



UK Broadcasters join forces to introduce new industry wide guidance for producing television safely during Covid-19

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ITV, BBC, Sky, Channel 4, Channel 5, STV, ITN, the Association for Commercial Broadcasters and On-Demand Services (COBA) and Pact have joined forces to introduce new industry wide guidelines for producing television safely in the weeks and months ahead. The guidelines are intended to enable a return to production for the television industry.

This guidance covers the broad range and scale of all TV programme making in every genre for TV and is complementary to the forthcoming British Film Commission guidance on managing the risks associated with film and high-end TV drama production.

In the new guidelines, the number one priority remains the safety and well-being of production teams and those who work with them. The guidance has been produced through a collaboration of cross industry experts in this area along with external expertise provided by Dr Paul Litchfield CBE. The broadcasters have also worked with First Option, safety consultants to the media and entertainment industry, to devise this approach as well as liaising with union representatives and the Health and Safety Executive.

The guidance has also taken careful note of the recent government advice (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) on the safe return to work. The expectation is that the guidance will evolve over the coming months as the lockdown is eased, as government advice evolves and as TV productions adapt to the new challenges posed by the Covid-19 risk and provide a framework the entire industry can work within.

The full guidance is attached. In summary, the guidance details six areas that producers, in conjunction with the commissioning broadcaster, must consider when planning to produce during Covid-19. They are:

- **Specifically consider people at higher risk of harm**
- **Heighten precautions for everyone at work**
- **Reduce the number of people involved**
- **Consider editorial 'on camera' requirements**
- **Consider mental health and wellbeing**
- **Feedback loop**

The guidance also lays out the key areas to consider when assessing risk on productions and suggests controls to consider (detailed in the attached guidance). They are:

- **Travel:** Try to minimise travel and follow social distancing principles within travel arrangements, wherever possible.
- **Location:** Consider the physical capacity of the space given the requirements of social distancing along with the provision of key hygiene facilities.
- **Work Activities:** Consider the activities that people are going to need to undertake across roles on production and if these can be adapted or changed to reduce risk.
- **Work Equipment:** Work equipment is key to TV production from cameras and headsets to edit suites. Good hygiene and managing potential issues with touchpoints should be addressed.
- **Work Patterns:** Work patterns may enable you to have small groups (cohorts) of people who don't come into contact with other groups.
- **Rest Areas:** Rest areas are very important but may need some reconfiguration and planning around breaks to ensure rest areas are as safe as possible.
- **First Aid and Emergency services:** Emergency services are under great pressure so may not be able to respond as quickly as possible alongside this Coronavirus (Covid-19) poses a potential risk to first aiders.
- **Masks, Gloves and Other Personal Protective Equipment:** Use of PPE is very much a last resort and should only be considered when all other forms of control have been considered and/or implemented. It would not in general be appropriate to source medical grade PPE. The very limited exceptions to this might be when filming in higher Covid-19 risk settings such as hospitals which would only be at the invitation of the relevant hospital authorities.
- **Mental Health:** The Covid-19 risk and the response has had a potential Mental Health impact for those working on productions.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said: "Great British television is keeping us company throughout the crisis, and I'm keen to get cameras rolling as soon as it is safe. Our creative industries are Britain's global calling card and this is a significant step forward in getting our favourite shows back into production."

Carolyn McCall, Chief Executive, ITV said: "ITV has been at the heart of informing, entertaining and connecting the UK through the Covid-19 crisis. Our production teams are now working hard to bring many more much loved shows back for viewers. This requires really innovative thinking, but above all, the safety and well-being of all those who work on the programmes is paramount. Working with partners across the industry, and with the support of DCMS, we have created clear guidelines to give producers a framework within which they can ensure that their production is safe."

Tony Hall, BBC Director-General, said: "Everyone across the TV industry wants to get production back up and running. Recent weeks have shown just how important shows are to the public. But we can only move forward with the right safety measures in place. This guidance is an attempt to get that right. Clearly we will keep it under review. We have, as an industry, already learnt a lot about how we can deliver programmes and we will all put that into practice".

Alex Mahon, Chief Executive, Channel 4 said: "I'm phenomenally proud of the role Channel 4, alongside our production partners, has played over the last two months to help navigate

audiences, particularly young and hard-to-reach viewers, through the Covid crisis. Unlocking the television production sector in a safe way will be vital to continuing to ensure we can both continue to serve our audiences and help sustain the livelihoods of those in the industry – and I’m pleased that we’ve been able to work in partnership with other broadcasters, DCMS and PACT to create this innovative new framework.”

Gary Davey, CEO Sky Studios, said: “This guidance provides production companies and broadcasters with a shared set of principles to keep staff, cast and crew safe across a range of productions. We will continue to work closely with our international partners, share best-practice and continuously review and evolve the guidelines as we return to production.”

Ben Frow, Director of Programmes, ViacomCBS Networks UK said “The UK is a global leader in content production and these guidelines will help pave the way to getting our sector safely back up and running, as we begin to navigate a ‘new normal’. Through a consistent and collaborative industry approach, we can work together with suppliers to reframe the parameters of programme-making during this challenging time, putting people’s wellbeing at the heart of the process.”

Simon Pitts, CEO STV said: “STV’s continued delivery of public service news and current affairs throughout the Coronavirus crisis demonstrates our ability to produce programming safely incorporating stringent new safety measures. Nations and regions producers like STV Productions play a vital role in driving both the UK’s world leading production sector and the local creative economy and - working closely with the Scottish Government - this protocol can provide a vital framework for more of our colleagues, across a broader range of production, to return to work with the same level of confidence about their safety and wellbeing.”

Anna Mallett, CEO, ITN said: “Our teams in ITN have pioneered new ways of working to keep the news on-air and crucially, to keep staff, freelancers and contributors safe during this time. We’ve been able to share our experiences and protocols to help draw up these guidelines for the wider industry. Our documentary team have found ways to ensure safety and creatively maintain production on a number of programmes filmed in contributors’ homes and on location”

John McVay, Pact CEO, said: "This guidance from all the major commissioning broadcasters in the UK is a very helpful first step to getting the industry back working and taking forward the recovery".

Adam Minns, Executive Director, COBA said: “Like the rest of the sector, COBA members are keen to renew production activity as soon as it can take place safely and responsibly. We hope this guidance will be an important step in getting the TV sector back to what it does best: making world class content.”

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