

Cockermouth Town Council

Risk Assessment regarding conducting small marriages and civil partnerships in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall in Cockermouth

Background

With the general easing of national Covid-19 regulations on 19 July, there is an increasing emphasis on personal responsibility for control of the virus. This applies to individuals but also to organisations that will have to decide their own policies with regard to infection prevention and control measures. Guidance has been issued by Public Health in Cumbria to support local organisations in reaching decisions about such policies, with a specific focus on those areas where national regulations will be lifted after 19 July 2021.

Summary of national regulations

While the majority of Covid-19 specific restrictions will no longer be legal requirements after 19 July 2021, it is important to note that other existing regulations continue to apply and that Covid-19 still needs to be considered in the context of those regulations. In particular, the Health and Safety at Work Act places a duty on employers to protect their employees from harm, including harm from communicable disease.

The number of covid cases in Allerdale is currently higher than we would like.

As such, workplaces should still have a Covid-19 risk assessment in place setting out the ways in which Covid-19 could be transmitted in the workplace and the ways in which these risks are being mitigated.

Venue managers have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and the officiant must be content that it is safe to proceed.

Cumbria County Council has sent a list of venue requirements for its officiants. These are in addition to those required by the licence.

Response to individual cases or symptoms

People who become symptomatic are still required to self-isolate and take a PCR test. If that test comes back negative they can return to work. If positive they must continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms. This remains a legal requirement and employers must not prevent employees from self-isolating.

People who test positive while not being symptomatic are still required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the sample being taken. Again this remains a legal requirement. Financial support is available for those on lower incomes who may lose out through self-isolation.

Contacts

People who are identified as close contacts by the national or local Contact Tracing service and told to self-isolate are still legally required to do so unless specifically exempted, for example as part of a national “test to release” pilot.

Management of outbreaks

Where an outbreak is suspected associated with a workplace (or other setting) – i.e. when there is suspicion of transmission happening within the setting – support will be provided by local Environmental Health Teams and the Public Health Team.

Key Principle	Government Guidance/officiant requests	Assessment	Conclusion
General Maintenance Issues following Lockdown	Ensure equipment is safe to use and that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.	Town Clerk inspected the premises on 3/7/2021.	No issues identified. Daily inspections will continue as standard and issues identified will be actioned.

Car Parking	CCC require two car park spaces close to the venue as registrars will travel separately	Member of staff on duty to check car park prior to each wedding to ensure 2 spaces are available. Area to be coned off.	All these measures will be adopted.
Social Distancing	<p>Physical distancing remains a valuable control and many people feel more comfortable maintaining a degree of distance from others. Supporting people who wish to maintain such distancing is therefore a matter of courtesy and respect.</p> <p>Where practicable physical distancing measures will be maintained until the current wave has substantially reduced.</p> <p>Examples given include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting • Signage • Changing layouts • Reducing numbers • Improving ventilation • Avoiding property belonging to others 	<p>FACE COVERINGS-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to the risks posed by the COVID-19 Omicron variant, the government has announced that, with effect from 10 December 2021, face coverings will be required by law in most indoor settings. <p>We respectfully request that all guests attending marriage, civil partnership, renewal of vows and citizenship ceremonies to comply with the guidance by wearing face coverings during ceremonies in our venue.</p> <p>The couple, children under the age of 11, medically exempted and the person conducting the ceremony are exempt from the wearing of face coverings, unless they choose to do so.</p>	All these measures will be adopted.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change room layout of pre-wedding interview room to ensure layout is socially distanced between the couple/registration staff• 2m distance between registrar/couple/guests• 2m distance between the photographer and registrars	
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Cleaning and Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitising station to be placed at Main entrance. • Toilet facilities at the venue should be used in line with hygiene measures applied. • Shared items required for the solemnisation of the marriage or the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage to be placed in Toilet • Additional cleaning products to be placed in toilet • Frequency of toilet cleaning to be increased • Hand Sanitiser/wipes to be located on table for 	<p>Amend booking/form hire agreement.</p> <p>Discuss in detail with Hirer(s) prior to wedding.</p>

	<p>formation of a civil partnership e.g. ring should be handled by as few people as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single use service sheets if used should be removed by the hirer 	<p>writing/signing and pre-wedding interview room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single use service sheets 	
<p>Guidance for vulnerable or symptomatic individuals – focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable or more likely to develop severe illness</p>	<p>All guests or those involved in the ceremony should stay at home and self-isolate if they are showing symptoms of covid-19, have tested positive or have been instructed to self-isolate. This is to minimise the risk of spreading COVID 19 to friends, the wider community and the vulnerable</p>	<p>Information to be issued Hirer upon booking</p>	<p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
<p>Young People and children</p>	<p>Parents or guardians should supervise young people and children. Parent to ensure they wash their children's hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use hand sanitiser</p>	<p>Particular attention should be paid to cleaning frequently touched surfaces by children and those that are at child height</p>	<p>Cleaner to be informed of requirement.</p> <p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
<p>Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments</p>	<p>Prior notification of singing, chanting and/or the use of musical instruments recommended.</p>	<p>The use of plexi-glass screen should be considered to protect guests as this will further prevent transmission</p>	<p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>

		and the screen can be easily cleaned.	
If someone becomes unwell at the venue	<p>If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID – 19 at the venue they should go home and be advised to follow the stay at home guidance. If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111. In an emergency call 999 if they are seriously ill. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital</p> <p>Other people who may have been in contact with a person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction</p> <p>They do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace.</p>	Inform staff and hirer of advice prior to wedding.	<p>Staff to be informed of procedure.</p> <p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
Keeping Staff Safe	Consider the risks staff may be exposed to and how these can be mitigated. Staff roles may include:	Appropriate PPE will be worn by any member of staff. Appropriate hand washing/sanitising will be observed.	Staff to be always issued with appropriate PPE and be reminded to observe appropriate hand washing/sanitising.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting bride/groom/guests • Marshalling • Playing of music • Ensure visitors comply with safety measures • Regular cleaning 	Staff to socially distance	
Contractor	<p>Consider risks contractor may be exposed to and how they can be mitigated. Contractor roles may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • damaged or defective equipment 	Contractor to carry out their own risk assessment	Town Clerk to examine and keep a copy of risk assessment provided.
Test and Trace	The Director of Public Health in Cumbria is recommending that Venue Managers continue to keep an accurate record of visitors for 21 days to assist with NHS Test and Trace	We will work with all relevant bodies to make the process for recording visitors' compliant with data protection legislation.	<p>An accurate record of visitors will be requested from the Bride/Groom prior to the wedding/civil partnership. This information will be checked on the day for accuracy and confidentially shredded after 21 days.</p> <p>Contact A Bailey, CCC for contact details of registrars on duty.</p>

Conclusions

I believe that if Cockermouth Town Council put in place the measures suggested above, we can manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and conduct small marriages and civic partnerships in accordance with the legislation and requests of Officiant.

This risk assessment will be reviewed and retained following any future alteration to governmental regulations.

Risk Assessments undertaken by Clerk & RFO Mrs Sheila Brown and amended guidance on face coverings by Kirstie Goodger. Approved by a majority response from all councillors via email.

4th January 2022

We recommend that you check the most up to date information from the government, which can be found on the www.gov.uk website “Covid-19: Guidance for small marriage and civil partnership” Cokermonth Town Hall takes no responsibility for ensuring couples understand and adhere to the Governments published guidance. Please note the registrars on duty reserve the right to refuse to go ahead with a ceremony where they do not believe safety measures and guidance have been implanted or followed.