite some years before that. And a big part of it for me is being a feminist. I grew up in a part of London where the Pankhursts, the famous suffragettes, used to live. They were some heroines of mine as a teenager. And as I grew older, I remember reading a book called Hard Work, where the journalist takes lots of low paid jobs. Being a hospital porter, being a cleaner, being a care worker, and writes about the experience of living on poverty pay.

And the thing that she concludes with is that so many of these low paid roles in cleaning, in caring and catering are feminised work. And there's this assumption that, you know, caring, cleaning are things that women naturally do. And I realised that a big part of trying to get gender equity today is making sure that more of those low paid women have enough money to be able to fully participate in society. And that's something that still really galvanises me.

And, can you help us with what the foundation defines as fair pay? What's the starting point for that kind of debate?

**Lianna:** Every year the Living Wage Commission, an independent commission, calculates what it takes to live a decent quality of life. And at the moment, we've calculated that as £12.60 per hour and £13.85 in London, the London Living wage. And that's a higher rate, a different rate from the government's living wage, which is the statutory living wage, the law that all employers have to legally pay. And the real living wage goes above and beyond the legal minimum.

**Melanie:** So I guess what Lianna and I share is my perspective is also an intersectional feminist one. And that's the kind of viewpoint, I guess that Reclaim The Frame are kind of bringing to this conversation around fair pay and equitable pay.

I was deputy director at Sheffield Dock Fest for quite a number of years before coming to Reclaim The Frame, about three and a half years ago. One of the things that attracted me to the role here at Reclaim The Frame was the kind of advocacy aspect of what we do as one of the kind of lobbying organisations in the UK for gender equity and a lot of the work that we do in that area is very much driven by the data that we amass.

So, we track for the UK sector, for the BFI, et cetera, how many films are getting picked up for distribution that are written, co-written, directed, co-directed, produced or co-produced by women, by, trans or non-binary filmmakers, how many of those are, for example, women of color, et cetera. So we're not so much kind of monitoring what gets made or what gets commissioned. What we're looking at is what gets seen.

**Keith:** And do you get a sense from the data that you see that it's a sector that's better or worse at talking about and paying people properly?

**Melanie:** So I can tell you that on average the number of films that reach our screens theatrically, and I'm talking about international films but in UK cinemas, on average 20% are written or directed by women on marginalised gender filmmakers.

And one of the things that we're really interested in, and this is where I think it really intersects with the idea of fair pay, not all releases are equal. 20% might be written or directed, by marginalised gender filmmakers, but bear in mind that not all releases get the same scale of release, and this is where pay comes in. Because marginalised directors generally, be that across any kind of protected characteristic, are often not commissioned to the same scale.

So obviously that impacts on the production, it impacts on the pay that, you know, those women are able to pay themselves and their crew and it impacts on the release and therefore the potential for audiences that that has. We're looking at parity in 2053 according to our data, which is coincidentally, you know, that's the same year that we're looking at reaching the gender pay cap as we know across all sectors.

**Tacita:** Real pay, fair pay and national minimum wage. They're different things and therefore might be quite confusing to production companies or to people within the creative sectors. With there being three and the challenges that you've both just spoken about, what are the conversations you should be having to support people moving towards fair?

**Lianna:** At the moment in the film industry, more than one in 10 people are paid below the real living wage and that means about two in five of them will be regularly skipping meals. So I would really encourage employers and production companies to use the real living wage as the benchmark of what it means to be a responsible employer.

**Keith:** When we're talking about £12.60, is that an assumption that we're talking about an employment contract that's full time? Or does it also apply as a figure to freelancers who might be dipping in and dipping out of a project? Or is that a slightly different calculation that needs to go into the budgets?

**Lianna:** Ah, this is such a juicy question, that I talk about all the time with people across the creative sector.

And essentially, that £12.60 figure, or £13.85 in London, is for people who are employed. And for freelancers we would recommend probably looking to unions to set an appropriate rate for freelancers because it differs so widely for different sectors of freelancers. But freelancers are often charging a rate that factors in, you know, sick pay, holiday pay, taxes, things that the real living wage calculations don't take into account. But the real living wage is essentially for people who are employed directly or on third party contracts.

**Melanie:** Yeah, just as one example, we look to Artists Union England for their sort of pay tariff. I mean, I'm sure there are others out there, but certainly Artists Union England updates every year, which is a really useful benchmark.

And there's also, there are other unions, and Dial F for Freelancer I know have published some resources on sort of how to support freelancers a bit more kind of generally. And just, you know, things like we implemented a few years ago paying freelancers within two weeks, whereas our invoice terms might be 30 days for sort of bigger companies. There are things like that that I think even small organisations like ours can implement to just help to care for what is, you know, largely a freelance team, obviously in our sector.

**Tacita:** So what then are the misconceptions maybe, or reasons why people aren't signing up? What do you hear?

What are the usual things where people are not coming forward and saying, yes, this is a good idea, or I can't sign up?

**Lianna:** I think often I hear that people say, “oh yeah, of course we're a living wage employer, we pay everyone a real living wage”. And then I say, oh, does that include your cleaners and your security guards? And people are like, oh…

So sometimes it's not malicious, it's not malevolent. It's just kind of an expanded consciousness to think about all workers, not just directly employed staff, but third party workers as well. And when we accredit companies at the Real Living Wage Foundation we support people to look at their contracts, to send template clauses to update those contracts and also to give some phase in time as well. You know, people might have a year, two years, up to three years to actually phase in the real living wage to all of those contracts. If it's not possible legally to change it overnight. And that's fine as long as there is that commitment and that journey towards including the real living wage for everybody over time.

And then I think more challengingly. It is a hard time for lots of people in the industry and because of that, there are so many people who are desperate for work, who will work for very little or even work for free, especially at the beginning of careers. And so I think it, it can be easy to just think, oh, we'll get by on the people who will do an unpaid internship or work for free.

I think we need to ask ourselves, do we want to be in an industry where only people who can afford to work for free who have those savings or that family support are the ones who can start a career in film? Or do we want a sector which is diverse and includes people from all sorts of different backgrounds, from all sorts of different socioeconomic backgrounds. And if you want a sector that actually represents the UK that represents audiences, we need to start with pay.

**Melanie:** So just within exhibition, our sort of go-to jobs board is the Independent Cinema Office jobs board, and to post on the ICO's jobs board is free. So very attractive to employers because it's the go-to space. And you cannot advertise without disclosing the salary. And, you know, and nor should you, we wouldn't.

But I like that they kind of uphold that as a standard, whether or not it's a freelance role, you must disclose the fee. Or it's a salary role, you must at least disclose a range, like a salary range.

**Lianna:** So I think one really positive trend in the industry is to see that as well as employers who are going to the Living Wage website, filling in a form and becoming living wage employers. There are now more commissioners like big broadcasters, like the BBC, like ITV, who are writing real living wage into tenders. And funders as well.

There's over 80 living wage funders who say, if you are applying for a grant from us, we would like to see that you're paying your workers the real living wage. And that is something that I really feel positively about and I think is going to change incentives and reward employers who are treating their workers well, who are paying real living wage and recognise that effort.

**Keith:** So if we are saying that we're a business that wants maximum opportunity to access funding, being a living wage employer gets us there. What a fantastic story. That's a positive ending to this kind of subject. There's a huge number of really thoughtful, caring organisations that take living wage seriously, but always room for improvement I'm sure.

Thank you. Hopefully we've captured at least a start of a conversation there for people.

**Melanie:** Thanks so much.

**Lianna:** Thank you. It's been a pleasure to be here.

**Tacita:** I think that the squeeze from both sides, and it's not a squeeze, I think there are many organisations that want to do this, but are not sure how. And something that they both, both Melanie and Leana described there was that it doesn't have to be overnight. You can work towards this, you can have a plan in place, and I'm sure having a plan in place also supports applications, talent, and therefore, within the next two years, our aim is to, by doing these steps, become a real living wage employer.

**Keith:** And then I think you can see it in a slightly broader context of how you want to express the ethos of your business. And we can say we've got a sense of paying people properly, but there's that broader sense of how do we serve our communities? And that's where some of the other accreditations can also help.

So the things like the B Corp movement or the Good Business Charter that sorts out a way of explaining those other aspects of what might mean something to my business in a way that makes sense to the rest of the world as well. So I like that idea of saying it's not just about the pay, it's making sure we pay people on time. I like that we also think about a level that works for people who suit freelancing arrangements rather than the paid employment minimum wage. And I think that again it means that there's a sophisticated approach for a small business, but if that sophisticated approach pays dividends, then it's gonna be worth it.

**Tacita:** So if you are already doing this for yourself, for your organisation, now look wider than just the people that are working directly with you. What is it about people that are working in your catering, that are working in your security, that are working across the board? Those that are supporting the cleanliness of your environment, super important.

**Keith:** And if we practice having these conversations and rehearsing what we might need to say when we are asked about our position on pay for the first time, for the second time, we're gonna feel confident with our position and help access that funding or that talent in a way that's gonna be useful without feeling awkward, without having that reserve about talking about the levels of pay.

So I think that badge has lots and lots of reasons why it should be applied and maybe it's easier to apply than we might have first thought.

Thanks for listening to the WorkWise for Screen Podcast, supported by the BFI awarding National Lottery funding.

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**Keith:** Please follow us on social media and join in this crucial conversation.

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