

Updates to guidance documents

Changes in guidance which came into effect on Monday represent a relatively modest step along the road of easing restrictions affecting places of worship in common with many other public places. While some changes will be welcomed by families, questions have emerged concerning the guidance for singing.

As ever, we have endeavoured to summarise changes to guidance. Note that some documents have been updated more than once this week and please do not hesitate to get in touch with your area office should you require further help and support.

- [Permitted Activities from 17 May 2021 under 'Step 3'](#)
 - People can now attend public worship in church as part of a group of 6 (as well as alone or as part of a household group).
 - Outdoor public worship can take place without any total cap on numbers as long as people stay within groups of not more than 30.
 - Weddings can now be attended by up to 30 people.
 - Funerals no longer have a specific cap on numbers (but there is guidance on capacity and keeping churches COVID-secure that needs to be taken into account).
 - Up to 30 people can attend support groups and parent and child groups (with children under 5 not being counted).
 - Concerts and plays and heritage visiting can resume in churches (subject to requirements and guidance on keeping venues COVID-secure).
- [Advice for clergy conducting weddings](#) (updated 19 May)
Up to 30 people can attend a wedding, this number does not include those working. The bride may be walked down the aisle and guests are required to wear face masks.
- [Advice for clergy conducting baptisms](#) (updated 17 May)
If the baptism is not part of communal worship and undertaken privately then the Government guidance states a limit of 30 can attend.
- [Advice for conducting funerals](#) (updated 17 May)
Government guidance permits as many people to attend church premises for a funeral as the COVID-secure capacity of the building allows.
- [Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship](#) (updated 19 May)
Updated to incorporate performing arts guidance, see 'singing' below.
- [Government guidance for the safe use of places of worship](#)
Updated to incorporate the adjustments set out in step 3 of the roadmap to reopening.

Singing

Government guidance states that singing should follow the [principles of safer singing](#) and the principles set out in the [performing arts guidance](#). In particular:

- Where music plays a big part in worship, and recordings are available, these should be considered as an alternative to live singing or performing.
- Any instrument played during worship should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

- Any performers should be positioned in a way that avoids face-to-face performance, as far as possible.
- Limit the duration of any singing, as far as possible.
- Do what you can to improve ventilation to ensure plenty of fresh air whenever possible, including opening windows.
- Always ensuring there is a gap of at least 2m between any performers and the first row of worshippers. Further mitigations like screens or other barriers between the performers and worshipper may also be considered.
- If worship takes place inside, the congregation should not participate in any activity that can create aerosols, including communal singing, shouting and chanting.

Indoors

A group of up to 6 amateur singers can perform, or rehearse for performance with physical distancing being maintained at all times. There is no limit on the number of professional singers but they should follow [guidance on performing arts](#). Children's Choirs (including those from multiple schools) can continue to rehearse with no limit on numbers according to the [out of school settings guidance](#). You should carefully risk assess what number of children and adult singers you use for public worship and if they operate in a professional or amateur setting. Where possible during worship the singers should be at the front of the church while the rest of the congregation remain seated. Communal singing, by the congregation, should not take place and strict physical distancing should be observed.

Outdoors

When communal worship takes place in the grounds or the outside space of a place of worship, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups, each consisting of up to 30 people, following the principles set out in the [performing arts guidance](#). This includes ensuring that congregation members follow physical distancing rules.

Other guidance

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) produced [more detailed resources on singing and music](#) (updated 19 May).