

COVID-19: Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships in England



From the Churches' Legislation Advisory Service (CLAS)

On 31 July, Boris Johnson delivered a speech from Downing Street in which he made changes to the planned coronavirus social distancing measures, including postponing the reopening of the last few close-contact sectors that remain closed. The most relevant extracts from the [announcement](#) were these:

- Wedding receptions of up to 30 people would not be permitted, but ceremonies could continue to take place in line with COVID-Secure guidelines.
- The Government also recommended extending the requirement to wear a face covering to other indoor settings, including to places of worship. This expansion of social distancing rules would become enforceable in law – and therefore mandatory – from 8 August.

On 3 August, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) issued updated [Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships](#) in England. The guidance:

'applies only to marriages and civil partnerships taking place in England under the law of England and Wales. Religious ceremonies (those not taking place under the law of England and Wales), belief ceremonies, blessings, or other non-statutory ceremonies are not covered, and those wishing to conduct them should refer to other guidance on gatherings (see links below). In particular for religious ceremonies you should refer to the [places of worship guidance](#).'

However, there are two passages in the guidance that seem to be equally relevant to religious weddings as to civil ones:

'Wedding receptions or parties should not currently be taking place and any celebration after the ceremony should follow the broader social distancing guidance of involving no more than two households in any location or, if outdoors, up to 6 people from different households. The roadmap set out the ambition of allowing small wedding receptions. This means sit down meals for no more than 30 people and subject to Covid-19 Secure guidance. This change will not take place until at least 15 August, at the earliest'.

This quote is from Prime Minister Boris Johnson:

"From 8 August, face coverings will be required by law to be worn in a greater number of public indoor settings including: museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and public libraries. Please be mindful that there are valid exemptions for some individuals and groups to not wear a face covering in these settings".

Sources: 10 Downing Street, 31 July, MHCLG, 3 August