

Good news: it's now possible to BringBackMyChoir

Making Music warmly welcomes the update published by DCMS to their performing arts guidance for England on 13 August.

While there are still special (important and appropriate) caveats relating to amateur music activity, the outright ban has been removed. Choirs, bands and orchestras are now able to meet again for rehearsals, provided that social distancing of 2m can be maintained at all times and certain other conditions are met.

Social interaction is still to be minimised and kept to a maximum of 6 people from different households, but groups can now meet to rehearse in a larger number than that.

Groups of 30 – and even more, if organised by a registered charity or company – are now allowed to come together, provided certain measures are in place and the venue is Covid-19 secure.

The updated DCMS guidance (as of 13 August) says all non-professional music groups can now meet and rehearse.

These are some crucial bits from the new guidance to bear in mind:

Limit numbers and social interaction as far as possible

Non-professionals must meet in line with official advice about meeting people outside your home.

You should also limit the duration of social interaction opportunities as far as possible.

Social distancing

The guidance gives leeway for professional groups to meet without maintaining social distancing. But is clear that:

“Non-professionals should not engage in activities that may lead to social distancing being compromised”

Taking steps to improve ventilation as far as possible and whenever possible, both through the use of mechanical systems and opening windows and doors

Continue to take the other vital steps outlined in the DCMS guidance, including making sure unwell people do not attend, maintaining cleanliness, supporting contact tracing and other mitigating measures.

Clubs or groups can begin to meet again in COVID-19 secure venues. However, you should take care to remain socially distant from anyone you do not live with or is not in your support bubble. You should also limit social interaction with anyone outside of these formal activities even if you see other people you know. Venues should ensure they comply with COVID-19 secure guidelines.

It's against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces), or in a public outdoors space, unless planned by an organisation in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidance. The government will be introducing fines for those who facilitate or organise illegal gatherings of over 30 people."

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do states (section 3.8):

"Can I attend an activity club or support group?"

Yes, you can. Premises such as activity clubs, community centres and youth clubs can reopen, and should follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines. It is important to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene in these circumstances.

Outside of these formal activities, to help control the virus, you should limit your interactions with those you don't live with."

Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities states (section 3.c):

"Clubs or groups that use community facilities can begin to meet again and facility managers should follow these COVID-19 secure guidelines to facilitate that.

Premises or locations following COVID-19 secure guidelines will be able to hold more than 30 people, subject to their own capacity limits. It is important for people to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene when visiting these spaces. People using community facilities should continue to limit their interactions with those they do not live with outside of any formal activities they are participating in to help control the virus.

People meeting in a club or group context at a community centre should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble...

DCMS have recently (21 August) added to and clarified the introduction section of their guidance:

"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. This is in line with guidance on "gatherings in Covid-19 secure venues" in the meeting people from outside your home guidance. 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."

Guidance on meeting socially says that "Social interactions should be limited to a group of no more than two households (indoors and out) or up to six people from different households (if outdoors)." That means chatting before or after rehearsals or during the break should be limited to these numbers (and in fact we would suggest, for clarity and simplicity, that 2m social distancing is never compromised). But for the musical activity there is not set number. So:

Yes to outdoor rehearsals in a public space with no limit on numbers - if planned by an organisation in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidance (and you complete a risk assessment and have mitigating measures in place).

Yes to indoor rehearsals with no limit on numbers provided the venue follows Covid-19 secure guidelines (and you complete a risk assessment and have mitigating measures in place).

Any music activity by non-professionals should not compromise social distancing of 2m at any time – not just during rehearsals, also during arrival/departure, breaks.

Risk assessment and measures in place

If your group is planning any activity you must consult with your members, carry out a risk assessment, follow COVID-secure guidelines, not compromise social distancing and have measures in place to minimise risk. Please see the completed RA document.

Sing4Joy Choir

Guidelines to participants returning to rehearsals at Hampton Bishop Hall from Tuesday 8th September 2020

- If you have – or have had in the past 7 days – any possible symptoms of Covid-19 (such as fever, persistent dry cough, loss of taste or smell) or general cold or flu like symptoms, then you cannot attend a rehearsal until after the isolation period. <https://111.nhs.uk/service/covid-19> for guidance on self-isolation and when to seek further help.
- Are you classified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable? If yes, you should be aware of the government guidelines on your enhanced level of risk should you develop Covid-19 and that, in accordance with those guidelines, you may be advised to not attend any rehearsals.
- If, after the rehearsal, you or any member of your household develop any symptoms of Covid-19, or test positive for the virus, then please inform your Music Director as soon as possible. Likewise, if someone develops symptoms then the Music Director will contact you as soon as possible so that you can take appropriate precautions.
- Please be aware that if your Music Director tests positive for the virus then this would automatically place them in communication with the local NHS Track and Trace Service. This means they would be required to inform this service about any close/face-to-face contacts they have had in the 48 hours prior to developing symptoms. Please be assured that only the necessary and minimum amount of information would be given for the NHS/Public Health data collection.
- Social distancing of 2m to be maintained at any time – not just during rehearsals, also during arrival/departure.
- You are encouraged to wear a face covering. There is no formal reference in the guidelines for masks to be worn during singing. You are advised to wear a mask at all other times when not singing. However, masks can be worn during singing time.
- There has been discussion regarding singing at loud volumes increasing the level of droplets expelled when singing and taken in when breathing. You will only be required to sing at a 'normal' level of no louder than mf – mezzo forte.
- Windows and doors will be kept open during rehearsals. As we are approaching autumn/winter, please wear/bring appropriate clothing to keep warm. It is advised not to use fans and so this will apply to the fan heaters in the main hall.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided on entry and exit. If possible, please carry your own travel size bottle.
- A one-way system is to be used – enter via main entrance and hall door, go straight to a seat and exit via the fire door as shown on the floor plan.

- Chairs will be spaced 2m apart in a single row. (please see hall floor plan for rehearsals for further information). Sopranos to sit the side closest to the kitchen hatch and altos on the far side of the hall.
- Please keep all keys, phones etc in your bag or pockets.
- Try not to touch your face or eyes with your hands, if you do then please sanitise your hands.
- Bring your own drink as there will be no interval and the kitchen is not to be used.
- Social interaction with others will be limited compared to ‘normal’ rehearsals.
- Only one person at a time is permitted to use the bathroom.
- The Music Director will be responsible for cleaning all contact surfaces both before and after each rehearsal. The Music Director will setup the hall and as chairs will need to be wiped down, the Music Director will pack these away.
- The option to attend remotely will still be available for those who cannot attend in person. The hall now has broadband and so you can join in via ZOOM. Please let your Music Director know so that the call can be initiated at the usual time of 7:30pm.

SING4JOY CHOIR—HALL LAYOUT WHEN RETURNING TO REHEARSALS FROM SEPTEMBER 2020—COVID-19

