Guidance on Vulnerable Contributors

There is no inherent risk in involving vulnerable people in Paramount content. The vast majority of people should be able to participate in our programmes and content should reflect the diverse nature of our society. Therefore, the emphasis should be on facilitating the involvement of vulnerable contributors rather than screening vulnerable people out. This is why it is important to complete a risk assessment to ensure any contributor vulnerabilities are identified and assessed at the earliest stage of production and there is an understanding and management of any risks of harm to psychological wellbeing throughout the production.

Contributors may be vulnerable because they (a) have a vulnerability and/or (b) they are in vulnerable circumstances and/or (c) they may become vulnerable through taking part in the production:

(a) Vulnerable Contributors

Below is a list of potentially vulnerable contributors – this list is not exhaustive:

- Children
  All children are vulnerable on account of their age. Please ensure that your own child safeguarding policy and Paramount's Child Protection Policy (Part 1&2) has been read before engaging children on a production. Advice can be obtained from Paramount's Child Safeguarding & Contributor Welfare lead (email: caroline.odwyer@viacomcbs.com)
- People with poor mental health wellbeing (or previous poor mental health including self-harm and suicidal ideation)
- People with learning and/or communication difficulties
- People who have been bereaved
- People who have experienced trauma
- People who are sick or terminally ill
- People with brain damage or forms of dementia
- People who have previously been involved in criminal justice proceedings
- Asylum seekers
- People without a permanent home or safe place to stay

(b) Vulnerable Circumstances

Individuals may cope differently with their vulnerabilities depending on the nature of their personal experiences and circumstances. The following factors may also impact on an individual's level of vulnerability:

- current or previous engagement with social services or the probation service
- temporary accommodation or poor social housing
- engagement of carers or health professionals
- long-term debilitating illness – including long covid

- life-changing personal circumstances – bankruptcy, divorce, house possession, debt, redundancy, impact of covid

(c) Made vulnerable (or more vulnerable) as a result of taking part in a production

A contributor may be at risk of harm (or of greater harm) as a result of their participation where:

- **key editorial elements of the programme include potential confrontation, conflict, emotionally challenging situations;
- **the programme requires them to discuss, reveal, or engage with sensitive, life changing or private aspects of their lives;
- they are not used to being in the public eye;
- the production is filmed in a constructed environment (and the contributor is away from home and out of contact with support networks of friends and family); or
- the programme is likely to attract a high level of press, media and social media interest.

**** NOTE: where the editorial focus of the production covers distressing, sensitive or controversial topics such as:**

- mental health
- abuse/victims of crime/sexual assault
- death/terminal illness/bereavement
- life-changing personal circumstances (for example gender re-assignment, refugee or asylum seekers)
- substance misuse
- major incidents/wars and armed conflicts/tragedies

If vulnerable people and distressing and sensitive topics are combined then the risks to the contributor are multiplied. Where there is a greater risk to the contributor, greater steps are required to manage that risk. The focus should not be on screening out contributors but on understanding and managing the risks to their psychological wellbeing to ensure a contributor is not harmed or made vulnerable by their involvement either because they are already vulnerable, or because the subject matter is distressing or both.

The casting process should seek to encourage contributors to self-disclose their vulnerabilities (inherent or otherwise). This maybe through a self-declaration form (with questions reviewed by an expert to ensure they elicit a suitable response) and/or discussions as part of the casting process.

No decisions regarding the nature and extent of a contributor's vulnerabilities should be undertaken by the production team. Members of a production team are not experts on assessing contributor vulnerabilities and should not make any decisions about the suitability of including a contributor in a

production without a professional assessment of vulnerabilities undertaken by a suitably qualified and independent expert which includes professional recommendations for that person's care while taking part in the production and post TX.

There must be total editorial separation between the programme maker and the expert at all times.

To ensure due care, the level of care offered to your contributor must reflect the level of potential harm that the production may cause. The greater the risk of harm, the greater the care.

Please contact Caroline O'Dwyer to discuss vulnerable contributors further:
caroline.odwyer@paramount.com

See also (available on the Paramount Production Guide):

- Child Safeguarding Guidance
- On and Off-Screen Expert Guidance
- Duty of Care Guidance