

CLAS CIRCULAR 2021/16 (16 July 2021)

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It would be very helpful if members could let us know of anything that appears to indicate developments of policy or practice on the part of Government or other matters of general concern that should be pursued.

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COVID-19 UPDATE

Government guidance on loosening of restrictions in the UK

For information **and possibly for action**

The UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments have announced that their respective lockdown restrictions will loosen. A short summary is outlined below.

England

Boris Johnson [confirmed](#) that Step 4 of the Roadmap will proceed on Monday 19 July, at which point the majority of legal restrictions will be removed.

- The Government 'expects and recommends' that face coverings are worn in crowded and enclosed spaces, such as public transport, when mixing with people you don't normally meet.
- While the Government is no longer instructing people to work from home, a return to the workplace should be gradual and businesses should follow the published guidance.
- Organisations and large events will be supported and encouraged to use the NHS COVID Pass in high-risk settings to help limit the risk of infection in their venues.
- Positive cases and contacts of positive cases identified by NHS Test and Trace will still be legally required to self-isolate, to help break chains of transmission. There will be an isolation exemption for contacts of positive cases for under 18s and for double-vaccinated adults from 16 August.
- Quarantine rules will remain for all those travelling from a red list country, and for amber list countries unless double-vaccinated.

See below for specific Westminster Government guidance on marriages, civil partnerships and related wedding ceremonies in England.

Scotland

Nicola Sturgeon [announced](#) that from Monday 19 July, physical distancing in Level 0 will reduce to 1 metre in all indoor public settings and outdoors. Additionally, informal social gatherings of up to 15 people from 15 households will be permitted outdoors without physical distancing. Gatherings of up to 10 people from four households will be permitted in all indoor public settings with 1 metre physical distancing. Other easings to Level 0 taking effect at that time include the following:

- Under-12s will no longer count towards the number of households that can gather indoors in public spaces and homes.
- Up to 200 people will be able to gather at weddings and funerals.

- Employers are asked to continue to support home working where possible until we move beyond Level 0.
- Travellers who are fully vaccinated through a UK vaccination programme and children arriving into Scotland from Amber List countries will no longer be required to self-isolate and take a day eight test, but adults and children over 12 will still take tests before travelling and on day two after arrival. Anyone testing positive for or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will still require to isolate for 10 days.

Wales

Mark Drakeford [announced](#) that Wales will move into alert level one from 17 July, meaning that:

- Up to six people can meet indoors in private homes and holiday accommodation.
- Organised indoor events can take place for up to 1,000 seated and up to 200 standing.
- The limits on the numbers of people who can meet in public places or at events will be removed. Outdoor premises and events will also have greater flexibility around physical distancing.
- Employers will have a specific requirement to provide comprehensive information on the risks and mitigations identified in the COVID risk assessment with their employees.

See below for specific Welsh Government guidance on marriages, civil partnerships and related wedding ceremonies.

[Source: Prime Minister's Office, 12 July; Scottish Government, 13 July; and Welsh Government, 14 July]

Guidance from the Churches

For information and possibly for action

Various Churches in the UK have now issued or revised their own guidance on the resumption of activities as the lockdowns ease:

- The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales published [Covid-19 Route Map: Step 4 Guidance](#) on 15 July.
- The Church in Wales updated its existing [COVID-19 Guidance](#) on 15 July.
- The Church of Scotland updated its guidance on [Reshaping Church Life](#) and [Reopening and Looking after your Church Buildings](#) on 13 July.

- The Methodist Church updated its [Coronavirus Guidance for Property](#) on 13 July.

We understand that updated guidance from the Church of England is still in preparation.

[Source: CLAS, 15 July]

CHARITIES & CHARITY LAW

Charity Commission: updated guidance on charity accounting

For information **and possibly for action**

The Charity Commission has updated its guidance on [Charity reporting and accounting: the essentials November 2016 \(CC15d\)](#) and on [Independent examination of charity accounts: guidance for trustees \(CC31\)](#) to include advice on the use of electronic signatures on the balance sheet, trustees' annual report and independent examination.

[Source: Charity Commission, 14 July]

DCMS: Risk management template for event organisers

For information **and possibly for action**

DCMS has published a [Risk management template for event organisers](#), which it offers as a resource to help event organisers to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in event settings.

[Source: DCMS, 14 July]

FAITH & SOCIETY

Weddings and civil partnerships: changes to COVID-19 restrictions in England from 19 July

For information

The Westminster Government has published the forthcoming Step 4 changes to COVID-19 restrictions in England in relation to weddings and civil partnerships. The summary is as follows:

'From 19 July, the rules for wedding and civil partnership ceremonies; and wedding receptions and civil partnership celebrations will change. At Step 4:

1. There are no legal restrictions on the number of people that can attend a wedding, civil partnership, reception or celebration.
2. Legal requirements for social distancing will no longer apply and you will not need to stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with.
3. Face coverings are no longer required by law in any setting. However, the Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport.
4. COVID-secure rules, including table service requirements and restrictions on singing and dancing, will no longer apply. However, there are steps everyone should continue to consider to reduce the risk of transmission, which are explained in this guidance. All businesses should follow the principles set out in the [working safely guidance](#).
5. If someone has been instructed by [NHS Test and Trace](#) to self-isolate because they have tested positive for COVID-19, or they're the close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, they must still self-isolate and not attend.'

The full document is [here](#).

[Source: HM Government, 14 July]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Charities Bill (NI): call for evidence

For information and possibly for action

The Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Communities has announced a [call for evidence](#) on the [Charities Bill](#), which is being taken forward in parallel with the [Independent Review of Charity Regulation in Northern Ireland](#). The text of the Bill is [here](#).

The primary purpose of the Bill is to deal with the situation that arose after the NI Court of Appeal, in *McKee & Hughes v The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland* [2020] NICA 13, upheld the judgment in *McKee & Ors v The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland* [2019] NICH 6 that the Commission did not have the power to delegate any of its statutory powers, duties and functions to its officials. (The call for evidence refers to it, somewhat confusingly, as "The McBride judgment": it was originally handed down by McBride J in the Chancery Division.)

The deadline for submissions is **Friday 3 September**.

[Source: Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Communities, 14 July]

Private Tenancies Bill

For information and possibly for action

The Minister for Communities has introduced the [Private Tenancies Bill \[NIA 32/17-22\]](#): a Bill to amend the law relating to private tenancies. The Bill (explanatory note [here](#)) passed First Stage and was ordered to be printed.

[Source: Northern Ireland Assembly, 6 July]

WALES

COVID-19: Guidance on reopening places of worship

For information **and possibly for action**

The Welsh Government has [published](#) updated guidance on reopening places of worship. The note provides guidance for managing the safe opening of places of worship and prayer during the coronavirus pandemic.

[Source: Welsh Government, 8 July]

COVID-19: Guidance on marriages, civil partnerships and related wedding ceremonies

For information **and possibly for action**

The Welsh Government has [published](#) updated guidance on marriages, civil partnerships and related wedding ceremonies. The note provides guidance to local authorities and places of worship on solemnisation of marriages and the forming of civil partnerships.

[Source: Welsh Government, 5 July]

Welsh Government legislative programme

For information

The Welsh Government has [announced](#) its legislative programme for this Senedd. The first-year Bills of likely interest to members, which will be introduced from the autumn, are:

- Agriculture Bill.
- Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill.
- A Bill to enable changes to devolved taxes.
- A Bill to consolidate the legislation on listed buildings and the historic environment.

In addition, the Renting Homes (Wales) Act will be brought into force.

[Source: Welsh Government, 6 July]