



Behaving well in supplier relationships

Version 1.0

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How to use this guidance

Read the whole document for context or use the links to skip to the relevant section based on the tool you need to support a step on the production checklist:

| Pre-production | Tool |
|--|--|
| Review and consider working conditions of: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set construction workers | Factors to consider...set construction workers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities team | Factors to consider...facilities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stagehands | Factors to consider...stagehands |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaners | Factors to consider...cleaners |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caterers | Factors to consider...caterers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security guards | Factors to consider...security |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport workers | Factors to consider...transport |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other | |
| During production | |
| Ensure respect for human rights when terminating or renegotiating supplier contracts | Factors to consider...supplier contracts |
| Post-production | |
| Survey suppliers to understand whether the production's practices caused any challenges to suppliers | Scoring a production's purchasing practices |

If your production is linked to a member of the TV Industry Human Rights Forum (Sky, NBCU, BBC Studios or ITV), you can request additional advice and support to use the tools by contacting Amelia.Knott@tvhumanrights.org.

Introduction

This toolkit aims to support productions to be 'good buyers'. Poor buying practices can directly impact the health and livelihoods of vulnerable workers in TV productions, particularly those who are lowest paid.

The toolkit outlines steps that productions can take in their own practices to ensure that decent working conditions are a feature of their content creation. It particularly includes factors to consider when engaging different types of ancillary workers, who are likely to be the least visible on production whilst also being among the lowest paid and in precarious employment arrangements.

Audience and Use

This toolkit is aimed at those in productions who are responsible for the purchase of goods or services. It should be used in conjunction with [Toolkit: Vetting suppliers appropriately](#).

Context: Purchasing practices

There are a number of ways that purchasing practices by productions can fail to uphold good practice in sourcing or actively work against it. These are practices that need to be guarded against.

Clarity of contracts

If the standards required are not made clear in contracts with suppliers then they may not be aware of what is expected and it becomes much harder to hold them to account. Every supplier should have a written contract; every contract should reference responsible sourcing standards, including labour practices; and a copy of latest policies should be sent to the supplier alongside the contract so that the terms are clear. The more comprehensive the contract, the more stable and guaranteed the overall context in which the suppliers operate.

Order placement and lead times

This timing of order placements directly influences the lead times that the suppliers have for preparing the right workers or the volume of goods requested by the buyer. When lead times are reduced, suppliers must scramble to meet requirements, which they increasingly do by resorting to excessive overtime, use of casual (and sometimes under-skilled) labour or outsourcing in order to meet deadlines. Sometimes, short lead times are due to a lack of effective communication between suppliers and buyers.

Pressure to reduce prices

Suppliers may agree to below cost production or services in order to gain or retain a client. This can lead to understaffing of productions or lower wage rates for workers.

Changes to orders or requirements

If contracts do not specify who is responsible for the costs incurred when there are changes in requirements then it is usually the supplier who has to bear the costs of changes, which puts pressure on their margins. Such pressure may be passed on to workers.

Using buying power to put pressure on suppliers

Suppliers may fear being blacklisted by broadcasters and production companies with power in the industry. If productions refuse to pay for orders or work done or if they demand better payment terms or discounts on the agreed contract price, suppliers may have little option but to accept the situation, knowing that there will be negative consequences if they complain. This can have significant ramifications if suppliers cannot then pay their workers in full or on time.

Accuracy of technical specifications and requirements

Incorrect estimations of requirements or unclear needs from the buyer can lead to difficulties for suppliers trying to fulfil those requirements. For example, underestimating the size of transport loads or the number of people that need feeding on set can put pressure on transport or catering providers, respectively, potentially putting a cost burden on the suppliers. Accuracy and planning can enable industry suppliers to plan better.

Mixed messages and disincentives

Requiring suppliers to meet high standards on one hand whilst demanding reduced prices and failing to uphold those standards on the other gives mixed messages. Ensuring good standards in the supply chain may mean that it costs more to do business and this should be factored in from the outset.

All such pressures make it more likely that suppliers will cut corners and reduce their own costs any way they can, e.g. by reducing wages, using casual labour, understaffing productions, outsourcing to subcontractors (whose lower costs make hidden labour exploitation more likely), forcing excessive overtime from employees and reducing a focus on health and safety.

How productions can improve their purchasing practices

1. Build good relationships with suppliers and be clear where there are estimates or unknowns so that the supplier can plan accordingly
2. Give suppliers as much notice as possible so that they have time to source their first choice of workers and to plan shifts appropriately
3. Acknowledge that downward pressure on budgets or time may have a knock-on impact to worker welfare and ensure that senior decision-makers are aware of such trade-offs if they have to be made
4. Try to gain an understanding of the true costs of the services and products you are trying to procure in order to spot when a supplier is underbidding.
5. Listen to feedback from suppliers and critically assess own approach in order to improve practices – consider using a [supplier survey](#) to review the production from the perspective of suppliers.

1a. Factors to consider when engaging set construction workers

Applicable to: all types of set construction, whether building semi-permanent structures on sites subject to CDM regulations or using specialist companies to build sets off site which are then installed by stagehands.

Things to remember

- Building and construction in the UK is known to have problems of labour exploitation, although due to protectionism in set construction, the risks of modern slavery in TV production appear low.
- As well as being physically demanding, construction work is inherently dangerous.
- It is common for construction workers to be self-employed, ie with no rights to minimum wage, holiday pay or sick pay. It is not always clear whether such self-employment is legal.

Potential worker welfare issues

- Safety is a challenge, with suggestions that accidents sometimes go unreported.
- It appears to be relatively common for riggers, mechanics and those providing manual labour to sets to have problems of literacy or suffer from dyslexia, meaning that health and safety information provided as lengthy documents are not good mitigations.
- Extreme hours, precarious employment and time pressures increase the risk of mental health issues.

Issues for productions to consider

- Has sufficient notice been given to companies to ensure that they can source qualified people and have the time to conduct proper due diligence checks on workers?
- Is health and safety information and documentation provided in good time and in appropriate formats, e.g. using appropriate and understandable language?
- Are set construction workers appropriately employed? Who is responsible for checking this?
- What safety reporting systems are in place and who has overall responsibility for set construction safety? Is this person sufficiently qualified and senior?
- Are the impacts of last-minute changes and decisions on the working hours of set construction workers taken into consideration?
- Is there any provision made for those required to work long or additional hours in order to meet changes to schedules (e.g. overtime pay, extra time off)?
- Does the industry supplier have a shift management system in place to ensure reasonable working hours and breaks as well as adequate rest between shifts?
- To whom can construction workers speak if they have safety concerns or worries about mental health or working conditions?

1b. Factors to consider when engaging stagehands

Applicable to: stagehands provided by crewing or event companies to TV production or recruited directly as freelancers, who carry out rigging, de-rigging or turnarounds in the course of filming.

Things to remember

- Manual handling is physically demanding and carries safety risks, with location work sometimes involving carrying items across significant distances; fatigue significantly increases such risks.
- Stagehands may have a significant amount of travel either side of the shifts they are working.
- Stagehands should be able to flag concerns about unreasonable requests, especially those that impact safety.
- Margins are very low for companies supplying stagehands so any pressure to reduce prices is likely to have a direct knock-on impact as there is not much wiggle room for reduced budgets.

Potential worker welfare issues

- There is a risk of rogue operators who pay cash to stagehands (including those in receipt of state benefits) and pay well below the minimum wage
- There are health and safety risks, particularly if productions are reluctant to pay for qualified people to do a job.
- For a variety of reasons, productions may underestimate the amount of resources (e.g. workers, time, etc.) required for a job or shift resulting in an unreasonable amount of work for the workforce that arrives.
- It appears to be relatively common for riggers, mechanics and those providing manual labour to sets to have problems of literacy or suffer from dyslexia, meaning that health and safety information provided as lengthy documents are not good mitigations.

Issues for productions to consider

- Is the company offering to supply stagehands undercutting known/reputable providers and is there a reasonable explanation for the lower costs?
- Is the requirement for work outside main hubs for stagehands? If so, it may be important to factor in accommodation to the budget or travel time for workers.
- Are the requirements realistic in terms of work done and time available?
- Are there sufficiently qualified or experienced people who will be working with or supervising the stagehands?
- Is there a shift management system in place to ensure that stagehands are not working excessive hours without adequate breaks between shifts?
- Where and to whom can stagehands raise concerns about working conditions or the work requirements?

1c. Factors to consider when engaging facilities providers

Applicable to: facilities teams within the remit of the Unit manager or under a Transport Captain if the production has one, including those who:

- Set up unit bases
- Service temporary/mobile cabins, trailers or offices
- Maintain equipment
- Gully-suck the honey-wagons and trailers
- Keep the facility generators working and fuelled
- Manage logistics, including vehicle logistics and transport requirements
- Manage waste
- Drive HGV/plant

Things to remember

- Facilities teams provide crucial services but can often feel under-appreciated by productions.
- Most workers are relatively low paid and carrying out tasks that may be seen as undesirable (e.g. picking up rubbish, unblocking toilets).
- Workers may be required to work outside in all weathers.
- Facilities workers may be first on and last off a production each day.
- Margins may be very low for companies supplying facilities teams so any pressure to reduce prices is likely to have a direct knock-on impact as there is not much wiggle room for reduced budgets.

Potential worker welfare issues

- Long working hours – a 12-hour shift is normal and hours may extend beyond this.
- Sometimes facilities workers may sleep overnight in the vehicles or cabins they are responsible for if they have a long commute
- Health and safety can be an issue if facilities workers are eager to please production.

Issues for productions to consider

- Has the budget factored in accommodation and subsistence for facilities teams where appropriate?
- Is there a shift management system in place to ensure that facilities teams are not working excessive hours without adequate breaks between shifts?
- Are facilities workers ever expected to sleep in vehicles or cabins? If you discover a worker sleeping in a vehicle or cabin, what steps will you take?
- To whom can facilities workers speak if they have concerns about health or safety (including mental health) or working conditions?

1d. Factors to consider when engaging cleaning providers

Applicable to: Cleaning services to productions whether provided by:

- Company subcontracted by the production
- Company subcontracted by the studio owner/manager
- Cleaners directly employed by the studio owner/manager

Things to remember

- Cleaners could be among the most vulnerable workers on productions, whilst also being among the least visible.
- Unlike other ancillary roles, cleaners tended to be required for much shorter timeframes and on an ad hoc basis, meaning their hours could vary considerably from month to month and they are likely to be working on a range of different sites.
- Margins are likely to be low for companies supplying cleaners so any pressure to reduce prices is likely to have a direct knock-on impact as there is not much wiggle room for reduced budgets.

Potential worker welfare issues

- Cleaning is often undertaken before morning call times or after a production wraps for the evening, when few people are around. Therefore, it is difficult for cleaners to build relationships with other parts of the production and for production staff to witness their working conditions. This lack of visibility puts them at higher risk of hidden exploitation.

Issues for productions to consider

- How will you conduct enhanced due diligence on cleaning providers to ensure that the conditions of recruitment and employment are not exploitative?
- Are there any opportunities to check on the welfare of cleaners? If so, who will do this and how will they do it?
- If you have concerns about the welfare of a non-English speaking cleaner or you need to communicate with them, how will you do this? (e.g. consider telephone translation services such as ClearVoice)
- How will you ensure that cleaners have access to information about their rights given that they may not have a chance to interact directly with any of the crew? (e.g. consider using posters)
- Where and to whom can cleaners raise concerns about working conditions or the work requirements?

1e. Factors to consider when engaging caterers

Applicable to: Caterers that provide a range of services to TV productions on set, in studios and on location, including meals, snacks and tea and coffee facilities.

Things to remember

- Food production cannot easily be brought forward or pushed back at short notice so last minute changes to a production schedule will have a knock-on impact that could affect the most vulnerable workers.
- There are significant impacts on worker welfare if the number of meals requested is different to the number of people wanting to be fed.
- Sometimes volunteers are used to support catering.
- Margins tend to be low for companies supplying catering so any pressure to reduce prices is likely to have a direct knock-on impact as there is not much wiggle room for reduced budgets.

Potential worker welfare issues

- Long shifts and insufficient rest between shifts (examples of workers sleeping on the kitchen floor)
- Undue or excessive pressure put on workers from inaccurate catering requests or late changes to timetables

Issues for productions to consider

- How will the production ensure accurate estimates of the number of meals needed each day?
- Is the budget for catering realistic?
- How will the production support caterers that work to reduce food wastage?
- Where and to whom can catering workers raise concerns about working conditions or the work requirements?

1f. Factors to consider when engaging security guards

Applicable to: Security guards providing services that include:

- Controlling set entry and exit points
- Checking on vehicles
- Registering and checking visitors
- Conducting patrols of the set and its perimeter
- Acting as banksmen
- Following up on any security alerts
- Protecting equipment, production personnel and visitors
- Acting to remove intruders

Things to remember

- Security guards are low paid and work long shifts in often uncomfortable and lonely conditions.
- Security guards are the first line of defence and expected to put themselves at physical risk to protect others.
- The role of security often features in risk mitigations for other suppliers or aspects of the production (although security guards themselves may be unaware of this).

Potential worker welfare issues

- Security personal often work outside in exposed conditions and need the right protective clothing for different types of weather
- Long shifts of 12 hours are common and pay is usually low
- Night working and solo working are common, sometimes without access to toilets or shelter
- Understaffing is common on TV productions but can mean that security personnel feel unable to take their rest breaks
- As the first line of defence, security personnel are most at risk of physical violence
- Security personnel may not be included as part of crew so have to make their own arrangements for food and drink

Issues for production to consider

- Has a security risk assessment been completed and does the planned staffing of security guards reflect this risk assessment?
- What checks have been done on security licences to ensure that they are genuine?
- Where will security guards take their rest breaks? (Is this place warm, dry and with somewhere to sit down?)
- What happens if a security guard needs to leave their post – e.g. to conduct a patrol, investigate a potential issue or to take a break? Who will provide cover?
- Can the security guards easily access toilet facilities, including those on night shifts?
- Will food be provided for security guards and, if not, what kitchen facilities are available to guards for storing/heating food or making drinks?
- How will shift handovers occur and is this factored in to shift times?
- Who will check in on the welfare of security guards (incl. at night or when solo working)?
- To whom can security guards speak if they have safety concerns or worries about mental health or working conditions?
- If a security incident were to occur, what back up is available?

1g. Factors to consider when engaging transport providers

Applicable to: Transport providers that provide services such as:

- Moving loads from one location to another
- Moving large vehicles from one location to another
- Prop running
- Setting up or taking down vehicles or units at a location

Things to remember

- Drivers are likely to be agency workers rather than known to the transport provider.
- Drivers may not speak English as there are a high number of migrant workers providing driving services in the UK.
- There are laws in place around driving hours and rest breaks.
- Vehicles are not legally allowed to travel overweight and, if stopped and checked, could be prohibited from further movement until the excess weight was removed.
- All transport providers over 7.5 tonnes must have an operator's licence issued by the Traffic Commissioner.
- Drivers are only allowed to sleep in their cab provided they have a sleeper cab. Without this, they are not allowed to sleep in the truck.
- There are rogue operators known in the transport sector who may be exploiting their drivers, requiring them to drive illegal schedules or using the wrong licences.

Potential worker welfare issues

- One driver may be used to undertake a long journey instead of two to save costs, causing the driver to exceed their hours. Or drivers may be worked more than six consecutive days, which is illegal and puts the drivers and other road users at risk
- Workers are relatively invisible as they work alone without supervision and are thus at potential risk of hidden labour exploitation

Issues for productions to consider

- Have you checked that all transport providers, including one-man bands, with vehicles over 7.5 tonnes have the correct and appropriate operator's licence?
- If a driver is moving a vehicle, how will they get to and from that vehicle and will they need any accommodation?
- Has the transport provider raised any concerns about the proposed schedules?
- How will drivers raise any health and safety concerns about their roles?
- Are drivers ever expected to sleep in their vehicles? If not and you discover a driver sleeping in a vehicle, what steps will you take?
- Are there any opportunities to check on the welfare of drivers at the point of pick up or drop off? If so, who will do this and how will they do it?
- If you have concerns about the welfare of a non-English speaking driver or you need to communicate with them, how will you do this (e.g. telephone interpreting)?
- Does your production have a transport captain and, if so, does this person hold any certifications of professional competence? If not, does the person responsible understand all the requirements and regulations in relation to transport?
- To whom can drivers speak if they have safety concerns or worries about mental health or working conditions?

2. Factors to consider when terminating or renegotiating supplier contracts

There are a number of reasons why a production may wish to terminate or renegotiate a supplier contract, which include:

1. The production is cancelled
2. The production is delayed
3. The budget has changed and the production can no longer afford the supplier's original terms
4. Another supplier is preferred
5. The supplier has not met the standards required
6. There have been complaints or issues raised about the supplier

It is important to ensure that the actions you take in terminating or renegotiating a contract are done in a way that complies with national laws, international labour standards and the terms of any collective bargaining agreements.

Disengaging or renegotiating a supplier without sufficient notice or when costs have already been incurred can have a detrimental impact on the workers of that supplier, who may lose out on wages for work already done or who may suddenly find they have no work with little warning.

Factors to consider

- Has the supplier incurred or committed to costs the production has not yet paid for?
- Has the supplier completed any work that has not yet been paid for?
- Are there any workers at risk if terminating or renegotiating terms with a supplier?
- Are there any complaints or issues in relation to the working conditions of those working for suppliers? If so, how can their welfare be put at the centre of the production's response?

Good practice

- Articulate escalation measures for disengagement upfront with the business relationship
- Provide sufficient notice of disengagement or renegotiation to the supplier
- Find a reasonable way to share, minimise or pay in full for work done and costs incurred, including cancellation costs, within a reasonable timeframe
- If you need to, prioritise labour costs to ensure salaries are paid in full by suppliers and to minimise impacts on workers
- Provide detailed information supporting the decision to disengage or renegotiate terms to management and to the trade union, where one exists
- Engage in collaborative processes to resolve any disputes
- Consider, where production cancellation is unavoidable and has nothing to do with supplier performance, committing to commensurate business in future

Do not

- Threaten the supplier
- Demand worse payment terms of a supplier after the contract has been fulfilled

3. Scoring a production's purchasing practices – questionnaire for suppliers

The below questionnaire can be used to score a production from the perspective of the companies that supplied it.

TIP: Good practice is to set this up as a Google Form or on a tool like Survey Monkey so that suppliers can respond anonymously.

| Question | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
|---|--|---|-----|--|--|
| Did you receive a clear contract setting out expected standards of practice? | Contract was very unclear or not received | Contract had some ambiguities | n/a | Contract was reasonably clear | Contract was very clear |
| Was the contract received well in advance of production occurring? | Contract was not received before production started | Contract was received just prior to production starting | n/a | Contract was received reasonably far in advance | Contract was received well in advance |
| Did you have sufficient lead time to prepare for this production? | Lead time was not at all sufficient | Lead time was not quite enough | n/a | There was just enough lead time | Yes, there was plenty of lead time |
| Did you have to agree to supply below costs? | Yes, we ended up supplying at a loss | Costs were covered but there was insufficient margin | n/a | No, we made some margin | No, we did not have to compromise on cost |
| Were there many changes to the requirements after they had been agreed | Yes, there were multiple and/or significant changes to requirements | Yes, there were some changes to requirements that presented challenges | n/a | There were some changes to requirements but they were completely manageable | No, the requirements stayed the same |
| Was anything incorrectly estimated by the production? | Yes, there were significant inaccuracies and we had to scramble to meet the actual need | Yes, there were some inaccuracies that caused some challenges | n/a | There were some inaccuracies but nothing that affected our workers or products | No, there were no inaccurate estimates of requirements |
| Was there consistency in the messages from production about their expected standards and their actions in practice? | No, there was a complete disconnect between what productions said they wanted and how they then acted towards us as a supplier | There was some disconnect between stated standards and practices that then undermined those standards | n/a | Messages were mostly consistent | Yes, there was complete consistency |

Total up the scores to understand how the production fared.

- Best score available = 14
- Worst score available = -14