

GUIDE FOR WEDDINGS

Version 1	10/07/2020	Simplification of previous guidance; notes for Holy Communion added
Version 2	20/07/2020	Additional note regarding wedding receptions
Version 3	3/8/2020	Guide for receptions changed to reflect Government guidance
Version 4	18/8/2020	Updates on singing, receptions and added links for Scotland and Wales
Version 5	29/9/2020	Updates to reflect the new restrictions, rule of 6 and Test & Trace requirements

1. Introduction

This Guide is part of STEP 5: Safety First in the process for reopening and managing your church building. It provides specific guidance for Wedding services, but should be read in conjunction with the [Guide to Using Your Worship Space](#).

2. Specific Considerations for Weddings

- The Government has produced additional supporting
 - In England - [COVID-19 Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships](#)
 - In Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnership-registrations/>
 - In Wales - <https://gov.wales/guidance-marriages-and-civil-partnerships-coronavirus>
- All spaces that are to be used for worship space should be [COVID-19 secure](#)¹, which means they meet the [7 Steps for Working Safely Together](#) for opening and running as outlined in the government guidance.
- Marriage ceremonies should have no more than 15 people in attendance (20 people in Scotland) (in Wales, the indoor capacity is determined by the risk assessment in keeping 2m apart or if outdoors, 30 people can attend), and social distancing should be strictly adhered to following a risk assessment.
- Those in attendance should gather in groups of no more than 6 people. This relates to the maximum group size before attendees enter the building and therefore can sit together in that building. It is not a directive to sit people together in groups of 6 as part of a meeting.
 - a. You can continue to space chairs and people as before with 2m distancing between household groups, which could be individuals, couples, larger families, etc.
 - b. Within each group of 6, those who are not in the same household should continue to practise social distancing.
 - c. Each group of 6 should **not** mingle with any other groups (see FAQ's below for more information).
- Note that the **maximum** number (as listed above) as a guide and that Managing Trustees have an obligation to assess if this is a safe number to accommodate. If after risk assessment it is found that a chapel can only accommodate a lower number safely, then this would be the maximum for this particular chapel.

¹ England -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903464/staying-covid-19-secure-2020-230720.pdf

Wales - <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/keep-wales-safe-at-work-five-key-steps.pdf>

Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/>

- If possible, ceremonies should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time, and limited as far as reasonable to the parts of the marriage ceremony required in order to be legally binding under the law of England and Wales.
- Face coverings are mandatory and they should be worn in places of worship to help reduce the spread of the virus. However, face coverings should not be seen as a substitute to other measures such as social distancing and good hygiene. As this decision is to be enforced by law, managing trustees have to insist upon the wearing of face coverings in their risk assessments and action plans. Please refer to the [Guide for Face Coverings](#) for more information and exceptions.
- All attendees should provide contact details for the purposes of [NHS Test and Trace](#)² and a QR code should be available for scanning.
- If Holy Communion is to be taken then follow the separate [Guide for the Holy Act of Communion](#).
- In terms of social distancing it should also be noted that this will also apply to those administering the service, the marriage couple or those taking a lead role in the marriage service. Unless of course any are members of the same household or social bubble.
- Where rings are exchanged, those involved should wash their hands before and after and the rings should be handled by as few people as possible.
- Music and Singing:
 - England
 - Allowed (inside and outside):
 - Professional and non-professional individual singing;
 - Professional and non-professional singing groups of no more than 6 people;
 - The playing of musical instruments (including wind instruments)³, as part of a worship group or similar. They must be accommodated safely, ensuring that others are protected from potential virus transfer through increased social distancing, screens or other solutions. This must be assessed for risk;
 - Playback of recordings of singing and music at a reasonable level to avoid the need for raised voices.
 - Places of Worship can be used for rehearsals and performances for both professional and non-professional choirs, musicians and other performing arts. This is guided by the Government's Performing Arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).
 - Not Allowed (inside or outside):
 - Congregational singing, shouting or raising voices;
 - Congregational playing of musical instruments that are blown into;
 - Scotland
 - Inside and outside - Singing as a congregation is **not** allowed.
 - Inside - the use of music is allowed and musical instruments (except wind instruments) can be used.

² Test and Protect in Scotland - <https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect>
Trace Test Protect in Wales - <https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-htm>

³ Please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>

- Outside – the use of music is allowed and all musical instruments⁴, including wind instruments can be used if safety precautions are followed.
- Inside and outside – A individual is allowed to sing, as long as it can be accommodated safely, ensuring that others are protected from potential virus transfer through increased social distancing, screens or other solutions. This must be assessed for risk.
- Outside – Groups of professional and non-professional singers can perform to worshippers, but this should be assessed for safety and the number of singers limited to a number suitable for the space available, while achieving safe social distances.
- Wales
 - The use of music is allowed and all musical instruments, except wind instruments, can be played⁵.
 - Inside and outside - singing as a congregation is **not** allowed.
 - Inside and outside – An individual is allowed to sing, as long as it can be accommodated safely, ensuring that others are protected from potential virus transfer through increased social distancing, screens or other solutions. This must be assessed for risk.
- All spoken voices should use a PA system where possible or practical. Specifically projecting or raising voices should be avoided.
- It should be considered how those who fall within a vulnerable group are able to attend safely as it is important that those who wish to attend are able to safely.
- It is important to liaise and communicate with the parties involved in advance. This will ensure that controls and expectations on the day are managed sensitively:
 - Communication of agreed arrangements in the chapel.
 - Basic arrangement for cleaning and hygiene.
 - Knowledge of numbers attending and potential seating plan.

3. **Considerations for Church Buildings who may provide a Wedding Reception Venue**

- Large wedding receptions are not permitted after a wedding ceremony.
- In England, all wedding receptions will be permitted⁶ -
 - Sit down meals only;
 - No more than 15 people;
 - Dancing is not permitted;
 - Venues hosting wedding receptions must close between 10pm and 5am.
 - To be undertaken in accordance with [COVID-19 Secure](#) guidance and following the [7 Priority Actions](#).
- In Scotland, wedding receptions are limited to 20 people indoors and outdoors.⁷
- In Wales, indoor and outdoor receptions are limited to up to 30 people.⁸

⁴ Please refer to <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-performing-arts-and-venues-sector/pages/overview/>

⁵ <https://gov.wales/rehearsing-performing-and-taking-part-performing-arts-guidance-phased-return-html>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-wedding-and-civil-partnership-receptions-and-celebrations>

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/gatherings-and-occasions/>

⁸ <https://gov.wales/operational-risk-assessment-considerations-wedding-venues-and-those-hosting-wedding-events-html>

- Refer to the [Guides for Cafes and Other Community Users](#) for more information.

FAQ's with answers provided by the Ministry for Housing, Community & Local Government

Q. What's the rule for weddings, funerals and life-cycle events

- The gatherings rule of six does not apply to weddings or religious life cycle ceremonies or funerals given their importance in people's lives, but attendance continues to be limited to 30 for such standalone events. This means people can mingle with other guests present beyond the numerical limit of six, though should continue to practise social distancing when mixing with those they don't live with or outside of their support bubble. However, people and venues must strictly follow the guidance on conducting these gatherings safely.

Q. Do people working count within the 15 people limit for weddings, funerals and life-cycle events?

- Anyone working is not included as part of the 15 person limit.

Q. Can all life cycle events have receptions after?

- No. The exemption only covers the ceremonies, and does not include receptions after other life cycle events. Weddings are the only exception.

Q. Are Choirs/bands (i.e. more than 6 people singing/playing) permitted for 'performances' in PoW? (Amateur choirs are capped at 6)

- Performing professional choirs will be regarded as being at their place of work and on that basis will not be subject to the rule of six - but they will of course need to follow the guidance published on the performing arts. We are discussing and agreeing with Government Departments how the new rules will impact amateur choirs and will update our advice as soon as we can.