

Fears for freelance workers post-pandemic

IPSE has responded to ONS labour market statistics which warn of a “drastic and avoidable” slump in the number of UK freelancers.

The ONS revealed that the number of self-employed people in the UK dropped by 178,000 from last quarter and by 105,000 compared to the same time last year.

Andy Chamberlain, director of policy at IPSE, the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed, said: “In recent years, the rise and rise of self-employment has been the great success story of the UK labour market, bolstering workforce numbers and driving the economy. It is worrying to see this so dramatically reversed.

“The ONS statistics show an alarming and avoidable slump in the number of self-employed people in the UK.

“While the Job Retention Scheme has held the number of employee job losses down, the cracks in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme have hit freelancer numbers hard.

“Without support, freelancers working through limited companies, the newly self-employed and other forgotten groups have left the flexible labour market in droves.

“In past recessions, the flexible expertise of freelancers has been crucial for recovery.

“In kick-starting the economy, the Government must therefore adopt measures that support and boost the freelancing community.

“It must also prepare to roll out a fuller self-employed support scheme in the event of a second lock-down for the sake

of freelancers themselves and the wider economy.”