



Northern Ireland
Executive

GUIDANCE FOR VENUES AND COUPLES ORGANISING MARRIAGES, CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS OR OTHER CELEBRATORY EVENTS

**WE ALL
MUST DO IT
TO GET
THROUGH IT**



STAY SAFE



SAVE LIVES

The Northern Ireland Executive has approved the resumption of indoor weddings from Friday 10 July, and the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 will be amended accordingly.

At present, couples may marry or enter into a civil partnership outdoors with up to 30 people present. If one of the parties to the marriage is terminally ill, they may also marry indoors in a place of worship. From 10 July:

- Couples may have their marriage ceremony inside a place of worship. The number attending must be discussed and agreed with the place of worship, which will determine attendance based on the size of the venue and the ability to socially distance;
- Couples may marry or enter into a civil partnership in a Local Government venue. The number attending must be discussed and agreed and the venue will determine attendance based on size and the ability to socially distance;
- Other venues such as hotels and places which are licenced for marriage/civil partnership ceremonies may also host such ceremonies. As with other venues, the number attending must be discussed and agreed with the venue, which will determine attendance based on size and the ability to socially distance;
- Some venues may be in a position to provide aspects of the marriage or civil partnership and related celebratory event inside and outside within the confines of the venue. Again the numbers attending must be discussed and agreed with the venue; and
- Noting that the number of people who may attend a marriage indoors is to be agreed with the venue, the limit of 30 people attending an outdoor marriage or civil partnership has been removed for these events. But it is important that the number of people attending is discussed and agreed with the venue provider in advance.

It will be for each individual venue to decide the date on which it will be possible to safely resume marriages or civil partnerships and related celebratory events. Venues must risk assess and determine numbers attending based on their ability to manage the event

safely, to ensure social distancing, and to follow any other Covid-19 related guidance relevant to their industry, sector or venue.

For example, hotels should follow the guidance below:

<https://covid19.tourismni.com/support-centre/business-support-advice/practical-guidance-for-working-safely-during-covid-19/guidance-for-hotels/>

There will be separate guidance shortly on retaining information about attendees to assist in test, track and support should that unfortunately be necessary.

The Executive is conscious that some couples have postponed their marriages or civil partnerships, their preferred venue may not be immediately available, and some may wish to wait until it may be possible to have their wedding as originally planned. Resuming indoor marriages must, in the context of Covid-19, still be seen as carrying a serious risk and it is on that basis that venues are being asked to help manage the risk by:

- following the existing hospitality guidance for meals and refreshments;
- avoiding lengthy celebratory events; and
- singing and dancing are not advised, and care should be taken with music pending further guidance.

Couples will understandably want to spend time with their families and friends and to enjoy their special day. Couples are asked to work closely with their venues, and to understand that the venue may have some limitations on what they can provide.

The Executive is conscious that couples and venues may have a range of questions about how they can best organise their day. The following information is provided as guidance. It is appreciated that these are not normal times and couples and venues will want to think very carefully about their arrangements and plan ahead. It might be the case that some aspects of guidance and arrangements can be relaxed overtime, but it is also important to remember that restrictions may need to be put back in place if the community transmission rate increases.

PLANNING YOUR DAY

Plan ahead carefully with your partner, family and chosen venue. We hope the guidance below is helpful. Please note that the information below is guidance, although it references some aspects of the Regulations where appropriate. Further updates will be provided when possible. For example, advice on music, singing and dancing may develop over time.

THEME	TOPIC	QUESTION	ANSWER
Pre-ceremony	Hairdresser	Can a hairdresser come to your house if there are more than 6 people already present?	<p>The Regulations state that only 6 people can meet indoors in a residential property with social distancing in place. This includes all occupants and visitors.</p> <p>Alternatively, the premises provided by the salon can be used in line with the guidelines associated with these businesses.</p>
Pre-ceremony	Make Up	Can a makeup artist come to your house if there are more than 6 people already present?	<p>The Regulations state that only 6 people can meet indoors in a residential property with social distancing in place. This includes all occupants and visitors.</p> <p>Alternatively, the premises provided by the salon can be used in line with the guidelines associated with these businesses.</p>
Pre-ceremony	Photographer / Videographer	Can a photographer/ videographer come to your house if there are more than 6 people already present?	<p>The Regulations state that only 6 people can meet indoors in a residential property with social distancing in place. This includes all occupants and visitors.</p>
Transport (to/from)	Transport	Can the people who are from two or more households travel in the same transport?	<p>Social distancing guidelines remain in place therefore if the vehicle can facilitate this, it is permissible for short periods of time.</p>
Transport (to/from)	Face coverings in Transport	Will people have to wear face coverings?	<p>Currently face coverings must be worn on public transport in all circumstances unless the person is exempt.</p> <p>Wearing cloth face coverings in public and indoor places is strongly advised, especially where social distancing is difficult to maintain. There is no expectation that the couple or their party would wear a face mask during the ceremony or celebratory event, although some may of course wish to do so.</p>

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Transport (to/from)	Guest Transport	Can minibuses or coaches be used to transport guests to and from the venue?	<p>Yes, providing guests from the different households can be seated socially distanced. The use of a cloth face covering is strongly recommended but not required.</p> <p>There may be additional protocols in place for private bus and taxi firms which should be checked out in advance.</p>
Transport (to/from)	Unfavourable Weather	If it's raining - can the driver assist with an umbrella into the venue?	Yes, assuming social distancing can be in place and contact is limited to short periods of time
Well wishers	Uninvited well wishers	Are spectators allowed to congregate outside the venue?	There is a limit of up to 30 people who can gather outside if they are not part of the wedding party.
Hand cleansing	Sanitation	Is the venue responsible for providing hand sanitizer and related PPE if required?	Hand washing facilities should be available and hand sanitation stations should be available at the entry and exit to the rooms and also at the bathroom entrances if appropriate.
Contacting guests later on	Track & Trace	Is the venue responsible for completing a record of guests in attendance?	<p>The couple/event planner should be engaged in the risk assessment process.</p> <p>They should also be responsible for ensuring that they have the contact details of all those who are attending the event. Guidance will be issued on this in coming days.</p>
Venue	One Way	Does a one way system need to be in place for the movement of people?	<p>The venue needs to ascertain and risk assess the flow of guests through the premises and the seating plan for each element of the celebration.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to implementing a one way system in and out of the room or rooms if this is appropriate for the size of the gathering.</p>
Venue	How many can attend	How many guests can the venue hold? Is it dependent on social distancing or a set number of guests?	<p>The number of guests should be dictated by the size of the room or rooms where the event is due to be staged based on social distancing guidance.</p> <p>No additional guests should be invited for an evening reception.</p>

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Venue	Venue	Do members of staff at the venue count towards the total number of guests allowed (either at indoor or outdoor ceremonies)?	There are no upper limits to the amount of people who can attend a marriage or civil partnership. The total number present will be decided by the venue via a risk assessment and social distancing guidelines. Couples are asked to work with their venue and comply with the venue's advice.
Ceremony	Meet & Greet	Can guests be met and escorted to their seats?	Guests can be greeted for a short amount of time at a social distance. The venue will have determined the seats available for the ceremony.
Ceremony	Order of Service	Can they be given out upon arrival vs placed on a seat?	Orders of service can be collected at a point of arrival or placed on a seat. The venue will consider the cleaning regime for all hard surfaces which might be touched during the service.
Ceremony	Order of Service	Can order of services be allocated between guests (i.e one between two) or does each guest require their own copy?	Guests who do not share a household will be required to have their own order of service. For guests who share households, the sharing of an order of service is permitted.
Ceremony	Procession	Can people from different households walk down the aisle together?	Seating should be available in line with social distancing measures. Only members of the same household should walk together and sit together in the venue. Timed or staggered arrival can be planned to relieve congestion and queuing.
Ceremony	Procession	Can the main party (couple, witnesses, parents etc) stand together or do they have to be seated socially distanced?	Social distancing guidelines remain in place and therefore any close contact of less than 2m increases the risk of spreading the virus
Ceremony	Minister	How close can the minister be? Can the minister interact with the couple and/or exchange items?	There is an increased risk to faiths leaders who are required to maintain close physical contact with individuals during religious services and rituals. These individuals will inevitably be placed at greater risk of contracting the virus. Where possible physical contact should be kept to a

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			minimum and social distancing guidance followed.
Ceremony	Kneeling	Are kneeling posts cleaned prior to use?	<p>Covid-19 can survive up to 72 hours on hard surfaces. Deep cleaning of rooms or shared areas is not required if they will not be used again within 72 hours, in which case wiping down surfaces with household cleaning products will be sufficient. The virus survives longest on hard surfaces. Contact with shared surfaces can therefore increase the risk of infection. Surfaces such as tables, seats, handrails and toilets should be cleaned regularly with household detergent. The virus may survive for less long on soft furnishings, such as seat cushions, but their use should be avoided where possible as they are harder to clean.</p> <p>All venues should be well lit, warm and properly ventilated with doors and windows open where possible.</p>
Ceremony	Lighting of Candles	What guidance is required for the lighting of candles during the ceremony by the couple or guests?	Candles can be lit.
Ceremony	Communion	What guidance is required for mass communion during the ceremony? Can the communion offerings be passed around? Does a one way system need to be in place for communion?	The communion sacrament should not be shared from a common cup or chalice. There are no special measures or precautions recommended for the cleaning or disposal of individual cups beyond standard cleaning and disposal practices.
Ceremony	Exchanging of Rings	Can the rings be handed to the officiant?	Yes, and care can be taken in advance to make sure that all items passing between the participants are clean.
Ceremony	Readings	Can multiple people give readings from the same pulpit/podium? Does this need to be sanitized between readings?	<p>It would be best to give short readings from a standing position at the front of the venue to avoid hard surface contact. Readings should be kept short, and voice projection should be avoided.</p> <p>The virus survives longest on hard surfaces. Contact with shared surfaces can therefore</p>



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			increase the risk of infection. Surfaces such as tables, seats, handrails and toilets should be cleaned regularly with household detergent.
Ceremony	Singing	Can a choir sing during either the ceremony or reception?	<p>Singing and chanted prayer are an important part of many religious services but can increase dispersal of the virus through aerosols and droplets. This is especially the case at loud volumes.</p> <p>Singing, music and dancing are not advised. The scientific understanding continues to develop and further guidance will be issued when possible.</p>
Ceremony	Singing	Are guests allowed to sing during the ceremony?	<p>Singing and chanted prayer are an important part of many religious services but can increase dispersal of the virus through aerosols and droplets. This is especially the case at loud volumes.</p> <p>Singing, music and dancing are not advised. The scientific understanding continues to develop and further guidance will be issued when possible.</p>
Ceremony	Music	Are instruments allowed if no singing is permitted? This would include an organ	<p>Singing, music and dancing are not advised. The scientific understanding continues to develop and further guidance will be issued when possible.</p>
Ceremony	Vows	Can the bouquet of flowers be passed to another person?	<p>Yes. This should be a very brief part of the day.</p>
Ceremony	Signing of the register	Can you use the same pen and table?	<p>All witnesses should use different pens either provided by the venue or brought with them. If provided by the venue, the pens and hard surface area for the signing of the register will be part of the cleaning regime.</p>
Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Photographs	Can group photos, extended family photos, friendship photos be taken?	<p>No large groups should form indoors for the purpose of photographs.</p>

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Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Gathering	Can people mingle together?	<p>Social distancing guidelines remain in place.</p> <p>Groups of different households should exercise extreme caution and refrain from close physical contact.</p> <p>Everyone must follow the venue's guidance and requirements at all times.</p>
Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Providing Food	Does tea, coffee, shortbread etc. have to be provided on a table service basis?	<p>All service of food and drink should be in line with Guidance for Hotels & Accommodation on Working Safely provided at the following link - https://covid19.tourismni.com/support-centre/business-support-advice/epractical-guidance-for-working-safely-during-covid-19/guidance-for-hotels/</p> <p>All service, food and drink, should be table service with staff assigned to specific tables.</p> <p>Drinks receptions can only be staged outdoors with social distancing measures in place.</p> <p>Buffet service including canapés should not take place.</p>
Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Guest Book / Item	Can a guest book be signed?	<p>Yes, provided there are sufficient pens available or brought to the venue by attendees, and the hard surface area must be part of the cleaning regime.</p>
Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Entertainment	Can there be afternoon entertainment? E.g. harpist, singer, magician, garden games	<p>Music, singing and dancing are not advised. There will be further guidance in due course.</p>
Afternoon Teas & Coffees	Children	Would social distancing apply to children?	<p>Severe disease in children is rare. Children are also likely to be somewhat less susceptible to the virus and somewhat less likely to transmit it when infected, particularly in the case of children under 11. However, social distancing guidelines should continue to be followed at all times.</p>
Reception	Line Up	Can there be a line-up of main Party to greet guests into the dining hall?	<p>Handshaking or line of welcome for guests are not advised.</p>

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Reception	Table Plan	How close can people sit at a table and do they have to be from the same household?	<p>The wedding planner/couple should try to keep guests in social groups - if they are a family they should be seated together. This should be on a recorded table plan with limited movement between tables and the same table seating plan should apply for all stages of the celebration.</p> <p>Guests should be advised on the seating plan prior to arrival to reduce queuing and there should be multiple table plans for the guests to observe at a social distance.</p>
Reception	Favours	Can favours be provided if at individual place settings?	Yes.
Reception	Refreshments	Can wine / juice be set on tables vs poured by staff?	Yes.
Reception	Bar	Is the bar open for service or just for staff use?	All elements of the ceremony and reception should be on a table/seated basis. Tables should be 2m apart or 1m minimum if that is not possible. The bar area will not be available to guests.
Reception	Food	Can a buffet be provided vs a sit down meal? Does this also apply to evening buffets?	<p>All service of food and drink should be in line with Guidance for Hotels & Accommodation on Working Safely provided at the following link - https://covid19.tourismni.com/support-centre/business-support-advice/epractical-guidance-for-working-safely-during-covid-19/guidance-for-hotels/</p> <p>All service, food and drink, should be table service with staff assigned to specific tables.</p> <p>Drinks receptions can only be staged outdoors with social distancing measures in place.</p> <p>Buffet service including canapés should not take place.</p>
Reception	Speeches	Are speeches prohibited - passing of microphone?	Speeches can be included - the wedding party may wish to have these at the start of the event or at a time they find appropriate. Microphones should be sanitised if shared. Voice projection should be avoided.

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Reception	Toasts	Are toasts allowed?	Toasts can take place.
Reception	Gifts	Can gifts be exchanged?	Gifts can be exchanged between parties however social distancing should be maintained
Reception	Toilets	Are toilets open? Can communal items be used? E.g. hairspray, deodorant	Adequate toilet provision needs to be in place and monitored to ensure that there is no congestion and cleaned regularly over the course of the event. Venues should avoid the use of air dryers, which can increase virus dispersal, or roller towels. Venues can supply disposable paper towels instead.
Evening Party	Live Music vs Recorded Music	Is a live band / DJ permitted? Can I play music on a pre-recorded playlist?	Live music by a band or group should be avoided.
Evening Party	Guests	Are Evening Guests Permitted?	No additional guests should be invited for an evening reception
Evening Party	Dancing	Is a first dance allowed including the main party?	There should be no communal dancing at the event. The couple may have a first dance to pre-recorded music. Further guidance on music, singing and dancing will follow when possible.
Evening Party	Dancing Guests	Can guests dance?	There should be no communal dancing at the event.
Evening Party	Sweet Cart / Chocolate fountain	Can a sweet cart / chocolate fountain be allowed if gloves are provided for individual use?	Items should be portioned out in a hygienic area into single portions and brought to the table. Guests must not congregate away from their tables.
Evening Party	Wedding Cake	Can the cake be provided to guests on trays for consumption?	A cake may be placed in the room. The knife for cutting should be sanitised. If the cake is to be served, it should be portioned out in a hygienic area into single portions and brought to the table. The remainder of the cake should be stored in a hygienic manner.
Evening Party	Bar Service	Is the bar open for guests?	All elements of the ceremony and reception should be on a table/seated basis. Guests may not go to the bar.

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Venue Logistics	Venue	Does the venue of the ceremony or the reception need a full deep clean before or after each ceremony, even if a time period of 72 hours has elapsed?	<p>Covid-19 can survive up to 72 hours on hard surfaces. Rooms used for worship should therefore be cleaned regularly following every service.</p> <p>Deep cleaning of rooms or shared areas is not required if they will not be used again within 72 hours, in which case wiping down surfaces with household cleaning products will be sufficient. The virus survives longest on hard surfaces. Contact with shared surfaces can therefore increase the risk of infection. Surfaces such as tables, seats, handrails and toilets should be cleaned regularly with household detergent. The virus may survive for less long on soft furnishings, such as seat cushions, but their use should be avoided where possible as they are harder to clean.</p>
Venue Logistics	Rented Items	Do rented items need a full deep clean before or after each wedding, even if a time period of 72 hours has elapsed?	<p>Covid-19 can survive up to 72 hours on hard surfaces. The virus survives longest on hard surfaces. Contact with shared surfaces can therefore increase the risk of infection.</p> <p>Surfaces such as tables, seats, handrails and toilets should be cleaned regularly with household detergent. The virus may survive for less long on soft furnishings, such as seat cushions, but their use should be avoided where possible as they are harder to clean.</p>