

Filming with confidence during Covid-19

Following the Government's introduction of national restrictions in England on January 5th, Creative England wish to provide some clarity around the implications for the film and TV sector.

Location filming is permissible across UK

The UK Government has confirmed that irrespective of risk level or local/national restrictions, COVID-secure film & TV production, in studios and on location, is permissible across the UK. This exemption covers all aspects of the production process, including scouting and recces, travelling and staying in a hotel for work purposes and that filming can continue to take place in the premises of businesses that are closed to the public due to the new Health Protection Regulations.

Over 85% of high-end UK productions are safely starting up again, creating the outstanding content in demand by audiences globally, and generating much-needed expenditure and jobs to drive the UK's economic and social recovery. Demand for England's studios and locations remains extremely high as the industry restarts, and we are keen to harness as much of this investment into the English Regions as possible.

Rigorous Health & Safety measures and Testing Regimes

Even before the pandemic, the UK film and TV industry was operating within a framework of strict risk assessment and health and safety protocols. The film and TV industry was, in fact, never officially asked to stop working even during the most stringent lockdown, but did so voluntarily as it was universally agreed that production couldn't continue safely without COVID-specific protocols in place.

During Lockdown, as part of BFI's Covid Taskforce, the BFC created a Production Working Group which included Creative England and began a UK-wide, cross industry consultation in order to create guidance to allow the film and HETV industry to return to work safely. The guidance was developed in liaison with the Department for Health and Social Care, Public Health England, DCMS and BEIS with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive and sign off from No. 10. On 1st June 2020, British Film Commission's Working Safely during COVID-19 in Film and High-end TV Drama Production Guidance was launched, enabling the industry to return to work safely.

Our industry's Covid-19 protocols are among the most stringent and effective currently operating in the UK. In addition to the Working Safely during COVID-19 in Film and High-end TV Drama Production Guidance, commercial companies have developed their own complementary protocols specific to their productions. And of course the film and HETV industry continues to operate within a risk assessment framework with each film and HETV project, each scenario and location, being assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The film and HETV industry also operates stringent testing regimes, far beyond what is required by law. Each film and HETV production is additionally overseen by an appropriately trained "Covid Supervisor" in line with the production guidance. Many larger productions employ entire COVID teams.

Crucially, because of the sensitive and secure nature of the industry, there is no interaction with the general public, with the majority of production taking place in Studios or in COVID-secure filming locations.

Due to maintaining a COVID-secure environment, Film and TV production has been able to continue safely throughout local restrictions of all levels in all four Nations of the UK. When individual cases of COVID-19 have been detected, due to stringent testing regimes and productions' 'fixed teams', 'cohorts', 'zoning' or 'bubbling', cases have remained isolated.

Creative England Support

Creative England is the national agency that provides support to the creative industries in England, outside London. Funded by Central Government via the British Film Institute, Creative England supports international and domestic film and TV production to shoot in England and works to improve the environment for filming in England. We are in close collaboration with the British Film Commission, working to attract inward investment from film and TV production.

Creative England continues to liaise with productions to ensure that they take all necessary actions to be COVID-secure. Working with industry, Film Offices, Local Authorities and Location Owners, we also continue to provide advice and support wherever needed.

For more information please get in touch with our Production Services team by visiting www.filminginengland.co.uk/planning-your-shoot/covid-19-production-guidance/ or email production@creativeengland.co.uk.