



# Covid-19: Can my group get back to in-person activities?

Guidelines covering how music groups can get back to rehearsing and performing are being published in the different nations of the UK:

- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#arts-2-1>) cover England.
- In Northern Ireland, it's the Arts Council of Northern Ireland document: In the Bubble of Our Making: Reopening the Arts in Northern Ireland (<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/In-the-Bubble-of-Our-Making-Reopening-the-Arts-in-Northern-Ireland-July-2020.pdf>)
- The Scottish Government published Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for the performing arts and venues sector (<http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-performing-arts-and-venues-sector/>)
- New guidance specifically for performing arts has been published in Wales (16 Sep), and we will update the information below shortly.

The guidance does vary and so what you can and can't do is different, depending on what type of group you are and where you are in the UK.

The tool below will help you identify which bit of guidance is relevant to you, and help you establish what your group can and cannot do.

The situation is ever changing, so please always check the latest official guidance, including local variations, before making and implementing any plans.

*First published 13 July 2020*

*Updated:*

- 31 July
  - England (performing groups and promoting groups)
  - Scotland (promoting groups)
  - 3 August - Wales (performing groups and promoting groups)
- 7 August (Northern Ireland – performing groups and promoting groups)
- 14 August (England – performing groups and promoting groups)
- 20 August (England – performing groups )
- 21 August (Scotland - promoting groups and England – performing groups)
- 25 August (Scotland - performing groups)
- 24 August (Northern Ireland - performing groups)
- 10 September (Scotland - performing groups, and England - performing groups)
- 16 September (England - performing groups)
- 17 September (Northern Ireland - performing groups, Northern Ireland - promoting groups, England - performing groups)
- 18 September (Scotland - performing groups, England - performing groups)
- 21 September (England - performing groups)
- 22 September (England - performing groups, Northern Ireland - performing groups (other))
- 23 September (England - performing groups, Scotland - performing groups, Northern Ireland - performing groups (other), Northern Ireland - performing groups (singing, wind and brass), Wales - performing groups, Wales - promoting groups)

**What country is your group based in?**

- ENGLAND**
- NORTHERN IRELAND**
- SCOTLAND**

## WALES

What type of group are you?

PERFORMING

PROMOTING

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On **22 September**, following new coronavirus measures announced by the Prime Minister, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) confirmed in their Coronavirus outbreak FAQs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>) that there has been no change to the guidance for amateur music groups. Groups can continue to meet to rehearse and perform. The FAQ reads in full:

### ***3.18 Can I go to my hobby club / amateur musical group / other leisure activity?***

*It is against the law to gather in groups of more than 6, where people are from different households or support bubbles. Some activities - such as those organised for under-18s - are exempt. In a COVID-19 Secure venue or public outdoor place, non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time.*

*If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.*

Music groups can continue to rehearse and perform in line with the government's existing Performing Arts – Working Safely During Coronavirus guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>), which was updated on 17 September and explicitly states:

*“Confirmed that from 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.”* (new section in Introduction)

The 'sub-groups of no more than 6' are causing some confusion when related to rehearsals. It is clearer for performances – you should not take a group booking of more than 6, and that group then needs to be socially distanced from the next sub-group.

In rehearsals, however, you should think of your 'sub-groups' as sub-groups of 1 attending your rehearsal (unless they are parent/child or partners or flatmates from same household). In other words, **every single person in a rehearsal should be socially distanced at all times from every single other person in a rehearsal – and during breaks, arrival, departure and**

**bathroom queue.** See our guidance and risk assessment template (<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/risk-assessment-covid-secure-rehearsals>) for more detail.

Updates have been published to the Coronavirus (COVID-19): Meeting with others safely (social distancing) guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>), which is aimed at individuals and their behaviour. Amongst other things it states that “venues following COVID-19 secure guidelines will be able to continue to host more people in total.”

The DCMS guidance says *"both professionals and non-professionals (meaning those participating in performing arts other than for work purposes), or groups which include non-professionals, should refer to this guidance for their activities."*

And:

*"Within this guidance there are no set limits on the numbers who can be involved in planned non-professional activity taking place outside and/or in a Covid-secure venue."... "However, organisations must ensure an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment is carried out and that the numbers of individuals involved are able to be socially distanced at all times. Organisations and venues will want to minimise the risk as far as possible and this guidance sets out a number of mitigations that should be considered when doing so."*

## **Social distancing**

*"Non-professional activities should not take place that require social distancing to be compromised."* (Introduction section).

And:

*"Non-professionals are restricted by rules on meeting with others safely. This means that non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place."*

This wording is stronger than the previous version and emphasises what is referred to in the FAQ quoted above, namely that **there is to be absolutely no mingling. If there is any mingling, activity cannot take place.**

## **The 7 priority actions you must take as an organisation**

1. **Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment.** Share it with all your stakeholders.
2. **Clean more often.** Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask your participants, professionals and volunteers to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.

3. **Ask your participants to wear face coverings** in any indoor space or where required to do so by law...Some exemptions apply. Check when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).
4. **Make sure everyone is social distancing.** Make it easy for everyone to do so by putting up signs or introducing a one way system that they can follow.
5. **Increase ventilation** by keeping doors and windows open where possible and running ventilation systems at all times.
6. **Take part in NHS Test and Trace** by keeping a record of all your attendees for 21 days. From 18 September, this will be enforced in law. Some exemptions apply. Check Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>) for details. **\*Please note: you must register for an official NHS QR code and display the official NHS QR poster from 24 September 2020. Find out how on the government's website (<https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster>)\***
7. **Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away.** If an attendee (or someone in their household) has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell, they should be isolating.

There is other government guidance specific to community groups and community activity (that the DCMS guidance does not specifically refer to):

Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities states (section 3.c) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>) then refers back to the DCMS performing arts guidelines. It now says, confusingly:

*“However, for activities and social groups where there is a significant likelihood of groups mixing and socialising (and where it will be difficult to prevent mingling and therefore breaking the law) should not take place in a community facility. These may include but are not limited to:*

- *formal or informal clubs and hobby clubs (e.g. women’s institute, veteran’s associations, freemasons, sewing clubs, book clubs, crafts clubs, reading groups)*
- *amateur choirs and orchestras*
- *informally organised sport activities on facilities grounds (professionally organised sport activities are exempt)*

But then it says later in the same paragraph:

*“Community facilities are now permitted to host socially distanced indoor and outdoor performances in line with the performing arts guidance.”* (which currently has professionals and non-professionals on an equal footing)

And

*“Both professionals and non-professionals can now engage in singing, wind and brass in line with the performing arts guidance.”*

ACRE (Action in Communities in Rural England) have issued guidance to the village halls in their membership that they can host community groups, including amateur music groups, provided there is strict social distancing.

## **What can music groups do?**

Groups can host in-person rehearsals, indoors or outdoors, provided they undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and put in place strong risk mitigation measures. Specifically, groups need to spell out that there is to be no social interaction (no mingling) and put measures in place to prevent this happening.

It is crucial in order to ensure for continuing permission to meet for individual groups and for the whole sector that groups avoid any mingling (=social interaction at less than 2 metres distance) during their rehearsals.

New is also the mandatory requirement from 24 September to display an NHS Test & Trace poster with a QR code relating to your event(s) (read: rehearsals). You can generate the code and poster online (<https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster>).

You still have an obligation to collect information offline for people without a smartphone or who do not wish to use the NHS app.



You should at the very least be implementing the 7 priority actions now listed at the beginning of the DCMS performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).

Please refer to Making Music's risk assessment and guidance (<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/risk-assessment-covid-secure-rehearsals>) for full details

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**Posted on 15 Sep 2020**

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