Silvermouse for production paperwork

Independent production companies: Programme Descriptions form

This helpcard will show you how to complete and submit a Programme Descriptions form.

The BBC Programme Descriptions form provides essential information for the final transmission schedules and publications for BBC Sounds and BBC iPlayer content and the BBC's programme websites. It also provides text for listings magazines, digital programme guides, and online searches. Good programme information matters. Research has shown that providing information about a programme can increase audience figures. A Programme Descriptions form is not required for non-linear content, except for BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds publications.

Where the Programme Description form is required, it should be completed and submitted within the required timeframes. A list of deadlines can be obtained from the **BBC Commissioning** website.

Please note: The data in this helpcard is for training purposes only. Please click in the Table of Contents below to navigate to a specific section quickly.

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Complete the Programme Descriptions form

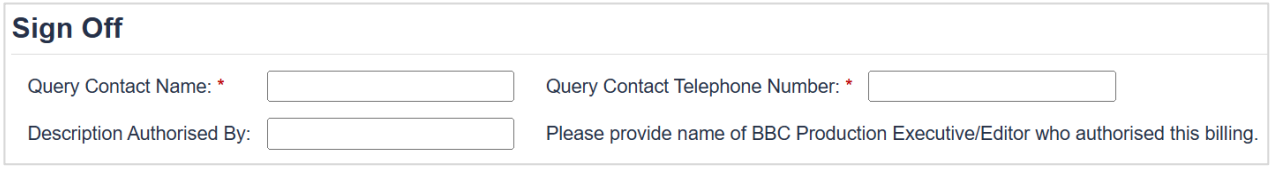
Although many of the fields in the Programme Descriptions form are not mandatory, please complete all the relevant fields to ensure your reporting is robust, detailed and accurate; otherwise, the BBC may reject the form.

Specific fields in the Programme Descriptions form are used by other systems to help audiences discover your content, improving audience experiences and increase its reach. To ensure this information can be shared and

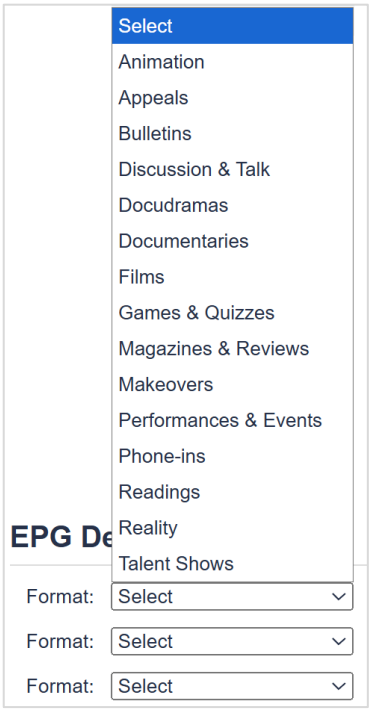
used effectively, it is important high-quality data is entered accurately into the appropriate fields. Do not rely on descriptive text in the synopses.

To complete the Programme Descriptions form:

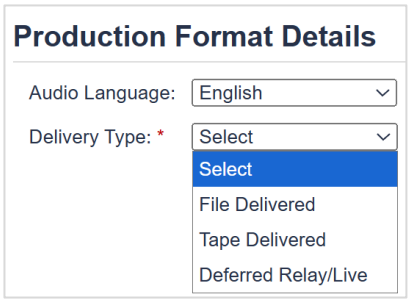
- In **Sign Off**, in the **Query Contact Name**, type the name of who is responsible for the programme description



- In **Query Contact Telephone Number**, type the contact details of who is responsible for the programme description
- In **Billings Authorised By**, type the name of the BBC Production Executive/Editor who authorised the programme descriptions
- For audiovisual content, in **EPG (Electronic Programme Guide) Details**, from the **Format** drop down list, select the format. This dictates where the programme or content will appear on BBC iPlayer. For example, selecting the format 'Documentaries' means your episode will appear in the Documentaries category



- In **Production Format Details**, from the **Audio Language** drop down list, select the main language used in the programme; the default is English
- From the **Delivery Type** drop down list, select how the programme will be delivered



- In **Points to Note**, type any advice that must be announced by Continuity, Presentation Details (Pres Dets) or Playout prior to the programme's airing. This includes details of violence, bad language, scenes of a sexual nature, disturbing scenes, strobe effects, and helpline details, e-mail or web addresses

Please refer to the sections on **Synopses** (below) and **Production Credits** in this helpcard to continue completing the Programme Descriptions form.

Synopses

The synopses have multiple purposes:

- To entice the audience to watch your programme or content
- To help the BBC recommend your content to potential audiences
- They are used in search engine results to improve listening and viewing figures

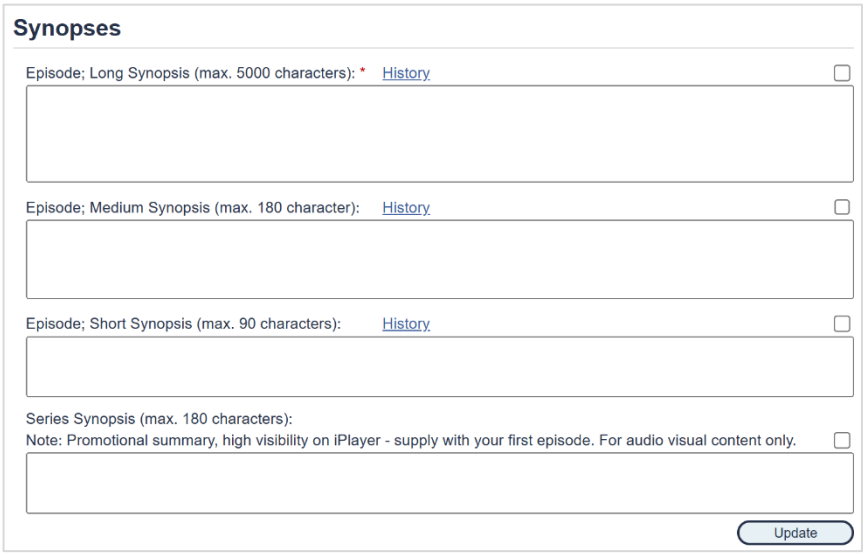
Essential information about Synopses

- Providing good quality descriptions in your Programme Descriptions form will give your content the maximum chance of being watched, both through the programme guide on live TV or radio, and on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds catch up

  Please refer to the **Programme Metadata Style Guide** for all content. Also, for more information about where the synopses are used and how to write a good synopsis, please read the **BBC iPlayer Billings Guide** for content which will be published on BBC iPlayer

- The synopses are never displayed together so key information should be repeated, but not verbatim. For example, the Short Synopsis is used in schedules and episode guides and is the first thing audiences see, the Medium Synopsis is used on programme and episode playout pages providing more information and complements the Short Synopsis, whereas the Long Synopsis is only available on web version of BBC iPlayer
- The Long Synopsis is mandatory for audiovisual content, and the Short Synopsis is mandatory for audio content. For audio content, the Long Synopsis can be used for a detailed list of tracks in a classical music programme, or a cast list in a drama
- Once the Programme Descriptions form has been approved, the BBC's metadata partner checks the synopses for typing errors and legal issues, and will standardise the formatting, punctuation and capitalisation. The synopses are then sent to listings providers, the BBC website, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds
- If the Short and Medium Synopsis fields on the Programme Descriptions form are left blank, they will be written by a team of listings writers, based on what appears to be the most important passages of the Long Synopsis
- The Long Synopsis can be pulled into the Front Page form
- For audio content, initially, it is essential that credits are added to the Long Synopsis so they are displayed on BBC Sounds. However, they should also be added to the Production Credits for future use
- For audiovisual content, key contributors should be added to the Production Credits section
- Any contributors in the Contributors form are not audience-facing
- Although the Long Synopsis allows up to 5,000 characters, use only as many as needed. It should be comprehensive, concise and impactful
- For Welsh language content, in both the Short and Medium synopses, please provide the Welsh synopsis followed by the English synopsis
- Topical shows should provide general synopses within the agreed timeframes and then resubmit the Programme Descriptions form when more details are known. Please agree this process with your BBC Contact who will need to reject the form so you can edit and resubmit it
- Please always proofread the synopses before submitting the form; do not rely on spell-checkers as some words might be correct even if mistyped, such as 'used' and 'sued'

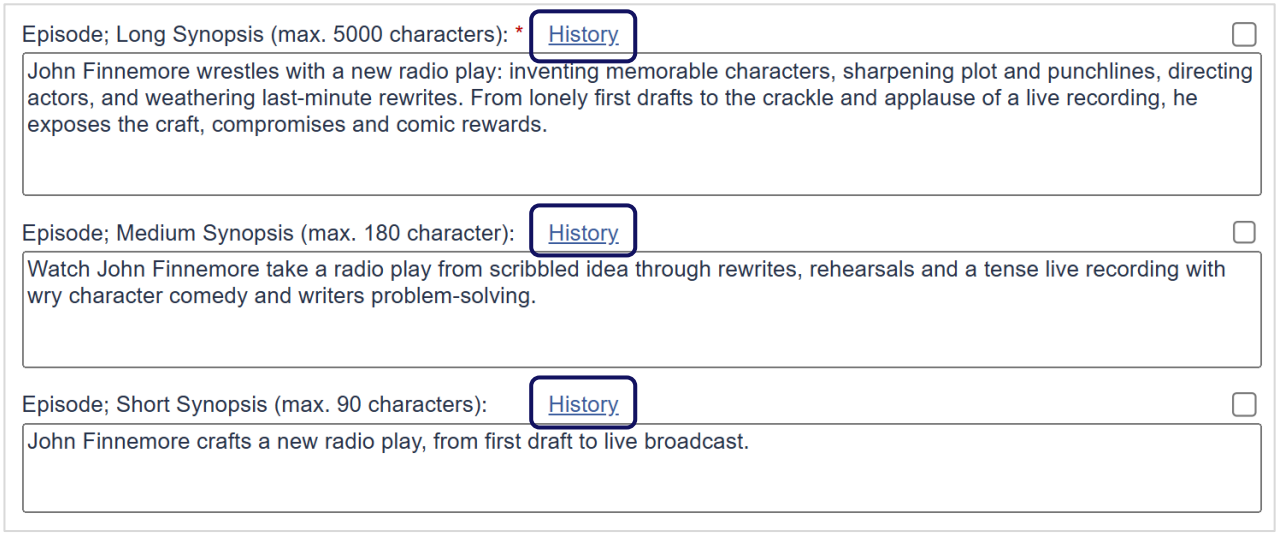
- In **Episode Long Synopsis (max 5000 char)**, type the synopsis for the programme or content. This is the only synopsis that is mandatory; however, it is strongly recommended that you use the other synopses boxes as well
- In **Episode: Medium Synopsis (max 180 char.)**, type a medium length synopsis
- In **Episode: Short Synopsis (max 90 char.)**, type a short synopsis
- For the first episode of audiovisual content only, in **Series Synopsis (max 180 char.**), type a synopsis for the series; this will appear in a prime spot on your content's website and in BBC iPlayer.



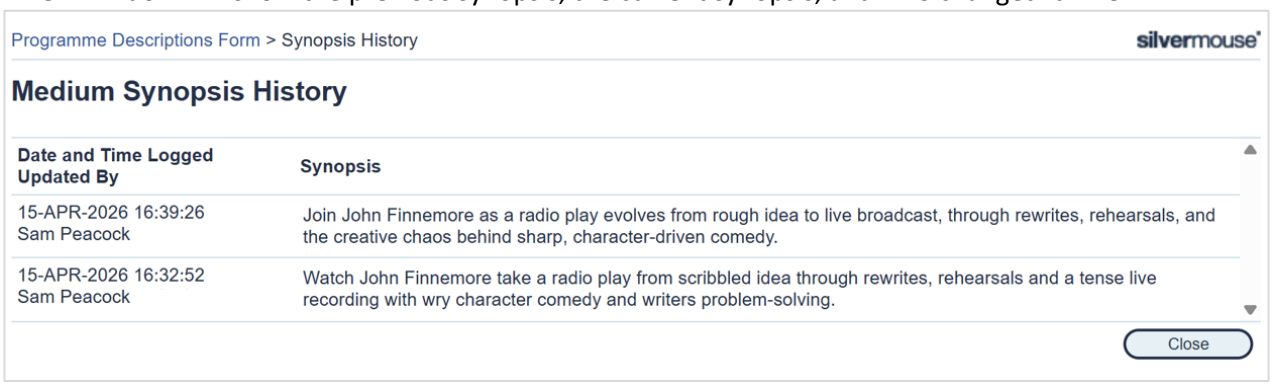
Synopsis History

If changes were made to the Short, Medium or Long Synopsis, you can view the previous entries, and who made them.

- For the relevant synopsis, click on **History**



- A new window will show the previous synopsis, the current synopsis, and who changed it when



- Click on **Close**

Production Credits

While Production Credits are not mandatory, maintaining a detailed and accurate record of contributors can provide significant value. In a world where algorithms rely heavily on metadata to surface relevant content, richer contributor credits data helps audiences discover material more easily.

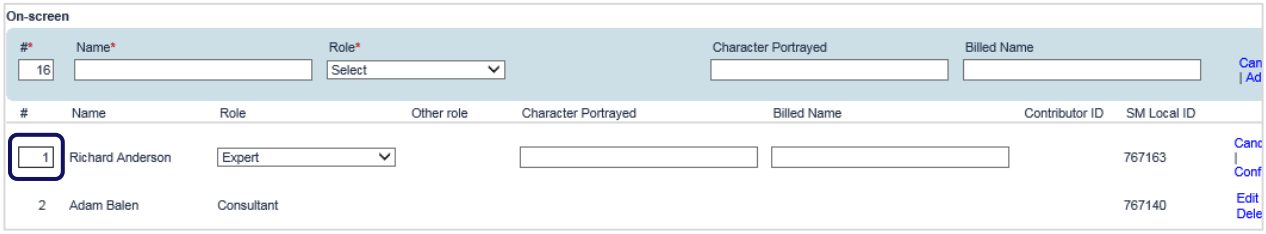
Providing high quality metadata at this stage can make a meaningful difference to how content is found and used in the future. Research also shows that audiences actively search for and engage with content based on specific contributors, reinforcing the importance of capturing this information comprehensively.

If your production wants to use them, you can either enter them manually or add all the contributors currently in the Contributors form for your programme or content by clicking on Append with Contributors.

Append contributors from the Contributors form

Key points to consider when appending contributors from the Contributors form:

- Contributors will be appended each time the Append with Contributors is selected, which may result in duplicates. Always check the information when it has been added to the form and Edit or Delete as required
- Contributors will be added in the same order as they appear in the Contributors form; however, the order can be changed. Click on Edit beside the respective contributor and change the line number to alter their position in the form

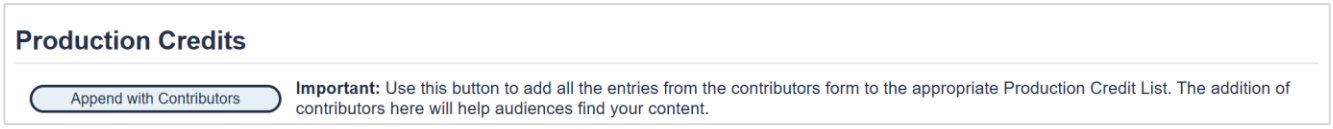


- When you have appended the contributors, any subsequent changes in the Contributors form will not be reflected in the Programme Descriptions form. Similarly, any changes to the contributors in the Programme Descriptions form will not be reflected in the Contributors form
- In the Programme Descriptions form, it is not possible to edit the name of a contributor that has been appended from the Contributors form. However, other fields, such as Role, Character Portrayed or Billed Name can be edited
- The Role can be changed to Other so you can type a manual description of the role; however, these will not be audience-facing or influence any recommendations
- If details of a contributor are pulled through that you would not normally bill, you can Delete them from the Programme Descriptions form
- Surname is a mandatory field in the Contributors form, so you may have added a child contributor as 'Joe SURNAMEHIDDEN'. Within the Programme Descriptions form, you could either delete the entry and then re-enter them manually, or use the Billed Name field to enter the name as you wish it to be advertised

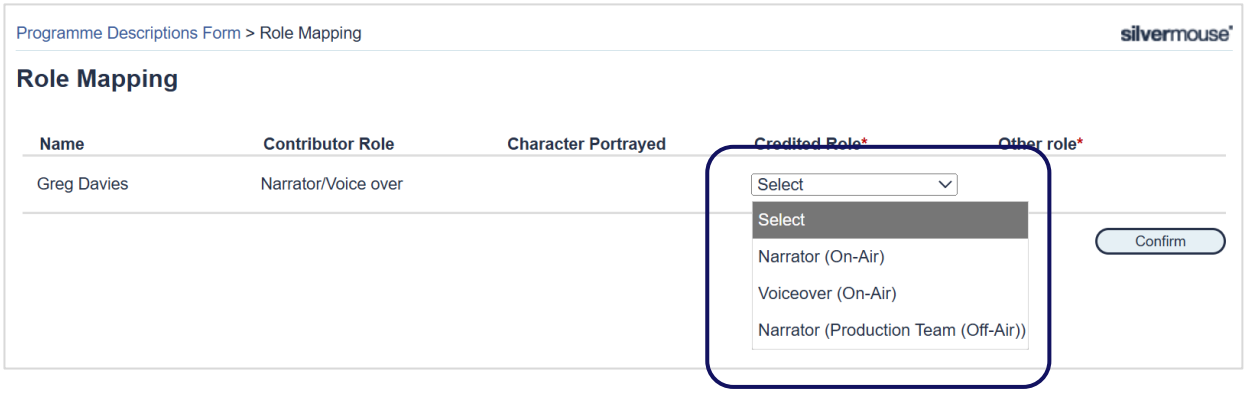
There are some differences between the roles in the Programme Descriptions form and the Contributors form. When you click Append with Contributors, the Role Mapping Form window may open; this means the contributor has a role which maps to several Programme Descriptions roles, and you will need to choose which role to use.

To append the contributors from the Contributors form:

- Click on **Append with Contributors**



- If prompted, from the **Credited Role** drop down list and select the role you would like to use in the billing



- Click on **Confirm**

The contributors will be added to either the **On-air** or **Production Team (Off-air)** section, depending on the role applied.

Manually add contributors to the Programmes Description form

To manually add contributors to the form, you need to enter the following information:

On-air

Use this section of the form for key contributors that would encourage audiences to consume the content.

- The **#** is the line number that is used for ordering the credits; it automatically displays the next sequential number but can be overwritten if required
- In the **Name** box, type the name of the contributor
- From the **Role** drop down list, select the relevant role of the named contributor
- In **Character Portrayed**, type the character name portrayed by the named contributor, if appropriate
- In **Billed Name**, type the billed name of the contributor if it should be displayed differently to the entry in the Name box. The Billed Name should also be used to change the format of the person's name for billings purposes. It should also be used to add the contributor's honorary title. For example, the Name field may show an appended name as "Steve Mc**c**rum", but this can be edited in the Billed Name fields to show as "**Professor** Steve M**cC**rum" so they are billed correctly. Similarly, the Billed Name should be used to add apostrophes, such as changing the appended name "Paul **Os**ullivan" to "Paul **O'S**ullivan"
- Click on **Add** to add the contributor to the list or click on **Cancel** at any time to clear the fields for that section

The Contributor ID and SM Local ID will only be displayed if the contributor has been appended from the Contributors form, and these IDs are available.

Production Team (Off-air)

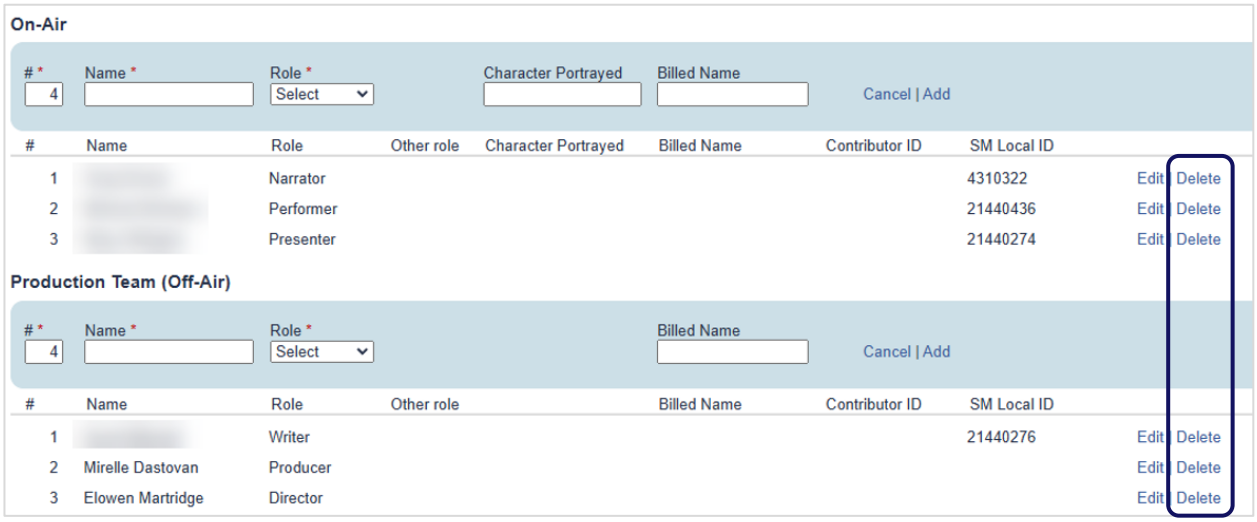
Use this section of the form for production team credits, such as the Producer and Director for TV, or Presenter and Host for audio.

- The **#** is the line number that is used for ordering the billing credits; it automatically displays the next sequential number, but can be overwritten if required
- In **Name**, type the name of the production team member
- From the **Role** drop down list, select the relevant role of the named production team member
- In **Billed Name**, type the billed name of the production team member if it should be displayed differently to the entry in the Name box. The Billed name may also be used to change the format of the person's name for billings purposes. It should also be used to add the contributor's honorary title. For example, the Name field may show an appended name as "Daniel Mc**b**rayne", but this can be edited in the Billed Name field to show as "**Dr** Daniel Mc**B**rayne" so they are billed correctly. Similarly, the Billed Name should be used to add apostrophes, such as changing the appended name "Connor **Ob**rennan" to "Connor **O'B**rennan"
- Click on **Add** to add the contributor to the list, or click on **Cancel** at any time to clear the fields for that section

Delete or Edit the Credits

To delete a contributor from the billings:

- Click on **Delete**



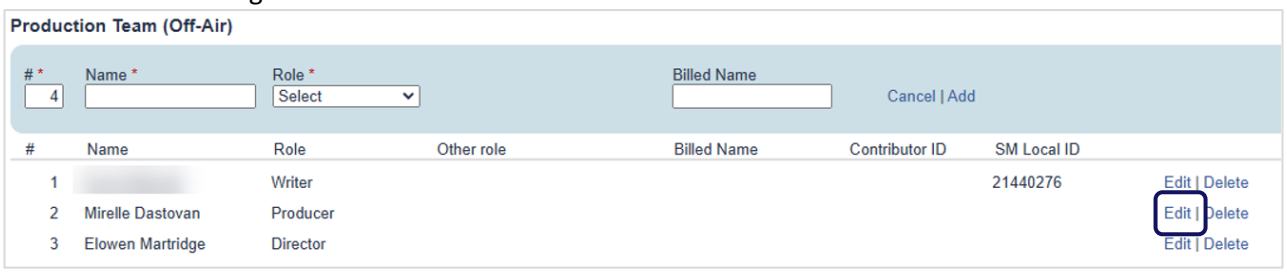
To edit a contributor:

- Click on **Edit**, and make the required changes
- Click on **Confirm** to complete the action or **Cancel** to close the edit screen

Make sure the contributors are listed in order of importance rather than by appearance, as the listings magazines and EPG will cut the list from the bottom upwards if they are short of space.

To change the order of the contributors in the billings:

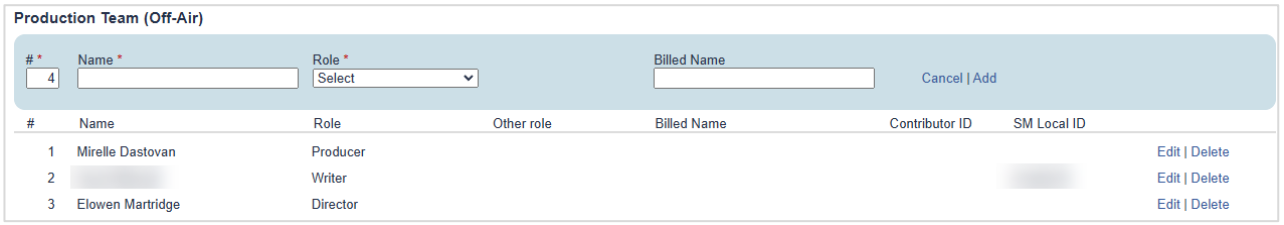
- Click on **Edit** at the right of the contributor's information



- Change the **#** line number and click on **Confirm**



The order has changed:



- When all the edits have been made, click on **Update**

To find out more about Programme Categories, Production Credits and where the Synopses are used, please refer to the **BBC iPlayer Billings Guide**.

- When all the information has been entered, mark the form as complete, and click on **Submit to Broadcaster**

Revisions to the Programme Descriptions form

Audiences will only see revisions to the Programme Descriptions form if the amended form is Approved up to seven days after airing.

It is not possible to edit a Submitted or an Approved form. You will need to ask your BBC contact to reject a form so you can make changes to it.

Emergency updates to billings

In most cases no email is necessary; amend and approve the Programme Descriptions form, and the revised billing will reach listings, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds without further action.

In some circumstances an urgent change cannot wait for the form to be approved, for example:

- For legal reasons the billing needs to be revised, or a spoiler needs to be removed
- A material change is needed to the audience facing billing out of hours, or when access to Silvermouse may not be possible

In these circumstances, please use the following emails:

- During normal office hours, email **ib3.metadata.billings@bbc.co.uk**
- Outside normal office hours ONLY, email **ib3.metadata.ops.team@bbc.co.uk**; this team works from 08:00 to midnight, seven days a week

Legacy information

When looking at older paperwork in Silvermouse, the following information may be helpful:

- The Programme Descriptions form was previously called the Billings form
- Older forms may show the following legacy fields:
  - In EPG Details, the **Programme Categories** also allowed the user to select the relevant genres for the content
  - In Production Format Details, the **Aspect Ratio** drop down indicated whether the audiovisual content was 16:9 or 4:3
  - In Production Format Details, the **3D checkbox** indicated the audiovisual content as a 3D production
  - In Production Format Details, the **Audio Format** showed whether the content was Stereo, Surround Sound or Surround Sound (Dolby E)
  - In Production Format Details, the **Video Format** indicated whether the content was SD (Standard Definition), HD (High Definition), or UHD (Ultra High Definition)
  - In Production Format Details, from the **Credit Safe** drop down the user had to select the aspect ratio of the content; if 16:9 was selected rather than 4:3, the user was advised to call the Commissioner
  - In Production Format Details, the **Black & White** checkbox was used to show that the entire audiovisual content had no colour at all
  - In Production Format Details, the **In-Vision Subtitles** checkbox was used to flag that subtitles were produced for editorial reasons. For example, English subtitles on a foreign clip or a clip where the speaker mumbles, rather than those that were produced for accessibility purposes