



Occupational Health in the Creative Arts

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Sustainable Occupational Health

It's not all- about -
prevention is better than cure



The Chartered Society for Worker Health Protection

" We must treat the workplace
rigour as we treat t

The Chelsea Palette – JMW Turner (1775 – 1851)



JMW Turner's 'Chelsea' oil palette

Layered with splodges of paint, Turner used this palette in the last years of his life. It is known as the 'Chelsea' palette because Turner used it in the house he lived in by the River Thames at Chelsea. Scientific analysis shows that the paint contains colour pigments that were first made available in the 1840s such as scarlet lead chromate (a bright red). This is evidence of Turner's lifelong quest to experiment with new artistic materials.

Tate Archive
Z00773



Lead white
Chrome Yellow
Cadmium Yellow
Naples Yellow
Scheeles Green



Museums, Conservation and Heritage



Awareness of workplace health risks: "Woman worked on sculpture for 15 years with **BBC News** no



...a specialist performed a blood test and discovered that she had very high levels of **arsenic and lead** in her blood. "I was f **Absolutely flabbergasted,**" confessed Genser.

*Elsewhere in industry this would have been picked up in a "COSHH assessment" **toxins prevented***

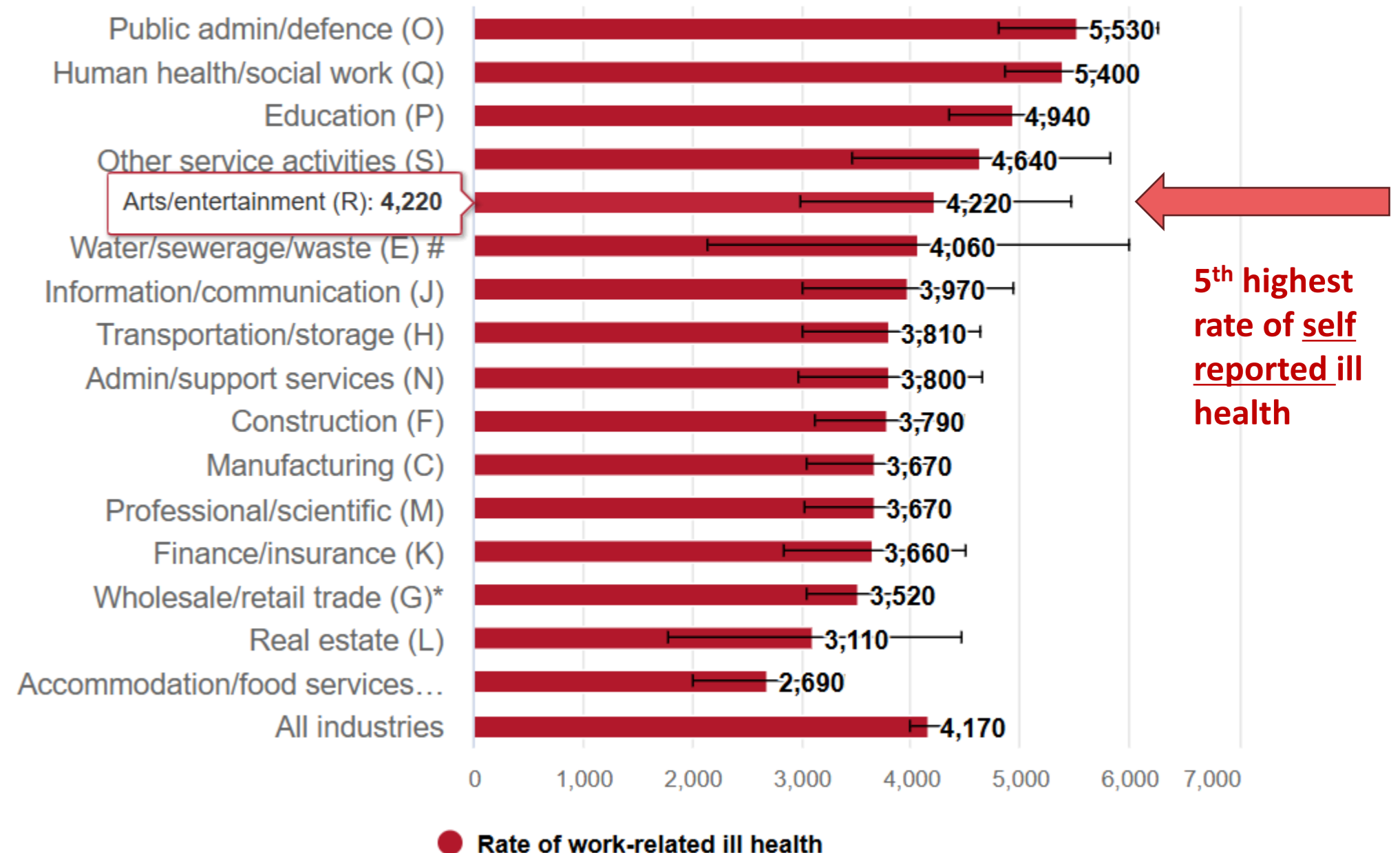
Common complaints

- Musculoskeletal disease
- Anxiety / Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Heart Disease

Note: are other ill health effects less reported due to latency?

Rate of self-reported work-related ill health by industry for people working in the last 12 months (per 100,000 workers) [Note 1], [Note 2], [Note 3]

Source: Labour Force Survey, annual average 2022/23 – 2024/25



Creative Arts – dance and performance

Industry Good Technique

- Feet shoulder width apart
- Bend at the hips and knees
- Avoid twisting
- Keep your back straight
- Stand close to the load
- No sudden movements or sharp jerks
- Wear appropriate footwear



Vs



OH Resources

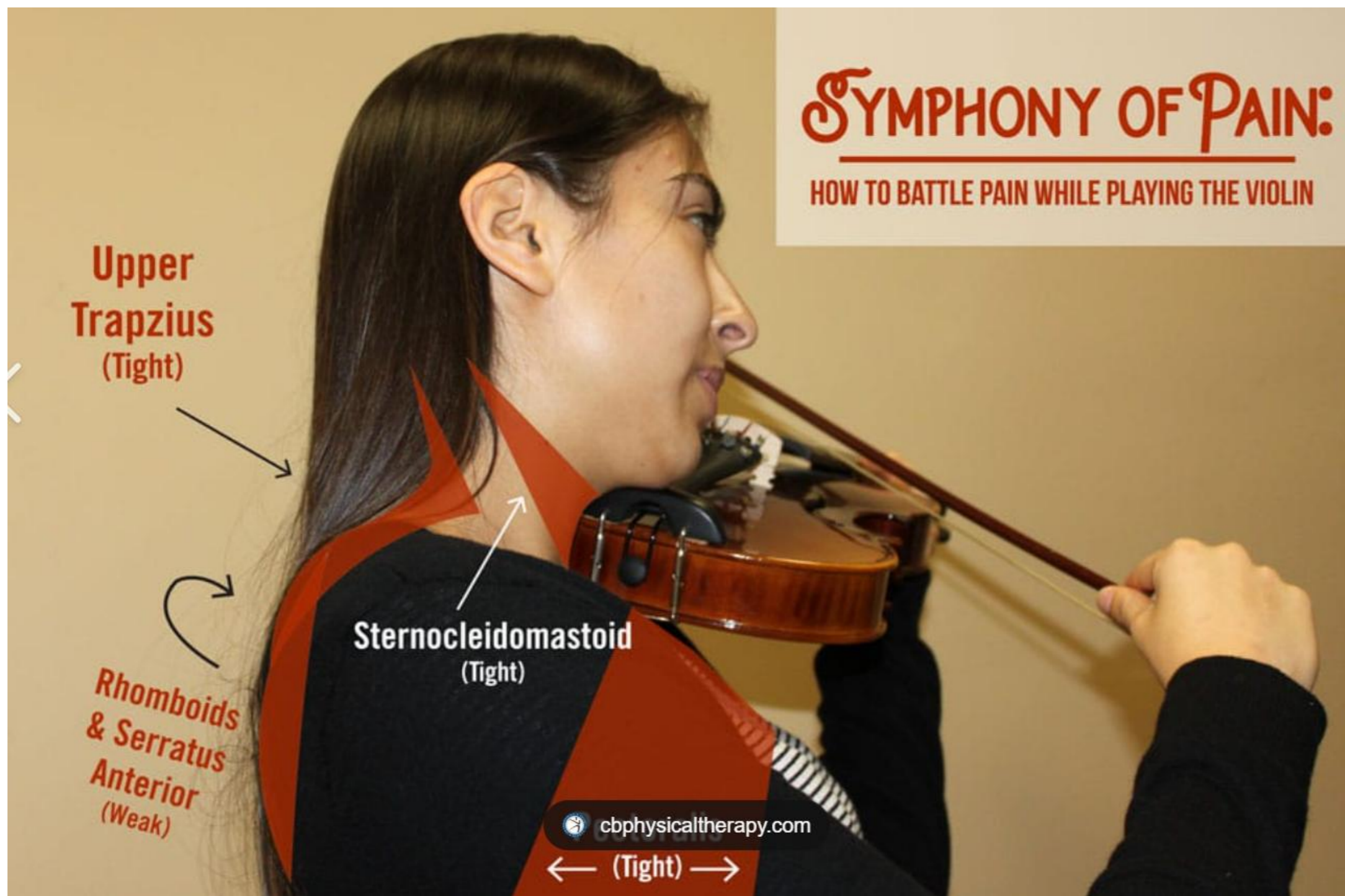


Programmes Directories News What we do Events Training & CPD

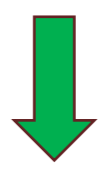
Healthcare Practitioners Directory



Creative Arts – Performance



OH Resources



Film, Media, Screen and Writing

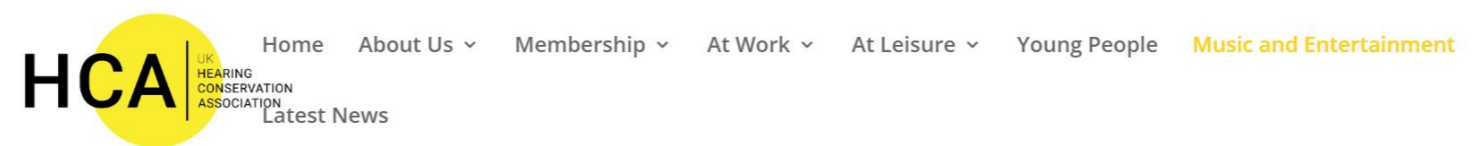


- Extreme heat and cold
- Hazardous substances
 - Gases
 - Biological agents
- Musculoskeletal
- Ultra-violet
- Fatigue / long hours
- Psychological stress (writing and filming)

Creative Arts – sector predominantly SME and microbusiness

Large organisation
Good Opportunity for Control

SME / microbusiness
Less Opportunity for Control



Hearing conservation in music and entertainment



Resources:



[Hearing Conservation | UK](#)
[Hearing Conservation Association](#)

Creative Arts – Behind the scenes



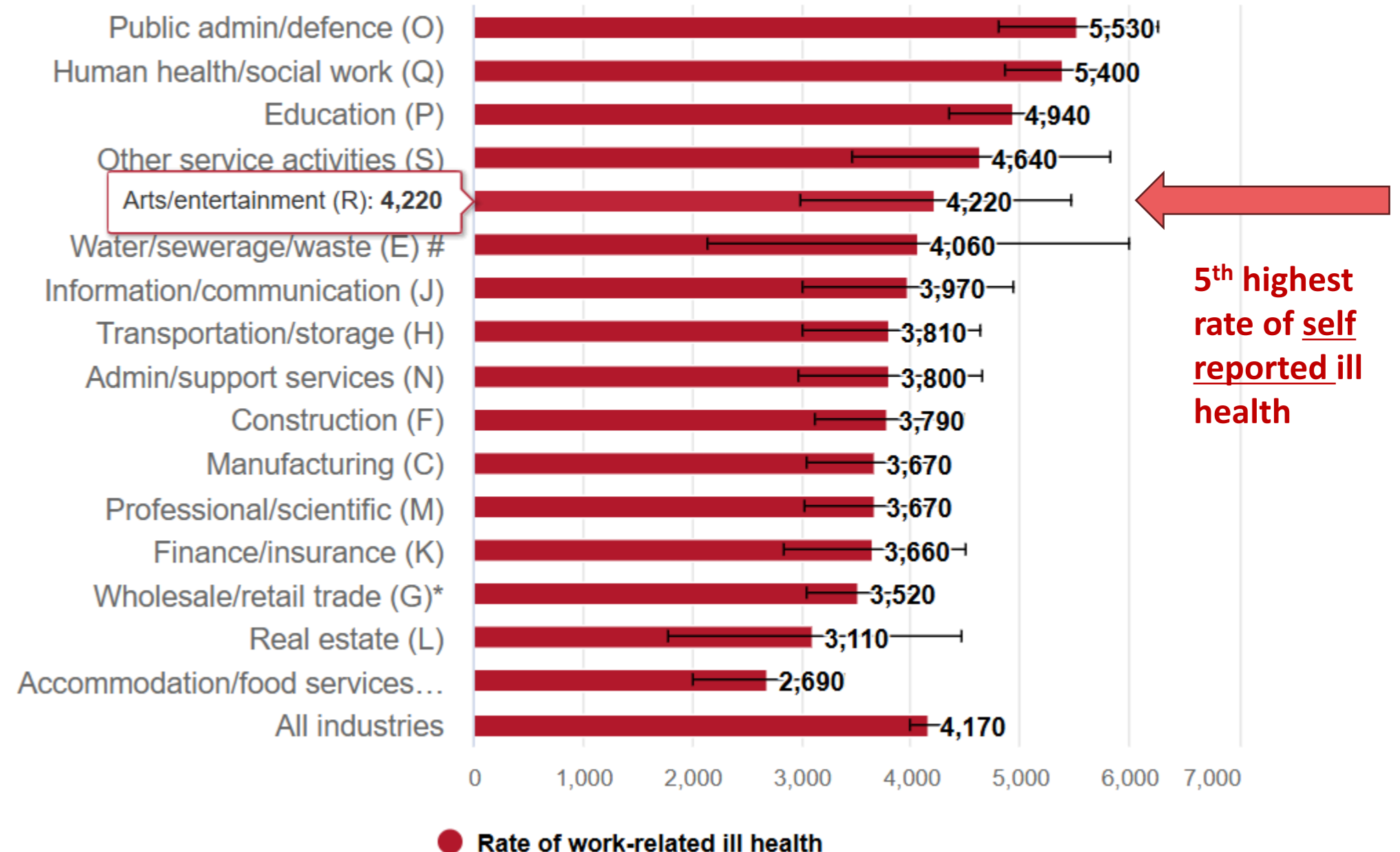
- Dust
- Noise
- Vibration
- Paints and adhesives

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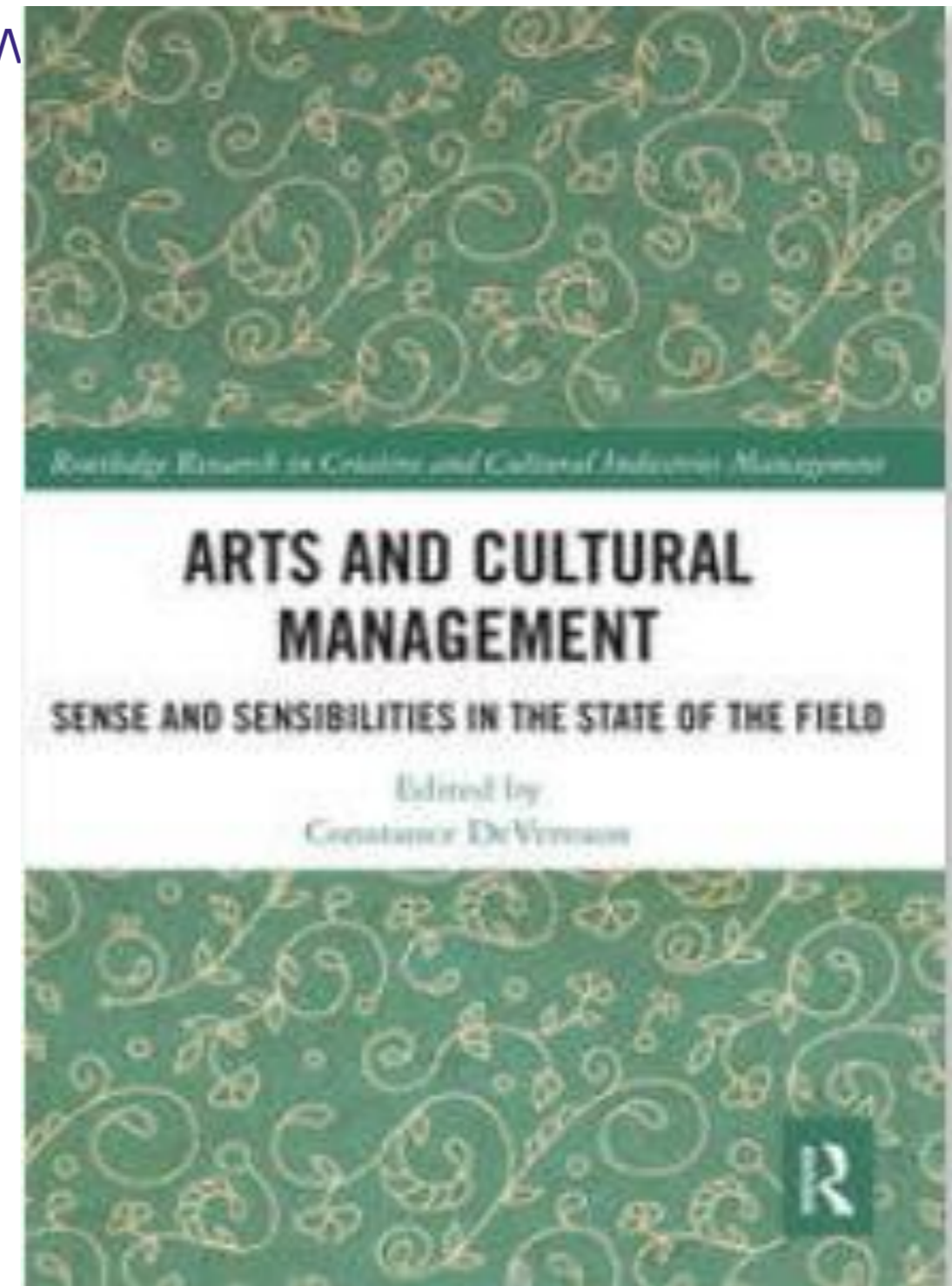
Psychological Risks

“ Those engaged in cultural work experience uncomfortable working conditions, peripatetic payment, and the precarity of self-employment.

Unpaid work is common, as are long hours, and standard work benefits (for example, sick leave or holiday pay) are often absent.

Lack of employment security, along with unclear career progression or pathways, also are prominent.

Hidden costs are also apparent, and many cultural workers experience physical and mental stress and have limited choice about where and how to live, an inability to plan for the future, and difficulty sustaining a reasonable
l i v e l i h o o d ”



r i e n c e

Mental Health – OH Resources



BAPAM
PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE

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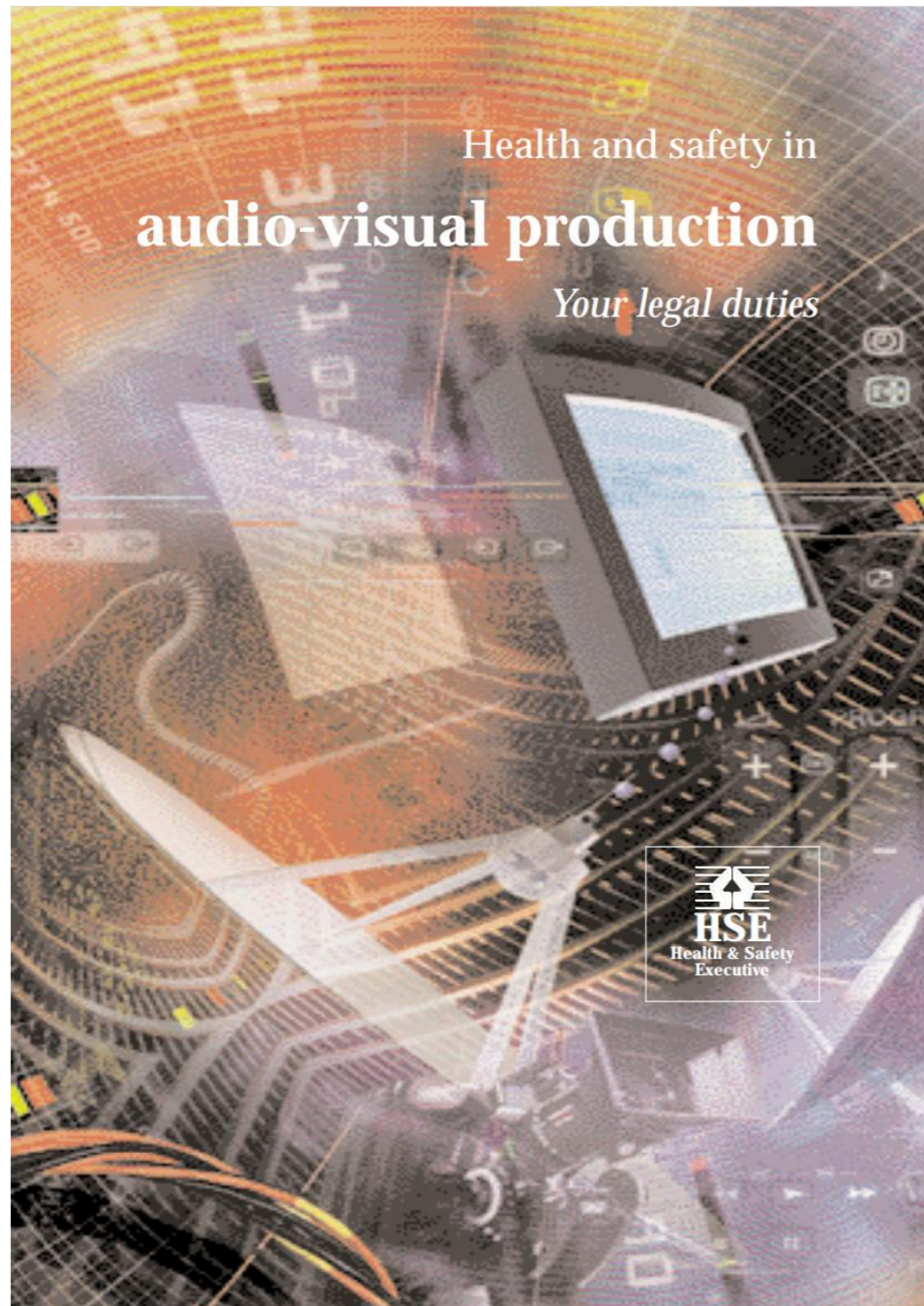
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE

**Mental Health and Wellbeing
Services for Performing Artists:
Guidance for the Performing Arts
Sector**



Mental Health Support Within The Arts

Pro-active management of health risks Consider: HSE Guidance Note: INDG360



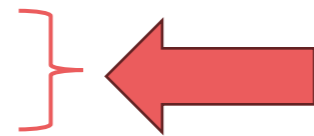
Obligations and responsibilities given for:

- **Investor / commissioner (client)**
 - Production company
 - **Producers / managers / supervisors**
 - Individual workers / crew
 - **Contractors**
 - Safety advisors and consultants
 - **Chain of responsibilities (flow chart)**
- In my opinion more a "safety"
- **Limited in application to artists and performers**

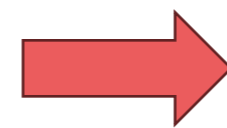
Inspiration from Construction Sector (cf: CDM2015 / INDG360)



- Ideation
- Development
- Rehearsal
- Presentation

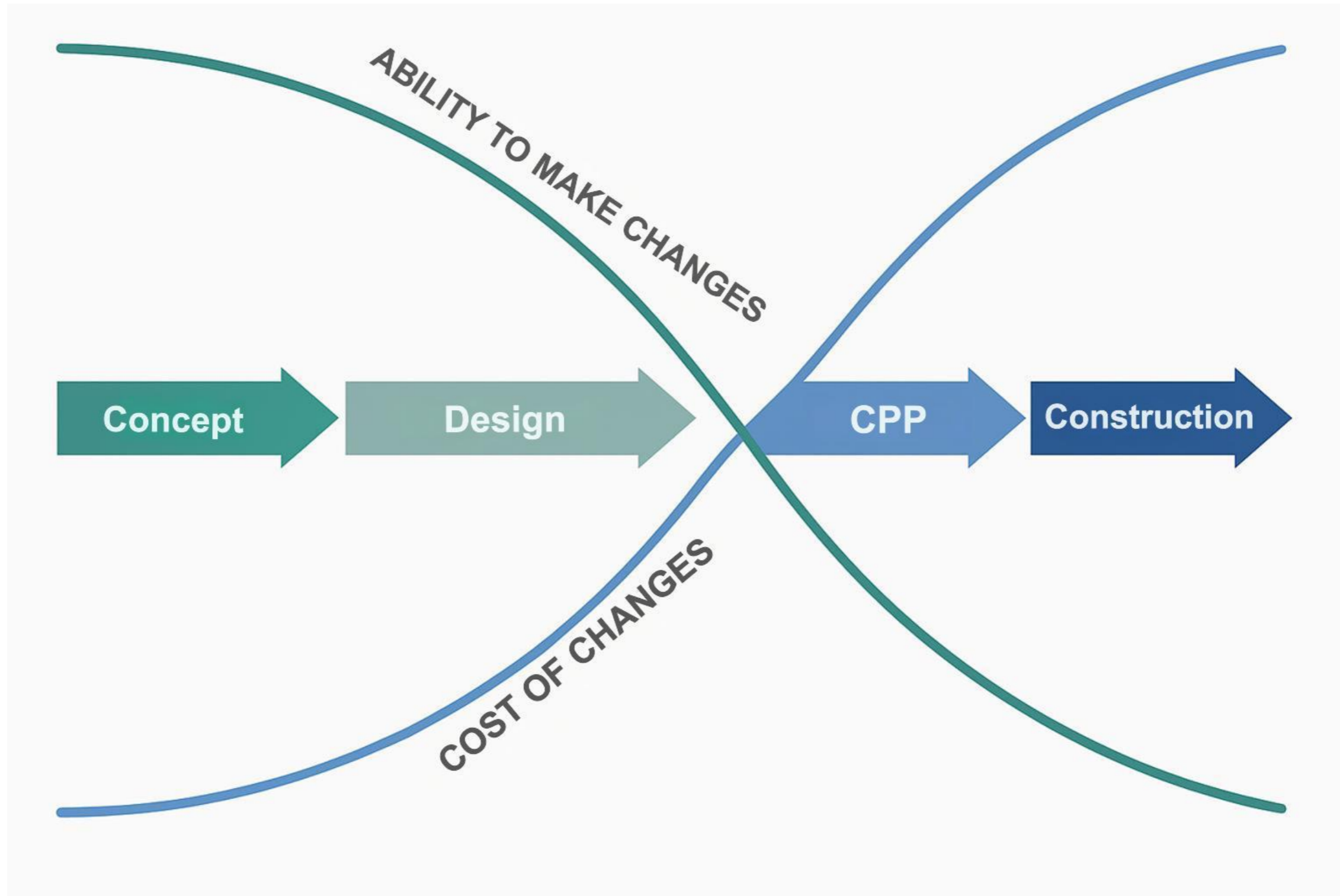


Experimentation
Reflection
Creativity
Design out the health risk



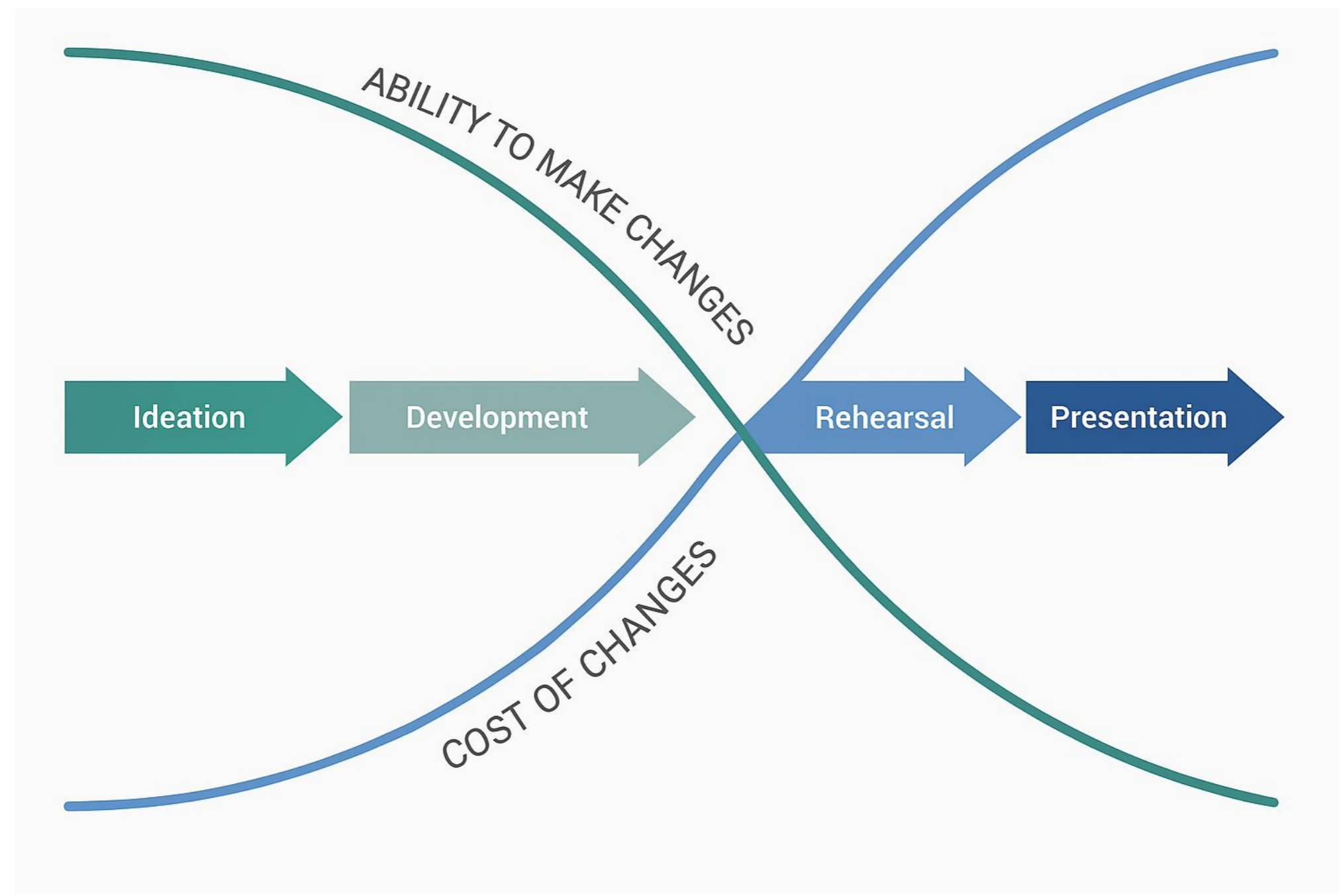
- Concept
- Design
- Construction Phase Plan
- Construction

Minimising health risk in construction – prevention is better than cure



Minimising health risk in creative industry – prevention is better than cure

Early intervention requires correct skills, knowledge, attitude, training and experience
(SKATE)



Some Final Thoughts

- Recap – OH is not all about treatment – prevention is better than cure
- **Advice and guidance is available. Many health risks in Creative Industries are encountered in other industries - and preventable.**
- There are models for managing health risks in sectors working in a similar way to the Creative Industries
- **Health risk prevention needs to be considered at earliest stages of production**
- Early interventions, facilitated by art education and access to OH provision, is needed to sustain careers.



Thank you!