

COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Wedding Services in Church

This risk assessment is based on guidance issued by the Church of England which can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

It should be used in conjunction with the Church of England Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public a template for which can be found under 'Documents' on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#) and needs to be completed before embarking on this risk assessment, which specifically addresses additional risks that arise for Wedding Services in Church.

In creating this document, specific reference has been made to the Church of England document [COVID-19 Advice for clergy conducting weddings](#), v. 5.1, issued 17 August 2020.

This document should be read in conjunction with '[Conducting Public Worship](#)' If the marriage is within a celebration of Holy Communion the advice on Holy Communion should also be followed.

Underlying Assumptions for this Risk Assessment

The transmission of COVID-19 is thought to occur mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated surfaces. The amount of time that the virus can survive on a surface is variable, but 72 hours is commonly considered to be a maximum.

The recommended mitigations for avoiding transmission are:

- Frequent hand washing
- Social distancing (2 metres)
- Removal/avoidance or cleaning of surfaces
- Wearing of face covering (to reduce the possibility of contaminating others)
- Good ventilation

Before undertaking the service, the Minister should confirm that they have read and will follow the guidance on the following pages.

Introduction: Special provisions to be made during the service (extract from the document above)

Apart from the bride and groom, who join hands as an essential part of the marriage ceremony, a physical distance of 2 metres should be observed between individuals as far as is possible. Please note that the minister does not have to touch the rings at the Giving of Rings, nor does he or she have to touch the couple's hands as part of a prayer or blessing.

Where rings are touched by anyone other than the bride and groom alone, hands should be washed or sanitized before and after. The rings should be handled by as few people as possible.

During the service, those participating should not project their voices to minimise risk of droplet spread and the use of face coverings is mandatory for the congregation.

The organist may play for the ceremony.

If the bride is to be 'walked down the aisle' she should only be accompanied by a member of her household, while bridesmaids should be careful to observe physical distancing unless also from the same household.

Good public health hygiene should be observed throughout with hand sanitizers available at the door.

Church:	Date completed:	Date approved by PCC:
Amendments		Date

What is the general risk?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What is the specific risk?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks? (refer to C of E guidance where possible)	Who needs to ensure this action is carried out?	Done
Risk of Minister not following the Church of England guidelines	Guidelines are referenced or copied in this document	Risk that Minister does not have the most up to date information	Minister to confirm that they have read and will follow the guidance in this document.	Minister	
Risk of wedding party being unprepared for what they need to do to ensure guidelines are followed	This document to be shared with bride and groom 7 days before the wedding.	Risk that wedding guests are confused about what they need to do.	Bride & groom to confirm that they have read and will follow the guidance in this document.	Minister	
	Photographer to be reminded of requirements to observe social distancing and wear face covering in church.	Risk that photographer is confused about whether the guidelines for the congregation apply to him or her.	Photographer to agree to observe social distancing requirements	Minister	
Risk of virus transmission by touching an infected person	Restrict numbers to maximum 30 people, including the wedding party, photographer, and Minister but not the organist and verger.	Risk of too many people to enable social distancing.	List of attendees to be confirmed with Minister beforehand.	Minister	
	Control entry at the church door to admit	Guests crowd together at the entrance door.	Verger to ensure that an usher is appointed with specific responsibility to	Minister	

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	guests one social group at a time		stand outside the church door and ensure social distancing		
	Remind guests about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact.	Guests greet each other without observing social distancing.	Verger and usher to remind people on the way in	Verger	
	Create socially distanced seating plan to ensure 2 metre distancing as far as possible.	Guests sit too close to each other in the church.	Name labels to be placed on the seats beforehand to avoid possibility of confusion. Service sheets should also be placed on the seats.	Minister	
	If the bride is to be 'walked down the aisle' she should only be accompanied by a member of her household.			Bride	
	Bridesmaids to observe physical distancing unless from the same household.		Bridesmaids to be reminded at the rehearsal and by the Minister on entry to church	Minister	
	Entry to the church to be controlled during the service	Anyone entering the church during the service may not observe social distancing.	Verger to control entry to the church during the service.	Minister	

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	Flow of people leaving the church to be controlled		At the end of the service, before the dismissal, Minister to remind people to leave one pew at a time, keeping socially distanced even when outside.	Minister	
	Advising everyone on entry to the church about the need for social distancing and the mandatory wearing of facial coverings.	During the signing of the Register social distancing may not be maintained.	At the signing of the Register the Minister will advise the bride, groom and witnesses where to sit and stand.	Minister	
Risk of virus transmission by touching an infected object	Hand sanitising on entry to church		All to be asked to sanitise hands at the door	Verger	
	Hand sanitising during giving and receiving of rings		The minister should not touch the rings at the Giving of Rings. Where rings are touched by anyone other than the bride and groom alone, hands should be washed or sanitized before and after.	Minister	
	Hand sanitising during signing of register		All those signing the register should sanitize their hands before signing, complete all the signatures necessary for them and then sanitize them again.	Minister	

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	Sanitising of pen		Sanitise pen between each signatory	Minister	
Risk of virus transmission by breathing in infected airborne droplets	Face coverings to be worn by all apart from bride & groom and Minister.		Bride and groom to ensure that all wedding guests are aware of face covering requirements beforehand	Bride & groom	
	Good ventilation	Risk of virus circulating in the building.	During service main door to be open if weather conditions allow, with bird prevention in place if relevant.	Minister	
	Congregations are not permitted to sing as part of the ceremony.		Minister to ensure bride & groom are aware of restrictions on singing.	Minister	

Additional note

In order to meet government requirements for NHS Test & Trace and to ensure the safety of all present, a list of all guests needs to be provided beforehand with contact details, and an indication of any household groups.

This list should be used when creating the seating plan. A copy should be retained by the Minister and destroyed 21 days after the wedding.