

Circus Change UP COVID-19 Protocol
Di Robson & Kevin Wratten
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Introduction

1. Disclaimer

This document has been compiled by Di Robson and Kevin Wratten using a range of inputs including other performing arts sectors and sports COVID-19 protocols, government guidance and discussions in the Circus Change Up COVID-19 Working Group.

This document aims to give advice and support to the circus sector on mitigating risk to enable us to get back to work safely. We have identified key areas that we feel must be considered when creating your/companies' COVID-19 protocol or implementation document.

The Working Group is made up of representatives from across the contemporary circus sector including independent companies/producers, NPO organisations, freelance artists and circus training centres. The geographical reach spans England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Discussions range across the different employment scenarios that companies and individual artists are working in. As far as possible the advice and information here applies to everyone working in the sector but we recognise that individual artists contracting to or working across a number of contracts are facing different challenges. It would be useful if you could advise the Working Group of your different experiences. This document is an ongoing "process".

The Working Group has agreed that this document covers the main considerations at the point of signing off on Friday 8th January 2021.

2. Updates

Our/your experiences are crucial to the ongoing task of keeping each other safe.

In order to maximise the usefulness of this guidance please share you work experiences with us by:

- emailing Kevin Wratten or Di Robson with new information
- joining the Circus Change Up COVID-19 Working Group discussions
- uploading documents which support safe working practices to the shared Google Drive.

You can contact us and find out more information about the Working Group discussions via <http://www.circuschangeup.co.uk>

3. Guiding Information and Principles

Please read through the Government Guidance (updated 9 December 2020):
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-COVID-19/performing-arts>.

The Government aims to give advice on:

“how to work and take part in the performing arts safely, and keep their audiences safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2m apart from those they do not live with.”

Legal status of the Government Guidance:

“The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices can constitute a criminal offence, with serious fines and even imprisonment for up to two years.”

4. Objectives of the COVID-19 Working Group

- To work as a group to establish a guidance framework for companies and individual artists to mitigate risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19 in our working practices.
- To create a sector-agreed document that adds weight to our own RAMS as a means of assuring co-workers, venues, presenters and audiences that we are working to minimise risk to everyone.
- To set up an ongoing process relying on all of us sharing information, insight and approaches to produce realistic, manageable (time and cost) and effective recommendations that enable circus training and performances to continue.

5. Key Observations:

- Agreeing safe working guidelines for physical contact is paramount.
- COVID-19 is a respiratory illness spread by “respiratory droplets or small particles, such as those in **aerosols**, produced when an **infected** person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes” BMJ Sept 2020. There is no evidence that it is transmitted by sweat.
- Existing performance guidelines are geared towards theatre and dance.
- Circus training space guidelines are geared towards solo training rather than ensemble work.
- Artists are typically freelance and contracting across multiple projects/performances at one time.
- Touring typically involves gaps between rehearsals and performances and varying presenter responses.
- COVID-19 reduction protocols are increasing company/individual performance costs including but not limited to: planning time (preparation of RAMs, protocols, implementation plans etc), cleaning equipment, tests etc.
- Testing is becoming less expensive but nevertheless remains a serious budget line
- Although a vaccination programme is now being rolled out the efficacy is yet to be proved and distribution will be limited so we need to continue to be vigilant in our working practice

Circus Sector COVID-19 Protocol

1. Purpose

a. Rules and Regulations

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, all employers have a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of anyone who has contact with their business (employees, freelancers, contractors, members of the public etc).

Technically the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 sit beneath this law and provide detail on what a safety management system should look like (e.g. how your business identifies and assesses its risks, takes steps to control them, trains relevant staff, and monitors/reviews its safety processes to ensure they are being carried out correctly and remain effective). The HSE has produced detailed guidance on this. Failure to comply with a business' health and safety duties is a criminal offence.

b. Using this Guidance

The purpose of this document is to assist you/your company to assess and manage your COVID-19 risks in rehearsal, in training and in performance and to identify reasonable and practical steps to safeguard the health and safety of everyone involved in relation to COVID-19.

We advise you to ensure that your H&S at Work Policy and RAMs include reasonable and achievable measures to mitigate and eliminate where possible risk from COVID-19. This will ensure that you are in compliance with the guidance, have a safety management protocol in place and support your risk assessment process.

c. Responsibilities

Everyone involved in a workplace has a responsibility to themselves, to their co-workers and to the people they live with to ensure that they are taking every effort to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

If some of the people you want to work with do not feel safe enough to work they must be given the opportunity to opt out without reproach.

Everyone who works together needs to:

- **consent to working together**
- **understand the risks**
- **agree to following the protocols contained within their contracts**

to maximise the safety of themselves and of others.

2. Government Guidelines

You can read the full up to date Government guidance for working safely during COVID-19 [here](#) (updated 7 January 2021)

3. Medical Information

Some medical context on COVID-19 (also read PHE's guidance [here](#))

- The time between exposure to COVID-19 and the moment when symptoms start is commonly around 5-6 days but can range from 1 to 14 days.
- COVID-19 is an aerosol viral infection that is transmitted from infected people's respiratory secretions – coughs, sneezes – reaching the nose, eye or mouth there is no evidence it is transmitted through sweat.
- A plume of infected respiratory particles can hang in the air for some time therefore good ventilation is essential for workplaces.
- The most common symptoms are high temperature, continuous coughing and loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.
- There may be additional symptoms including: shortness of breath, body or muscle aches, sore throat, watery eyes, fatigue or tiredness, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea, runny nose, chest pain, palpitations / heart racing / tachycardia.
- Some people with COVID-19 suffer or show no apparent symptoms. Asymptomatic sufferers may still be infected and there is strong scientific evidence that they can transmit the virus too.
- COVID-19 can also survive on surfaces for 72 hours and be transmitted from them.

4. Key Principles

We need to proceed on the basis that we all have the potential to be asymptomatic carriers and must adhere to the safety principles to minimise risk.

- Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment.
- Share the risk assessment with all personnel present/working together.
- Ensure that all personnel are aware of their responsibilities.
- Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures for individuals and equipment.
- Wear masks whenever moving outside of the rehearsal/performance or workspace.
- Maintain 2m social distancing where possible.
- Where people cannot maintain the 2m distance take measures to mitigate/manage transmission risks as suggested in this document.
- Maintain regular ventilation of indoor spaces
- Monitor all personnel's health daily through temperature checks and questionnaires.
- Personnel who have tested positive need medical clearance before returning to the team.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, productions should take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission by:

- Considering whether the activity needs to continue for the project to happen.
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Staggering arrival and departure times.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using fixed teams or partnering.
- Working in bubbles.
- Providing PPE and appropriate cleaning kit.

5. Best Practice

a. Creation

General Principles:

- Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment
- Has everyone involved consented to work together and has read the risk assessment?
- Create a clear coherent protocol that all personnel are aware of and have consented to comply with
- Have you circulated clear guidance on self-isolating should anyone develop symptoms and clear systems to advise all personnel who may have been in contact with this person?
- Appoint someone to maintain daily records of everyone's health status including their temperature on arrival and departure
- Use appropriate floor markings / signage to help people maintain social distancing / one way systems etc.
- Consider if your cast and crew – can become a “bubble” and on what basis. For example working and living together in residencies for blocks of weeks
- Does everyone need to be in rehearsals all of the time? What rules apply to people who are not called to a session? What acts can be rehearsed individually, in group, with the whole company?
- Is it possible to work in fixed teams?
- Can everyone work wearing masks? Use of PPE?
- Is it possible for all performers to report for work fit and show ready after lockdown and “layoff”?
- Can people travel to work avoiding using public transport?

b. Performance

General Principles:

- A risk assessment needs to be in place for each location for the venue and for the company. These documents need to be shared within your company, with the venue and all other relevant personnel.
- The venue is responsible for ensuring all Government Guidance is complied with FOH, backstage and onstage. This includes during get-ins and get-outs as well as technical and any other onstage rehearsals/work.
- Ensure everyone working with you has read the venue's COVID-19 protocol and that everyone understands it.
- You, the company/employer/contractor needs to ensure that all of the above is in place and available.
- All guidance for travel, arrival and departure from venues needs to be operated as above (see rehearsal section).
- Accommodation: ensure that you/the company can be accommodated comfortably and safely observing all COVID Guidelines (Government, yours and the venue's). Travel to the venue from accommodation needs to maintain the “company bubble” as much as possible.
- You/the company needs to ensure that whilst working together a “bubble” scenario is maintained throughout the booking and/or tour to protect the H&S of colleagues – is this possible?

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- Is working together in fixed teams a more realistic option?
- Ensure everyone working together in your company minimise social contacts.
- Keep equipment and costumes clean, single use only before cleaning.
- Ensure that everyone knows how equipment and costumes are cleaned and who is responsible for overseeing this.

c. Post Creation and Performance follow ups

General Principles:

- Record temperatures at the end of each session.
- Check that everyone is healthy post rehearsal or performance – 1 then 5 days.
- Ask participants to record their health.
- Ensure that up to date contact details are recorded and accessible for all personnel involved you have everyone involved.

6. Contracts, Fees, Budgets, Insurance checklist

a. Contracts

Check to ensure the contractor has:

- Supplied their COVID-19 protocol and RAMS in advance. Can you deliver within their guidelines?
- Included cancellation terms of the show/performances in their cancellation clause. COVID-19 is NOT an unknown risk i.e. force majeure. It is a known factor and it should be covered in the cancellation clauses.
- Not asked the artists/you to carry the cost of cancellation due to changing COVID-19 regulations. Request a 50% non-refundable payment at the point of signing contract.

b. Fees

- Request a non-refundable deposit for your services from the contractor when the booking is confirmed, this should ideally be 50% of the booking fee. Everyone knows that there is always a risk of bookings being cancelled due to Government guidance; artists should not carry the risk for this.
- Ensure fees cover additional costs of delivering your COVID-19 protocol.

c. Budgets

- Add your costs for COVID-19 to your budget.
- Do you need a COVID-19 “enforcer”? This is probably most relevant for rehearsals.
- Remember the costs of testing and vaccination if this becomes possible.
- Check through increases in insurance, technically this should not happen.

d. Insurance

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- Check with your insurance company what the legal and costs implications are for your Employer and PL Insurances.

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Appendix 1 - Pre-work Health Questionnaire

Context

These are guidelines and a pre-work health questionnaire drafted for a 1 day engagement with 1x Artist, 1x Producer and 1x Videographer working indoors in a studio theatre for 1 day of filming.

Key Points:

- An email (below for reference) outlining the pre-work health questionnaire procedure was sent along with activity RAMS outlining more in depth risk reduction measures including:
 - Travel guidance
 - What to do if you are showing Covid symptoms before/during/after activity
 - Personal hygiene and surrounding environment hygiene
- All contracts referenced that following these protocols was a contractual obligation and everyone's responsibility
- The health screen questionnaire was set up as a Google Form allowing quick, easy completion from a mobile device, and instant results given to the producer. Providing an answer to all questions was mandatory and the form couldn't be submitted with missing answers.
- If working with a larger team I could have scheduled for the link to be re-circulated with a scheduled email on the morning of activity.
- After sending a verbal follow up took place to make sure all systems and requirements had been understood.

Email Communications

Dear NAME,

I'm attaching the RAMS and COVID-19 reduction measures for rehearsals and activity this week. Please read through and feel free to ask any questions. See below some important information and general practices we'll have in place for our rehearsals and activity:

IMPORTANT:

Pre-work health questionnaire: to monitor the health of our team, ahead of each day of working ALL WILL BE REQUIRED to complete this short health questionnaire. If you answer YES to any of these questions you should not attend work. In this instance contact the producer and don't arrive for work.

GENERAL PRACTICE:

- **Social interactions:** as we approach filming, try to reduce any unnecessary social interactions where possible
- **Travel:** where possible walk/cycle or use your own transport. If you do need to use public transport follow government guidelines and wear a face mask at all times

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- **Personal hygiene:** we will all follow increased personal hygiene and cleaning protocols for the period of work (including travel to work). This includes cleaning hands and equipment we are interacting with often.
- **Face masks and distancing:** we will use face masks and social distancing as much as possible during our work. The artist won't be wearing a mask during filming but the producer and videographer should wear a mask for the duration of the activity unless an existing health condition is flagged in advance. In instances where we have to work close together (less than 1m) we will seek consent from those involved and keep these moments as short as possible.

If you have any questions please email/call in advance of activity beginning.

COVID-19 Health Screen Questionnaire

Please answer the questions honestly prior to attending work for Split Second. All questionnaires will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The questionnaire will only be used to assess the safety of you and others in working in the same building and allow us to implement suitable control measures where necessary.

If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you should **not attend work** and follow government guidelines to self-isolate / undertake a COVID-19 test.

1. Full name:
2. Contact number used for NHS Track and trace if required):
3. Date of work:
4. Have you come into close contact with anyone suffering COVID-19 in the last 21 days?
YES / NO
5. Have you been asked by NHS Track and Trace to self-isolate, or returned from a country requiring you to be in quarantine within the past 14 days?
YES / NO
6. Have you displayed any of the common COVID-19 symptoms in the past 21 days:

A new, continuous cough YES / NO
A high temperature YES / NO
A high temperature YES / NO
7. Please tick to confirm you have read and understood the RAMS for the period of work, and you will actively employ the safety measures to reduce the risk of contracting/transmitting COVID-19:

I confirm I have read and understood the RAMS ____

Appendix 2 - Daily Screening

Context

This is a daily screening system drafted for a small group of the same company members rehearsing in the same space over several days:

Before leaving home:

- Any member of staff demonstrating any symptoms of being unwell (COVID-19 or any other condition) is instructed to **inform their line manager and remain at home**.
- **Under no circumstances should staff attend a company facility unsure if they are unwell or adopt a wait and see approach.**
- A temperature reading and the completion of a wellness screening should be conducted for each person.

Travel

- It is advised that staff avoid public transport where possible.
- Follow local government guidelines when using public transport, which currently includes mandatory use of a cloth face covering.
- Cars should not be shared other than with other members of your household.

Arrival at the premises

- A safe zone at the venue entrance should be established to facilitate the recording of temperature readings.
- Use a non-contact thermometer used by staff in appropriate PPE.
- A temperature of 37.8° Celsius would be considered to be febrile under any circumstances and therefore access to the premises is advised to be denied.