

BECTU COSTUME - RETURNING TO WORK WITH COVID-19

Disclaimer

This page is designed to give general information about health and safety on returning to work. It does not cover all circumstances and should not be treated as a definitive answer. Members should contact Bectu either through their union rep or full-time officer for specific advice.

We are the experts in our department in how it is run. It is essential that we take our share in the responsibility in the safe return to work. We are here with information and support to help you return to work safely.

This unusual situation we find ourselves in brings a SHARED responsibility - we all have to be our own Health & Safety officer - the only thing we have control over is our own behaviour - "What are YOU doing to manage the risk?"

Guidance doesn't eliminate risk, it reduces it.

The whole costume set up WILL be different to start with - all will be new and challenging.

Plan ahead, taking into account what you need to achieve, your crew, location etc. to produce the safest and most effective workflow for you and your department. Bear in mind everything will take longer.

Work deliberately and diligently. Help keep everyone safe.

Make sure you follow protocols - they are there to protect you.

- Maintain distancing, whenever possible.
- Practice frequent Hand Hygiene and don't touch your face.
- Cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow or disposable tissues.
- PPE - replace frequently. Only to be worn when in prolonged close contact with others. If you touch the outside of your mask wash your hands immediately.
- Keep your kit clean and don't touch or share others kit. Shared equipment should be disinfected between users.

Talk to your HoD's about any concerns. Make sure you know the incident reporting procedure.

Feedback - both positive and negative - within your department and to production is essential because the situation is new. There should be a feedback 'loop' in your guidelines - use them.

A cautious and strict return is required so productions don't encounter 'setbacks'. **If ONE production shuts down it could be potentially disastrous for our industry.**

Guidance will change as we move forward. The risk perception of Covid-19 is changing all the time - make yourself aware of changes and updates. Consider daily briefings and use visual reminders.

A word on sustainability - we have been working hard as a union to push the sustainability agenda forward. In this new arena, with the considerable employment of PPE - Please consider the impact of your choices as you move back to work. Hopefully it is a temporary situation.

RETURNING TO WORK FAQ's

I am shielding or am in the high-risk group, can I return to work?

Those who are high risk/shielding will have a tough decision to make about returning to work in an environment which, currently, carries a substantial increased risk. Shielding is for your own protection but it's your choice to decide whether to follow the guidance or not. Your return to work should be discussed in the context of advice from your own health professionals and, if appropriate, any company medical advisor. Flexibility and changes in how you do your job might mean you can return sooner than you think.

What information should I receive on my return to work?

The minimum you should receive is -

- Risk Assessment detailing production company guidelines
- Details of symptom & temperature checking procedures
- Details of working procedures and protocols in place. These will depend on the size of the production
- Covid-19 training
- Details of the Covid-19 supervisor and/or H&S Rep.

Where will I do my Covid-19 training?

It is most likely you will do your Covid-19 training **online**. The ScreenSkills/Skills For Health/First Option Covid-19 Basic Awareness course can be found [here](#). It is FREE to do, takes 40 mins-1 hour to complete and provides you with a certificate of completion at the end.

It will be COMPULSORY for those returning to work.

Will I be asked to complete a health questionnaire/declaration?

There are TWO answers -

The initial offer of work should not be conditional - they are NOT allowed to ask you to complete a Health Questionnaire/Screening BEFORE you are offered work. Productions have to be careful not to discriminate.

Once you are working you will regularly be asked to complete a 'self-certifying' style questionnaire.

It will likely ask you -

- if you have or are experiencing symptoms
- if you have a temperature (you may need your own thermometer)
- whether you know you have had or think you have had Covid-19
- if you have had close contact with (resided with/cared for) someone else who has been diagnosed with/is showing symptoms of Covid-19
- have you been asked to self-isolate by an authority (likely to be within a certain timeframe)

You will be asked to do this on a very regular basis - it will differ for each production, but could be a) before you leave home, b) when you arrive at work, c) at lunchtime.

The declaration should also have a paragraph notifying you about data and the use of it; and the deletion of it (production must adhere to strict GDPR standards).

What happens if I answer 'yes' to any of the questions?

If you answer 'yes' to some of the questions, or develop symptoms you will probably be tested and asked to self-isolate for 7 days.

Job protection is a HOT TOPIC and should be considered in the planning of productions, so ASK before you start work what the production plans are. It should include pay when you have to self-isolate, but this will depend on the scale of production. Good procedures and compensatory pay help to implement rules - people are much less likely to adhere to the rules if good systems are in place.

What if I am asked to sign a 'waiver'?

Waivers don't release productions from their duty of care. A waiver does not protect the production if they are found to be negligent in their responsibility to keep you safe (Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999)).

Will I be tested?

Testing will be essential in some instances but will vary between productions - some will only test those in close contact with cast/director, others will have a more comprehensive testing procedure in place.

TEST/TRACK/TRACE is key to what happens when someone gets sick. Records/logs will be kept and disposed of after a fixed amount of time (the BFC guidelines have very specific recommendations about this for producers, and also indicate that storage of private information needs to adhere to GDPR standards).

What is a 'cohort'? What is a 'bubble'?

'Cohorts' or 'bubbles' are a way of grouping people together in work groups - it reduces risk by managing the contact risk ie. not exposing everybody at the same time. It's another way of managing 'distancing'.

The KEY CONTROL in returning to work is reducing contact between people.

What if my job requires me to work within the distancing requirement of 2 metres?

If your role means you are required to work within 2 metres of your colleagues and cast the following procedures apply -

- The risk should be written into the department Risk Assessment. This means everyone in production and department are aware of the risks of the role.
- You should be assigned a cohort group or bubble - people in your dept/other depts that you are allowed to associate with.
- You should be provided with and maintain adequate PPE. Current government guidance includes the use of **a visor and/or mask** for close proximity work. Try to be conscious of the environmental impact of your choices.
- Make sure you follow protocols - they are there to protect you.

Will production provide PPE?

Yes, production will provide PPE where required. Bear in mind that PPE is seen as the last control measure after all other protocols have been implemented. PPE provided by production should have a CE mark (compliance with EU Safety, Health & Environmental requirements) - check it's not a cheap knock-off product.

How will production maintain procedures and protocols?

Production should ensure there is enough time built into each day to allow for additional procedure to maintain the cleanliness and good hygiene of the unit. It's written into our Bectu Costume Risk Assessment.

There should be a dedicated Covid-19 supervisor on every production.

I heard they want to reduce the number of crew and as a trainee/junior I am worried that there won't be any work for me - is this true?

Reducing crew is safer, but it's not about reducing crew overall, it's about **reducing the amount of people working together** at any one time. Everyone is keen to keep trainee positions, but understand they will be limited by the guidance and therefore tasks may be more restricted initially. There is a good chance some productions will employ **more** trainees to increase workflow behind the scenes.

I used to travel to work on public transport - how do I get to work now?

Avoiding public transport at peak times is key to reducing contact risks. Ways to avoid this are - travel off-peak; car share with colleagues/cohorts; cycle to work; hire a car, amongst others. The best solution for you and your department is the one that reduces risk to an acceptable level for the job you will be doing.

How do we prep? Buying/fitting/working in rental houses.

This is covered in the guidance. To cover some of the main questions -

Buyers/fitters - should take advantage of technology to assist them; discuss their transport arrangements; employ PPE where necessary; look at all the quarantine guidance.

Rental houses/costumes - each costume house has their own system - check it in advance; houses are working on appointment only basis for the moment; costumes should be quarantined each way; careful logging/bagging/dating should be done.

How are they going to allow for the time to deal with supporting artists?

Initially, there will be fewer crowd - whether that means not producing scripts that involve a lot of crowd or reducing numbers. Productions/producers should be aware of the time it takes to deal with additional numbers and maintaining protocols.

To whom should I report my concerns if I have any?

Make sure you know the incident reporting procedure - there should be a feedback 'loop' in the guidance you receive from production.

- Firstly, talk to your HOD's (designer/supervisor) about any concerns.
- Secondly, there should be a **Covid-19 supervisor or H&S rep** appointed to the production, as per the BECTU and BFC guidelines, to whom you can raise concerns.
- Thirdly, BECTU can offer support and guidance should you find yourself in an unsatisfactory position- <https://bectu.org.uk/coronavirus-support/>
- Additionally, you can contact the Health & Safety Executive -
HSE COVID-19 enquiries, Telephone: 0300 790 6787 (Mon to Fri, 8:30am to 8pm)
HSE online: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>

FURTHER ADVICE

Risk Assessment

READ the Risk Assessment and ask questions - don't be afraid to speak up. Employers have to be transparent and consult workers.

UK Government Guidance on Working Safely during coronavirus (Covid-19)¹ states, "Employers have a duty to consult their people on health and safety.... You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be."

You will find a generic Costume Department Risk Assessment and a supplemental Covid-19 Risk Assessment for reference and use on the Bectu Costume website.

USEFUL LINKS

BECTU Costume - <https://www.bectucostume.com/covid-19>

BECTU & BFC Guidance - <https://bectu.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Broadcasters/PACT Guidance - <https://www.pact.co.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/bafea386-4e38-4bfe-b77a98e804384e9b.pdf?userDownload=true>

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>