



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 put in place revised arrangements for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, for a 4 week period, from 19 October 2020. The arrangements are as set out in and the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

What are the new restrictions?

From 19 October:

Marriage and civil partnerships are limited to 25 people. This number includes the couple, witnesses, officiants and all guests (including children under 12).

Receptions and post ceremony gatherings are **not** permitted.

Can we hold our wedding in a private dwelling?

No mixing of households is allowed at a private dwelling, therefore a ceremony may not be held indoors at a private dwelling as the registrar would not be allowed to enter the premises.

Outdoor gatherings at a private dwelling (including the garden of a dwelling) is restricted to six people from two different households. Children aged 12 and under from those two households are not counted in this total.

Are there any exceptions?

A marriage ceremony or a civil partnership ceremony can take place in a person's home if one of the parties is terminally ill, with 10 people in attendance (this includes the couple, two witnesses and the officiant).

The Executive is aware that couples may have a range of questions about what they can and can't do on the day. The following information provides answers to some of these questions and is based on the restrictions as they currently stand. They should be followed to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is appreciated that these are not normal times and couples will want to think very carefully about their arrangements in the coming weeks. It might be the case that some aspects of guidance and arrangements can be relaxed over time, but it is also important to remember that restrictions may need to be put back in place if the community transmission rate increases.

The following provides answers to questions you may have:

THEME	TOPIC	QUESTION	ANSWER
Pre-ceremony	Hairdresser	Can a hairdresser come to your house?	No, this is listed as a close contact service and is not presently permitted. Hairdressing salons are also closed
Pre-ceremony	Make Up	Can a makeup artist come to your house?	No, this is listed as a close contact service and is not presently permitted. Beauty salons are also closed
Pre-ceremony	Photographer / Videographer	Can a photographer/videographer come to your house?	No mixing of households in private dwellings is permitted. However, there are exemptions which mean an individual can come to your home in a professional capacity. This means that if a photographer/ videographer is coming to your home they can do so as long as they can maintain social distancing with no close contact, in line with a completed risk assessment.
Transport (to/from)	Transport	Can the people who are from two or more households travel in the same transport?	It is recommended that you only share a vehicle with members of your own household. Where possible, social distancing between households should be adhered to e.g. on a bus. Face coverings are mandatory on public transport, taxis and private buses and coaches
Transport (to/from)	Guest Transport	Can minibuses or coaches be used to transport guests to and from the wedding venue?	Yes however guests from different households should be seated socially distanced. In line with face covering regulations all passengers and staff must wear a face covering on a bus, coach and train services, including private buses and coaches and taxis. The driver must also wear a mask unless he she is behind a partition. Further details on the rules relating face coverings can be found at https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings
Transport (to/from)	Unfavourable Weather	If it's raining - can the driver assist with an umbrella into the venue?	Keeping contact time between persons to a minimum helps prevent the spread of the virus. Assistance with umbrellas provided by the driver should be kept to a minimum.
Spectators	Uninvited well wishers	Are spectators allowed to congregate outside the venue?	The total wedding party can be no more than 25 people.
Misc.	Track & Trace	Is the ceremony venue responsible for completing a record of guests in attendance at the wedding?	Where the ceremony takes place in a venue that is not a place a place of worship, the regulations state that visitor information must be recorded either before or at the time

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			<p>of visit and retain this information for a period of 21 days beginning with the date on which the visit occurred. This must include the name and telephone number of one member of each household visiting the premises, the date of their visit and arrival time and the number of household members visiting the premises.</p> <p>We would strongly advise that places of worship also gather this information.</p>
Ceremony	Meet & Greet	Can guests be met and escorted to their seats?	<p>Guests can be greeted for a short amount of time at a social distance.</p> <p>The ceremony venue will have determined the seats available for the ceremony.</p>
Ceremony	Order of Service	Can they be given out upon arrival vs placed on a seat?	<p>It is recommended that orders of service are collected at a point of arrival or placed on a seat rather than handed out by a person to minimise contact.</p> <p>The venue will consider the cleaning regime for all hard surfaces which might be touched during the service.</p>
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?	<p>Guests who do not share a household should have their own order of service. For guests who share households, the sharing of an order of service is permitted.</p>
Ceremony	Face coverings	Does everyone have to wear a face covering in the church?	<p>Everyone (other than a person leading a service) entering or leaving a place of worship, or while not seated, must wear a face covering unless there is a reasonable excuse not to do so. This however, does not apply to a couple to solemnise their marriage or form their civil partnership.</p>
Ceremony	Procession	Can people from different households walk down the aisle together?	<p>Members not of the same household should maintain social distancing at all times. Only members of the same household should walk together and sit together in a venue.</p> <p>Timed or staggered arrival should be planned to relieve congestion and queuing.</p>
Ceremony	Procession	Can the main party stand together or do they have to be seated socially distanced?	<p>Members not of the same household should maintain social distancing at all times. Close contact of less than 2m increases the risk of spreading the virus.</p>
Ceremony	Minister	How close can the minister be? Can the minister interact with the bride and groom and/or exchange items?	<p>There is an increased risk to faith 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 minimum and social distancing guidance followed.</p>

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Ceremony	Kneeling	Are kneeling posts cleaned pre wedding?	Contact with shared surfaces can increase the risk of transmission of the virus. All shared contact surfaces including kneeling posts should be cleaned and disinfected between uses. Particular attention should be given to cleaning and disinfecting hand contact surfaces such as door handles, handrails etc.
Ceremony	Lighting of Candles	What guidance is required for the lighting of candles during the ceremony by the bridal party 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?	Place of worship should follow their existing guidance on this matter
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? Does this need to be sanitized between readings?	Place of worship should follow their existing guidance on this matter
Ceremony	Music	Can music be played during the ceremony, particularly when the bride is walking down the aisle and the couple walk back up the aisle?	This depends on the venue. Music is permitted for ceremonies within a place of worship however in venue where intoxicating liquor may be consumed e.g. hotel, or community hall, marquee or an independent venue, live music is not permitted however recorded music is allowed.
Ceremony	Singing	Can a choir sing during either the ceremony?	Singing and chanted prayer are an important part of many religious services. You are advised to bear in mind that singing may result in increased dispersal of the virus through aerosols and droplets. This is especially the case at loud volumes. Please bear in mind that the maximum number of 25 will include all parties present.
Ceremony	Singing	Are guests allowed to sing hymns during the ceremony?	Singing and chanted prayer are an important part of many religious services. You are advised to bear in mind that singing may result in increased dispersal of the virus through aerosols and droplets. This is especially the case at loud volumes.
Ceremony	Vows	Can the bouquet of flowers be passed to another person?	Yes although it should be avoided if possible. This should be a very brief part of the day. It is advised that hand hygiene equipment should be made available for this purpose.

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Ceremony	Signing of the register	Can you use the same pen and table?	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 should be part of the cleaning regime.
Photography	Photographs	Can group photos, extended family photos, friendship photos be taken?	Large groups should not form for the purpose of photograph, unless social distancing can be maintained
Reception	Gathering	I know I can't have a reception but can I serve tea/coffee?	Under the current regulations no reception or post ceremony gatherings are permitted.