



Inclusive security practices: Factoring identity into production security

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Background

TV production is a diverse industry with diverse individuals involved and it is increasingly becoming more diverse¹. However, production can involve situations that put some team members at greater risk because of an aspect of their identity or take place in countries which actively discriminate against individuals with certain characteristics or where cultural norms can create tensions if not respected. As well as possible risks to their physical safety, such scenarios can also affect people's mental security and mental health.

Good planning can prevent and mitigate such situations but TV Industry Human Rights Forum research from 2021² found that security and production reported challenges in having conversations related to people's diverse identities that made such planning difficult. The research identified a need to promote the support that security teams can provide and make sure that the support was as inclusive as possible, helping production teams to operate safely.

For any production, there is a need to consider how the individual identities of crew, talent and ancillary workers intersect with the context and the nature of the production, in order to understand and mitigate risks adequately and to ensure the right response and support should an incident occur.

Throughout 2022, the TV Industry Human Rights Forum partnered with Creative Diversity Network to explore the following question: How can security and production teams have better conversations that take into account gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, disability, age and other identities to improve the safety of everyone on TV productions? The project involved dialogue with people from a range of perspectives to understand how to better embed inclusive security practices into TV productions.

This white paper summarises discussions from the final part of the project, a collaborative event held on 1 March 2023, that used identity-related scenarios to explore ideas for good practice. The below recommendations may apply to any genre.



¹ The Fifth Cut: Diamond at 5 – <https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TheFifthCut-Diamond-at-5.pdf>

² Respecting human rights in the security practices of broadcaster for documentary making, news and sports – <https://www.tvhumanrights.org/research-security-practices>

Prevention and mitigation of identity-related issues on productions

Pre-production information gathering

- Gather information, leaning on diverse local insight and not relying on one voice, covering aspects such as:
 - religious and cultural norms
 - the location and its environs, including areas to avoid
- Take lessons and feedback from previous visits and productions to particular locations, sharing insights across genres
- Share this well in advance of production with the team in order to build their knowledge and understanding and to identify and address concerns in good time.

Risk assessment

- Consider how production crew will spend their down time and incorporate into risk assessments, taking into account the composition of the crew
- Help the team to consider how to support each other, empowering them all to be allies, so that the burden of responsibility for preparing and responding to situations does not rest with only those directly affected

Training

- Ensure the team is equipped to handle situations and anticipate problems before they escalate; this can be done through scenario planning and situational awareness training
- Knowing how to de-escalate an incident is vital and something that needs practice, e.g. through role play; crew should have conflict resolution and de-escalation training

Planning with security providers

- Know your security providers and have several available to provide options
- Give security providers clear specifications with as much advance notice as possible and contingency built in to cover last minute requirements
- Ensure that security providers buy into, understand and implement high standards
- Ensure that channels and relationships exist for feedback and reporting between security providers and production teams in case issues arise

Set the right culture on shoots from the outset

- Emphasise that the responsibility is on everyone to know how to respond appropriately to situations where an individual might be impacted because of an aspect of their identity
- Ensure diverse crew members feel empowered to speak up about risks and proactively check in with individuals
- Establish a team ethos of looking after each other, acceptance of individual differences and respect for all those involved in the production, including security personnel
- Incorporate security personnel into the production team so that they are seen as a colleague, treated with dignity and respect and have access to the same food and facilities
- Identify any particular needs individuals may have, including ancillary workers and security personnel, and ensure open lines of communication
- In the majority of productions, it should be possible to designate a welfare room or safe space for use by those who need it, e.g. for praying, pumping milk etc
- Be prepared to alter plans and ideas, rather than sticking to them rigidly, based on new insights, information and intelligence

During production

- On longer shoots, remind people of risks and mitigations at a point when complacency may have set in; reinforce guidance regularly

Responding to an incident related to someone's identity

Immediate response

- De-escalate a situation where safety is an issue
- Ensure those directly affected are safe – move out and away if necessary
- Record details of what has happened, retaining any film footage if useful
- Make sure those directly affected are ok – the incident could be a one-off or it could be one of many
- Provide access to mental health support for anyone who needs it
 - Mental health first aid
 - Employee Assistance Programme
 - Psychological care
- Emphasise no blame to those affected as a result of their identity

Communications and messaging

- Give individual debriefs with those present or directly affected
- Issue messaging to the rest of the production to clarify the situation and prevent rumours – this may be best delivered face-to-face and tailored to smaller groups rather than through a formal production-wide email
- If a perpetrator is part of the production (including ancillary workers), have a direct conversation to explain standards and expectations and investigate whether there is a pattern of behaviour or if there is another explanation for an incident
- Seek to diffuse tensions with other stakeholders, e.g. through apology, investigation etc
- Report as a safety incident if appropriate

Longer-term

- Conduct debriefings and reflect on whether enough was done to prevent the incident, looking in particular at:
 - Briefings and communications
 - Risk assessments
 - Whether there was sufficient security resource
- Review responses of the team when the incident occurred and check in with those directly affected to understand whether they felt appropriately supported
- Consider whether the issue has been adequately dealt with and rectified or whether there is anything more that could be done to prevent it happening again to someone else in future – this may involve sharing details of poor behaviour with other organisations
- Embed lessons learned and document insights for future productions to access
- Use trend analysis to inform future risk assessments

Barriers to good practice

There are a range of barriers that prevent some of this good practice being in place. Some of these are within the purview of productions teams or broadcasters to address, while others are factors beyond the control of productions that simply have to be taken into account.

Attitudes and team culture

- Power dynamics that make it difficult for people to speak up, share concerns or make their individual needs clear; people need to feel accepted in order to share
- Previous experience of discrimination or concern that future work may be impacted if an individual draws attention their particular needs, differences or experiences
- Complacency when nothing has gone wrong previously on productions in particular places or where something has been designated 'low risk' or when a shoot is long and people drop their guard after a few weeks of no issues
- Inability to adapt to emergent risks or a resistance to taking appropriate advice and input
- Lack of a cohesive team due to its size and/or its variety in terms of crew and ancillary workers, including staff, freelancers, contractors and those employed by third party suppliers
- Low safety awareness within production teams

Competing priorities

- Schedules and time pressures
- Budget and resources elsewhere rather than on appropriate and adequate security provision
- Production requirements, e.g. for a particular location
- Editorial requirements overruling or deprioritising security and safety
- Fixers wanting to please rather than saying 'no' to requests that would not be safe

Processes

- Fewer planning and resources to 'low' and 'medium' risk locations, which may end up being high risk for some individuals
- Lack of adequate communications with fixers
- Lack of dialogue with the whole production team on production safety early and throughout a production
- Inadequate diversity of local knowledge such that different identities are not considered when planning production safety
- Lack of or poor record-keeping – incidents may not be written down but dealt with in the moment so that it is left to individuals to remember it
- Requests for security (especially last minute ones) often delegated to junior members of the production team without the experience to know what to ask for and how to mitigate potential risks as a result, simply needing to do the job they've been asked to do

Security provision

- No say over the security providers used in some situations, for example at sporting venues or in national parks for wildlife shoots
- The transient nature of many of those that work in security making it difficult to invest training
- A mismatch of supply and demand for security support
- Competition concerns relating to sharing information across organisations, e.g. about good and poor security providers