

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

Shropshire Registration & Celebratory Services

updated 1st December 2020

The following guidance is issued to provide you with an understanding of how updated Government guidelines will affect your ceremony. Whilst not an exhaustive list, the information given has been sourced from [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and from supplementary guidance produced for Local Authorities by the General Register Office.

We understand that this guidance may change the plans that you have put in place for your day. Please be assured that we will work with you and your venue to try and meet your needs as safely as we are able.

[Ceremonies update 1st December 2020](#)

[Tier system from 2nd December 2020](#)

The following are changes which are as a result of the introduction of the Tier system in England from 02 December 2020.

[Which Tier is Shropshire in?](#)

Shropshire is in Tier 2 – High Alert

[Can my reception take place](#)

In Tier 2 areas small receptions for up to 15 people are able to take place. However, anyone who resides in a Tier 3 area cannot attend a Wedding or Civil Partnership Reception that would be allowed to take place in a Tier 2 area.

There are no exceptions for wedding receptions within and for those residing within a Tier 3 area, regardless of their status (bride, groom etc).

[Can I travel to a Tier 2 area from a Tier 1 or Tier 3 area](#)

Travel between tier areas if necessary, is permitted,

[I have a marriage/civil partnership ceremony booked in the next few weeks. Will It go ahead?](#)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

Ceremonies have resumed in register office buildings and external venues following government restrictions and guidance. Ceremonies may be different due to the current restrictions and guidelines in place, but we are committed to doing all we can to give our couples a truly beautiful and memorable ceremony experience on your special day.

Should you wish to reschedule your booking due to the Covid 19 pandemic and associated restrictions, we will reschedule your booking free of charge. If you wish to cancel our normal cancellation policy will apply. the dates and times we can offer you are subject to our availability.

If you wish to postpone/reschedule your booking, please note that we are only able to accept bookings up to 2 years in advance.

Please call our registration service team via Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre on 0345 678 9016, or email dsr.registrars@shropshire.gov.uk

Our team will be more than happy to help, but please note that high volumes of calls and emails are being experienced, and we thank you for your patience.

What to expect from a ceremony in an approved venue

Our ceremonies may look and feel different under Covid-19 restrictions, but we are committed to providing a special ceremony for you to remember. The health and safety of you, your guests, our colleagues and staff at our approved venues is very important, we have been working with our venues to make sure appropriate measures are in place. Please take the time to read and understand the guidance below before the day of your ceremony. Please share this information with those joining you on the day.

- No-one should attend a ceremony if they or a member of their household has had any Covid-19 symptoms in the 14 days prior to the ceremony date.
- No more than 15 people should attend a ceremony. **Please note** - this includes the happy couple, the witnesses and babies and children, **it does not include the 2 ceremony officers nor any third party suppliers** - for example a photographer. The maximum number able to attend will depend upon the size of your ceremony room so please check with your chosen venue.
- Social distancing guidelines will apply. Please adhere to all signage and floor markings. People from different households should adhere to social distancing at all times.
- Please wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before and after the ceremony, following any exchange of rings and signing of register. Hand sanitising facilities will be provided by the venue.
- It is mandatory for all guests at a ceremony in a register office/approved venue to wear a face covering (unless exempt for medical reasons). Face coverings will not have to be worn by the bride, groom, civil partners or Registration staff (although the member of the team performing your ceremony may choose to do so). You will need to make sure your guests provide their own face coverings as we will not be able to provide them.
- Readings and Personalised Vows Ceremony timeframes are being kept to a minimum therefore short readings and short personalised vows will be considered on an individual basis and permitted only where it is safe to do so.
- Arrival of Ceremony party - all persons must arrive 20 minutes prior to the ceremony time.
- Vulnerable Adults, Infants and Children - to minimise risk vulnerable adults, infants and children should avoid attending ceremonies during Covid-19 restrictions, how-ever this is at the couples' discretion.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies FAQ's

- Any infant must be held by a parent / guardian or member of their own household. Pre-school children will be permitted to sit on laps, Infants and children should be included in the total number of guests.
- Animals -. Any animal present is at the discretion of the couple and the venue and must always be kept under control.
- Pre-Ceremony Interviews - these will take place in person before the ceremony and will be kept as short as possible, only the couple and the registrars are able to attend.
- Entrance to the Ceremony Room - social distancing measures should be maintained throughout the ceremony including persons walking down the aisle.
- Exchange of rings - to limit contact one partner should have responsibility for safe keeping of the rings.
- Signing of the register - the ceremony team will indicate where to sign this will be carried out adhering to social distancing guidelines. The couple and their witnesses should bring their own pen (blue or black ink).
- Music Singing, shouting or raised voices should be avoided. The use of musical instruments should be in accordance with current government guidelines and must be agreed prior to the ceremony with the registration service. Recorded music must be supplied by the couple and played on your own device or arrangements for playing made prior to the ceremony with the venue.
- Certificates – where possible we will issue certificates on the day however we reserve the right to issue certificates after the ceremony and post to the couple.
- Photography - photographers attending will not be counted in your party of 15. Photo opportunities may be restricted and are at the discretion of the Registrars. The register will not be provided for photo opportunities.

If the attending Registrars feel the appropriate safety measures are not in place or are not adhered to, they reserve the right to refuse to proceed with the ceremony.

Outdoor Structures

Some of our Approved Premises have licensed outdoor structures these will be included within any risk assessment provided by your venue. In some venues the structures may not be large enough to support the social distancing requirements so it is important that if you are planning a ceremony which would take place in one of these structures that you liaise with your venue in advance. Any ceremonies in structures are subject to prevailing weather conditions as was the case prior to Covid 19.

What to expect from a ceremony in a Registration Office

Our ceremonies may look and feel different under Covid-19 restrictions, but we are committed to providing a special ceremony for you to remember. The health and safety of you, your guests, our colleagues and staff at our Registration Offices is of paramount importance. Please take the time to read and understand the guidance below prior to the day of your ceremony. Please share this information with those joining you on the day.

- No-one should attend a ceremony if they or a member of their household has had any Covid-19 symptoms in the 14 days prior to the ceremony date.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

- The government guidance of no more than 15 people includes the happy couple and the witnesses, and any babies or children, it does not include the 2 ceremony officers and any third-party suppliers - for example a photographer.
- **Please note** - the numbers able to attend ceremonies in our offices vary according to venue and are shown below.

For Basic Ceremonies in the Shropshire Register Office Shrewsbury, 6 (including 2 registrars the couple and 2 witnesses, Children/ babies are included in the numbers)

For Ceremonies in the Ceremony Room at The Shirehall - 9 (including 2 registrars, the couple, and 2 witnesses. Children/ babies are included in the numbers).

For Ceremonies at Castle View, Oswestry, 12 (including 2 registrars, the couple and 2 witnesses, Children/ babies are included in the numbers)

Due to social distancing requirements, at present it is not possible to have ceremonies in any other registration office in the Shropshire Council Area.

- Pre-school children are permitted to sit on laps, children aged 5 and over will need to be seated on their own chair. **Infants and children should be included in the total number of guests.**
- Social distancing guidelines will apply. Please adhere to all signage and floor markings. People from different households should always adhere to social distancing.
- It is mandatory for all guests at a ceremony in a register office/approved venue to wear a face covering (unless exempt for medical reasons). Face coverings will not have to be worn by the bride, groom, civil partners or Registration staff (although the member of the team performing your ceremony may choose to do so). You will need to make sure your guests provide their own face coverings as we will not be able to provide them.
- Our officers will wash or sanitise their hands between each ceremony and we will wipe down desks and chairs before you enter the room and waiting area
- Please wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before and after the ceremony, following any exchange of rings and signing of register. Hand sanitising facilities will be provided by the venue.

Arriving and Leaving:

- Make sure you allow enough time for parking and confirmation of your arrival at our office
- Arrival of Ceremony party - all persons must arrive 20 minutes before the ceremony time
- Please note you may be asked to wait outside the building until the ceremony officer is available to greet you
- Follow the signs around the building carefully and listen to any safety instructions given by our officers
- On arrival, you will be asked to use hand sanitiser before moving through the building. We would recommend doing this again as you leave for your personal protection
- You may be asked to wait in a specific waiting area. Please do not wander from this area. Our layout has been carefully planned to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- For the time you are in our building, please observe social distancing at all times of 2 metres.
- When you leave the building, the officer will explain how to exit. Please carefully follow this guidance as there may be a one-way flow which means you exit through a different door than when you arrived.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

During the Ceremony:

- Pre-Ceremony Interviews - these will take place in person prior to the ceremony and will be kept as short as possible and only the couple and registrars are permitted to attend.
- Entrance to the Ceremony Room - social distancing measures should be maintained throughout the ceremony including persons walking down the aisle.
- Readings and Personalised Vows Ceremony timeframes are being kept to a minimum therefore only short readings or short personalised vows will be considered for inclusion and only where it is possible to maintain safety.
- Vulnerable Adults, Infants and Children - to minimise risk vulnerable adults, infants and children should avoid attending ceremonies during Covid-19 restrictions, how-ever this is at the couples' discretion. Any infant must be held by a parent / guardian or member of their own household.
- Exchange of rings - to limit contact one partner should have responsibility for safe keeping of the rings.
- Signing of the register - the ceremony team will indicate where to sign this will be carried out adhering to social distancing guidelines. The couple and their witnesses should bring their own pen (blue or black permanent ink) .
- Music Singing, shouting or raised voices should be avoided. Due to limited space no singing or live music performances are permitted in our register offices. Recorded music must be supplied by the couple and played on your own device or arrangements for playing made prior to the ceremony with the venue.
- Certificates – where possible we will issue certificates on the day however we reserve the right to issue certificates after the ceremony and post to the couple.
- Photography – Photographers will not be permitted in our register office ceremonies for 6 people as there is not enough room for social distancing. In our ceremony room where 9 people are able to be accommodated (to include 2 registrars, the couple and 2 witnesses) the photographer has to be included in the permitted number Photo opportunities may be restricted and are at the discretion of the Registrars. The register will not be provided for photographs

Can I postpone my ceremony?

We will reschedule your booking free of charge and if you wish to cancel our normal refund policy applies.

Please note the dates and times we can offer you are subject to our availability.

If you wish to postpone/reschedule your booking, please note that we are only able to accept bookings up to 2 years in advance.

Please call our registration service team via Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre on 0345 678 9016, or email dsr.registrars@shropshire.gov.uk

Our team will be more than happy to help, but please note that high volumes of calls and emails are being experienced, and we thank you for your patience.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

Can I make a new booking for a ceremony?

We are taking bookings for weddings and civil partnerships up to 2 years in advance. Unfortunately, until government restrictions are lifted on non-statutory ceremonies, we cannot take bookings for naming ceremonies, renewal of vows and bespoke ceremonies.

If you wish to make a new booking please note that we are only able to accept bookings up to 2 years in advance.

Please call our registration service team via Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre on 0345 678 9016, or email dsr.registrars@shropshire.gov.uk

Our team will be more than happy to help, but please note that high volumes of calls and emails are being experienced, and we thank you for your patience.

Are marriage/ civil partnership notice appointments in Shropshire Registration Offices still going ahead?

Yes they are!

We are however prioritising appointments.

Appointments can be made either on line by visiting www.shropshire.gov.uk or over the telephone by calling Shropshire Councils Customer Service Centre on **0345 678 9016**.

Do I need to give notice again if I am postponing my booking?

At this stage, there has been no change in legislation to allow the validity of the notice period to be extended. If you have already given your notice of marriage / civil partnership, your notice will be valid for a period of 12 months only from the date you gave notice.

If you reschedule your marriage / civil partnership to more than 12 months after the date on which you originally gave notice, you will be required to give notice and pay the statutory notice fee again. If you have chosen to move your ceremony to another venue, you will also be required to give notice again.

The fee for giving notice is a government set statutory fee and we are therefore not able to waive any fees for notice appointments at this time.

What if I am struggling to pay for my ceremony?

All ceremonies are due for payment within 3 months of the ceremony date. If you are having difficulties please email us registrars@shropshire.gov.uk to discuss your options. We do not charge late payment fees.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

I want to cancel my ceremony, will I get a refund?

We are committed to helping you reschedule your ceremony to another date. If you would like to cancel your ceremony our normal refund policy will apply. Please contact us on registrars@shropshire.gov.uk.

What if someone with Covid-19 symptoms attends the Register Office/Approved Venue? Can we ask them to leave?

Yes. Guidance regarding public health and social distancing should always be followed. Anyone who has covid-19 symptoms should be self-isolating at home along with others in their household. If it is one of the parties to the marriage or civil partnership a new date can be rearranged over the phone. If it is one, or both, of the witnesses the couple will be required to provide new witnesses. It is acceptable for a member staff to **volunteer** to be witnesses in this circumstance (providing the member or staff is not already officiating at the ceremony). Staff cannot be compelled to undertake this role, it remains the responsibility of the couple to provide their witnesses.

Can enhancements to the solemnization or a marriage or formation of a civil partnership be offered?

The government guidance advises that the ceremonies and services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time and limited as far as reasonably possible to the parts of the marriage or civil partnership that are required in order to be legally binding under the law of England and Wales. We will **consider** short readings/personal vows providing these can be done in a safe manner.

We are getting married in a Local Authority Ceremony room or in a register office, as there is less risk outside can the ceremony take place there instead?

No. A marriage or civil partnership must take place within the venue as detailed on the Notice and Authority, and as specified in the approval of the premises. The outside space is not included as part of the venue.

Why can't witnesses use video technology to witness the ceremony?

There is still a requirement within the legislation for 2 witnesses to attend to witness a marriage or civil partnership and then sign the register.

However, video technology could be used for other guests where this is available.

Does the marriage register still need to be signed with registration ink? This would mean that everyone would use the same pen.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - wedding and civil partnership ceremonies **FAQ's**

Although it is always preferable for registration ink to be used, it is safer to use your own pen (either black or blue/black ink),. Please ensure that you bring one with you.

Are babies and small children included in the numbers? Are they allowed to attend?

Yes, **babies and small children are included in the overall numbers** and a parent/guardian or member of the household must hold the infant.

Can my father walk me down the aisle?

Providing you live in the same household or are in the same bubble, or that you adhere to social distancing requirements.