

Risk assessment for COVID secure rehearsals

 makingmusic.org.uk/resource/risk-assessment-covid-secure-rehearsals



After more than a year of constantly changing regulations in all four nations of the UK, we have rewritten this guide and brought it in line with the guidance and thinking on Covid-19 transmission risks, and how to mitigate against them.

Previously all four UK nations issued sector specific guidance for the arts. These have been replaced and groups should now follow the more general guidance for their specific nation. These are:

- England: [Events and attractions guidance](#).
- Northern Ireland: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) regulations and guidance: what they mean for you](#).
- Scotland: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer businesses and workplaces](#)
- Wales: [Alert level 0: guidance for employers, businesses and organisations](#).

None of these specifically mention leisure-time music activity - but they are the relevant guidance for venues and groups organising activities in those venues.

This guidance is based on the [Events and attractions guidance](#) for England. Although it is for England, the principles apply for all UK nations.

See our [guidance tool](#) for more information on the nation specific guidance.

But if all restrictions are being removed, why would we still need to do a risk assessment and put mitigations in place?

Covid-19 is still with us and new variants are still emerging. All activity is now permitted (soon in all four UK nations), but that does not mean it is permitted without any consideration for the transmission risks which that activity may bring with it.

As the people in charge of a music group, you continue to have a duty of care towards your members and participants when you organise activities and events.

Making Music is here to help. While this guidance page does not write the risk assessment for you, it raises the questions your group should be asking itself and gives you possible mitigation solutions to the risk of Covid-19 being transmitted at a rehearsal of your group.

Government guidance in all nations is increasingly placing the responsibility at organisations' door to assess Covid transmission risks and to mitigate them appropriately.

This is good news: every music group is different, has different kinds of participants and is based in a different geographical location. A risk assessment means you can assess the unique nature of your group and put the relevant mitigations in place to serve those requirements.

But: it means you have to do the thinking and planning – the governments are not doing it for you. We have created this document to help you with that.

Please also note this guidance is about rehearsals, or other group activity not involving a live audience. For performances with an audience see our [separate risk assessment guidance](#).

Section one: Key questions to address

1. What are you allowed to do?

At the moment we in a period where most restrictions are being lifted in all four nations, but they may well return and/or continue to differ across the UK, so [check our guidance tool](#) once a week for changes – we update this constantly with new information.

2. What is the situation in your area?

At the moment all guidance is national with no local restrictions. But keeping an eye on data in your area can help inform what you do. A surge in hospitalisations might make you consider cancelling rehearsal that week. The [government coronavirus data summary](#), updated daily, allows you to drill down into postcodes and local areas.

3. What are you trying to achieve with your risk assessment and mitigations?

- That no-one who is knowingly infectious attends your activity
- That if someone (who is unknowingly) infectious attends, no-one else gets infected from that person

4. What are the risks now considered to be?

- Aerosols. These pose the biggest risk. They are the smallest particles that we breathe out and carry the virus if we have Covid.
 - Being lighter than air, they will float around according to the air flow in that space. Unless you're a physicist, it will be hard to work out whether the airstream from the violins will end up in the clarinets or the French horns.
 - Being so light, they also linger in the air for much longer than larger particles. Think cigarette smoke or perfume, which you can often detect in a room long after the smoker or scented person has left.
 - Mitigations:
 - good ventilation is the best mitigation ([see Ventilation](#))
 - face coverings ([see Face coverings](#))
- Droplets. These are larger and heavier particles than aerosols and can vary in size.
 - Because these are heavier they fall to the ground sooner, but you don't know quite where or when. There is evidence to show that larger particles do not travel beyond 1 to 2 metres from the originating person, hence the previous requirement for 2 metres social distancing.
 - Mitigations:
 - keep some distance ([see Social distancing](#))
 - reduce contact and the length of contact between people
 - screens or barriers
 - face coverings ([see Face covering](#))
- Surfaces. They could be contaminated if someone had sneezed or coughed on them or touched them.
 - Mitigations:
 - hand washing/hand sanitising
 - frequent cleaning of surfaces

5. Do you want to present a plan to members for their views / input, or do you want to ask them what they want / what would make them feel comfortable before creating your plan?

Asking members their views is vital. But exactly how you do that is worth considering. Asking members first definitely gives them a chance to have their full say, but could leave you with a range of conflicting views that are difficult to balance and accommodate on a practical and financial level.

Presenting a plan and allowing members to comment still gives them a say but might help focus their views. How you present it will be important as members could feel railroaded and not properly consulted. Some who disagree might not feel able to say so once they see a plan and just stay away instead. There could be a 'third way' of putting a plan to members with options on details. And, of course, if the overwhelming message is that the plans are not right you still have to listen that.

a) If you are asking members first: what measures will make them feel comfortable coming back?

b) If you are presenting a plan you will need to decide some key things first, including whether you intend to keep some measures that might no longer be required (depending on the nation):

- Social distancing – helps mitigate droplet risk, and there is a case to be made for keeping some distancing (e.g. 1 metre - [see Social Distancing](#))
- Face coverings – helps mitigate aerosol and droplet risk, and there is a case to be made for using them indoors, especially in small, crowded spaces with bad ventilation. ([see Face coverings](#))
- Vaccinations - these are a key reason for the easing of restrictions. As more people are vaccinated, the risks of getting Covid from and spreading Covid to others are reduced. But they do not mean you can remove other mitigations, and you need to be careful about using vaccination levels in your group to inform plans ([see Vaccination and testing status](#)).

6. Is the venue suitable and as safe as it can be?

This will depend to some extent on the mitigations you want. Key considerations:

- Ventilation – this is crucial and you should not compromise on it ([see Ventilation](#)); is it possible to achieve acceptable ventilation; what is the gap between users/hirers and the airing regime; and who is responsible?
- Cleanliness – what happens between users/hirers and who is responsible?
- Size – is it still suitable if you have to / want to maintain some degree of distancing?
- Approach: are they on top of their own risk assessments and procedures?

Read the [Making Music resource on finding a venue](#).

7. There may be an ideal plan – but can you afford it in terms of time and money?

If members all want you to keep 2 metres social distancing but that would mean a much larger venue at more cost – is that realistic?

If you need lots more volunteers to run rehearsals safely if everyone comes: do you have these volunteers?

Balance that against your members' needs in terms of mental and physical well-being and against the group's aims of keeping everyone engaged and the group viable into the future

8. The musical questions

- Quality of playing/singing. Will that have been impacted? Do you need to rebuild slowly so that people don't get too frustrated or lose confidence?

- Repertoire. Therefore... is it best to just meet for rehearsals for a term and refresh the music you already know or is it best to programme a concert and have something to aim for, or challenge yourself with a new commission or other music you are unfamiliar with?
 - If not everyone is ready to return will you consider hybrid rehearsals? Read the [Making Music resource](#) and [case study](#) on hybrid rehearsals.
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Section two: Key conversations to have

The committee

The group of people in charge of your organisation are all responsible, so they need to agree a plan of action together. They will be the ones making the key decisions above and so they should be the first people to meet.

Make sure that everyone understands that they will be contributing and participating in decision-making. even if you appoint one 'Covid-19 guru', you are still all responsible, so make sure that person or that sub-committee keeps the whole committee informed of what they are doing.

The musical director/conductor/accompanist/other relevant professionals

Talk to these people about their personal situation. They will have to make a choice about whether they want to meet in person or not and what level of mitigations will make them feel comfortable. They might not want to and that is of course fair enough but if members want to and you feel it is safe that shouldn't stop you – perhaps you need a different (interim) MD.

Discuss their professional position. It is possible not everyone in the group will return to in-person rehearsals and you may be considering hybrid rehearsals. These will need buy-in from your MD. This is also good to establish in case there is a return of restrictions on in-person activities or indeed to full lock-down.

Members

Why you should ask your members

- Some members might be happy to leave all the decision-making to the committee, others may be desperate to give you their views. Either way, your group is nothing without its members. Keeping them involved and on board (all of them ideally!) is a paramount consideration which informs how you move forward
- Covid-19 is a divisive issue and, without asking, you won't know where most of your members sit on the scale of 'very worried' to 'not worried at all'. Finding out as precisely as you can will also help you decide if you need to plan for hybrid rehearsals, or find a new venue, etc.

- Having evidence will help you implement your plans. If 80% of your members say they want to maintain, say, social distancing; then the other 20% will probably accept that, on the grounds that they are in a clear minority.

What to ask members

Essentially you are finding out if your members are ready for in-person activity, and what would make them comfortable enough to attend. You will need to decide whether to do this by giving them a plan to comment / feedback on, or by asking more openly (e.g. giving them options as to length of rehearsals). But the overall aim is to find out what it will take for your group to get its members back into a physical rehearsal space.

How to ask members

Make sure everyone gets a say, so if you use our survey but not everyone is responding online, then send out a paper form, get on the phone, or find out members' views in other ways. The quiet ones aren't necessarily just happy, they may be intimidated by the more vocal ones, or worry that their view will be unpopular with the rest of the group. Offer anonymity where possible. Make sure they know that the committee wants to please everyone as far as it can, and that even if it doesn't manage that, it does want to have the full information from everyone in front of it before planning and deciding.

Whether drawn from the membership or not, don't forget to talk to the volunteers who may be exposing themselves to a greater risk such as setting out the chairs, doing cleaning or checking people into rehearsals. Make sure you have protocols for them and provide them with the PPE they would like (e.g. latex gloves).

Rehearsal/meeting space

Your working relationship with the venue you usually rehearse in is very important. Start your conversations early to make sure you have a clear picture of whether they are happy to have you back, what they would expect of you and who is responsible for what.

The venue will want to be sure that you have systems in place which work alongside theirs seamlessly and don't compromise their own risk assessment. They will not just be thinking about your group, but all the other groups using their venue throughout the day and the week, so they will be designing systems and protocols to manage the varied risks associated with a multiple use venue.

But you will also want – and need – to be sure that the venue is fulfilling its duties to keep the public safe, so that your activity can take place in the manner that you consider to be safe. So:

- Ask to see their risk assessment and/or ask them what they are doing with regard to the 6 priority actions (see section below).
- Go and see what they have in place for yourself and in particular to discuss ventilation (see Ventilation below). You may want to do this with a CO2 monitor, to measure air quality.

- Of particular interest to you will also be what is happening in the space before you arrive and whether there is a cleaning and ventilation plan in place between different occupants of the space.
- Be flexible when you can, as they will probably be juggling a lot of different hirers, but if you are unhappy about their risk assessment and don't consider them a safe venue, take action: either plan for your group to make the space safe (e.g. arriving early to ventilate properly) or consider a different venue – you are responsible for your group and your participants.
- The other aspect to consider (raised by the [Events Research Programme](#)) is not just to think about your group once they're in the space and sitting down, but where in the venue there are pinch points, e.g. entrance/exit, toilets, where the break takes place etc. It is still desirable to avoid bunching people in close proximity; you can manage such pinch points if you are aware of them, so look at your venue with fresh eyes.

Section three: Key considerations

Face coverings

It is worth quoting the [entire section from the guidance](#):

"Encourage customers and visitors to wear face coverings, for example through signage, if your facility or event is likely to include enclosed and crowded spaces.

Face coverings are no longer required by law, but the government expects and recommends that people should continue to wear them in crowded and enclosed settings, to protect themselves and others. Where worn correctly, this can reduce the risk of transmission.

Your workers may choose to wear a face covering in the workplace. You should support them in doing so, and ensure they are aware of guidance on using face coverings safely.

Consider recommending the use of face coverings by workers and customers as a safety measure, in enclosed and crowded spaces where they may come into contact with people they don't normally meet. When deciding whether you will ask workers or customers to wear face coverings:

- *You need to consider the reasonable adjustments needed for workers and customers with disabilities. You also need to carefully consider how this fits with other obligations to workers and customers arising from the law on employment rights, health and safety and equality legislation.*
- *You should not ask people to wear face coverings while taking part in any strenuous activity or sport.*

- *Remember that some people are not able to wear face coverings, and the reasons for this may not be visible to others. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances. Be aware that face coverings may make it harder to communicate with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound."*

So it is clear that there is no legal requirement to wear them (in England), but that you should most certainly consider and debate the use of face coverings if rehearsing indoors, particularly for vocal groups

Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said that he himself would continue wearing one in 3 instances:

- Crowded badly ventilated indoor places where he was mixing with people he didn't normally meet
- If someone in authority who he trusted asked him to
- When it made others uncomfortable if he wasn't wearing one.

The first and last one of these may be relevant to your group or should certainly be discussed before you take a decision.

There is a recurring theme in all the new guidance about not discriminating against people with protected characteristics, so you should consider this for every measure you consider, including this one.

Get a [discount on Sing Safe face coverings.](#)

Ventilation

Because of the increased awareness of the role of aerosols in Covid-19 transmission, the scientists advising government are placing more emphasis on ventilation as a tool in avoiding outbreaks.

- Outdoor activity is preferable as transmission risks are a fraction of those in enclosed spaces. Scientific advisors are particularly worried about the autumn/winter when people will increasingly congregate indoors and are more likely to close doors and windows against the cold.
- Indoor activity in general presents a higher risk, but is worse when it's crowded. Mitigations that reduce the number of people and time spent indoors can help here. Research also shows that a one off event with a large number of people is less likely to cause an outbreak than frequent events with smaller numbers – so you could even consider fortnightly instead of weekly rehearsals.
- Indoor activity presents a particularly high risk if badly ventilated. We are already seeing a lot more emphasis on ventilation and this is likely to increase (see [Risk assessment: Provide adequate ventilation](#) for information on how to ventilate).

Discrimination

There is some emphasis in new guidance reminding venues and organisations that they must not discriminate against people with protected characteristics. The quote below from the '[Managing your workforce](#)' section of the guidance references workers, but it would be equally applicable to volunteers and participants.

"Consider the impact of your policies on your workers.

- *Provide clear, consistent and regular communication to workers of any relevant safety measures or changes to policy/procedure. Engage with workers and worker representatives to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.*
- *Consider how this will affect staff with protected characteristics, and any adjustments you should make to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation.*
- *It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, ethnicity, sex or disability. Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.*
- *Discuss with disabled employees what reasonable adjustments can be made to the workplace so they can work safely.*
- *Assess the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.*
- *Make sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments."*

Read the Making Music resource on [An inclusive approach to COVID-secure activity](#).

Vaccination and test status

The vaccination and testing status of an individual does have a bearing on the risk they are exposed to and the risk they present to others. So both can be useful tools for your risk assessment.

- Someone who is double jabbed is less likely to get seriously ill from Covid and is less likely to spread Covid to others.
- Someone who has recently tested negative with a lateral flow test is less likely to be infectious.

But you have to be careful how you use this information to inform your plan:

- Vaccination and testing are measures to go alongside others, not to replace them. So a room full of vaccinated people should still have mitigations in place, for now.
- Collecting data opens you up to data protection issues.
- Excluding people based on status opens you up to discrimination and reputational risks.

What are the options for finding out people's status?

1. NHS COVID Pass/vaccination certification (differs in the four nations)

The NHS COVID Pass is a way an individual in England can demonstrate that they are fully vaccinated, have had a recent negative test, or have natural immunity. Certification in the other nations is currently not as easy to obtain or comprehensive (e.g. just vaccination status).

Find out more about Covid certification in:

- [England](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

The Event and Attractions guidance (England) says organisations can consider asking individuals to show their NHS COVID Pass. The [NHS COVID Pass guidance](#) says:

"Use of the NHS COVID Pass is voluntary for individual organisations. However, we encourage the use of the NHS COVID Pass in facilities or events where people are likely to be in close proximity to a large number of people from other households for a sustained period of time. This is likely to include settings that have the following characteristics:

- *crowded indoor settings such as nightclubs and music venues*
- *large unstructured outdoor events such as business events and festivals*
- *very large structured events such as business events, music and spectator sport events"*

So, you don't have to use it and a rehearsal would be unlikely to meet the event criteria listed above. But groups do have the option of asking members to show an NHS COVID Pass/vaccine certification. The key things to consider are:

- People don't have to have the vaccine, or the answer.
- If they have not been vaccinated/won't answer, what will you do?
- If you exclude on this basis, you would be in danger of discriminating against protected characteristics, e.g. age (not everyone can have the vaccine).
- Exclusion could be a difficult situation to manage that creates division in your group and has a reputational impact. Using vaccination status as a condition might actually create more problems than than it solves.
- Vaccination status is not a replacement for other measures. The measures you should have in place anyway will protect members, vaccinated or not.
- There is no issue here with collecting or storing medical data if you are only looking at their pass/status document, not keeping that information.

2. Ask members about their vaccination and/or test status (e.g. a survey).

- This has the same issues as above regarding requiring people to do it and excluding people on the basis of their answer or lack of answer
- If you ask for people's names it creates a data protection issue, as you would be asking for and storing sensitive personal (medical) data

3. Ask anonymously

We believe that encouraging members to take up vaccines and do regular lateral flow testing, and finding out (anonymously) whether they have had vaccinations and/or are doing regular lateral flow testing is the best way forward.

- This approach assumes you are not excluding people, so removes the issues and risk associated with exclusion, and avoids antagonising your members
- It also removes the issue of storing sensitive data as it would be anonymous
- But it would give you useful data to reflect back to the whole group – e.g. 85% of members are double vaccinated/90% are doing regular tests twice a week - so that should make those who haven't had the vaccine (for whatever reason) or who are vaccinated but still nervous feel comfortable in attending rehearsals.
- You may wish to repeat the questions (always anonymously) after 3 or 4 months, as the percentage is likely to have changed with continued rollout and/or if lateral flow tests become less easily accessible for people.

Personal responsibility of attendees

You, the committee, is responsible for the group activity that happens in a specific place at a specific time. But individuals have to take responsibility also, for:

- making sure they don't attend if:
 - they have Covid symptoms - or indeed symptoms which could be related to any respiratory disease, such as flu or colds
 - they have tested positive
 - someone they have close contact with has tested positive
 - they have been told to self-isolate
 - they have had a recent positive lateral flow test.
- their transport to rehearsals. You can perhaps provide guidance – e.g. car sharing vs public transport vs cycling etc., but ultimately individuals have to take responsibility for that.
- their own health. You can mitigate and minimise risks, but you can never eliminate the risk completely that they may be exposed to Covid-19 in the rehearsal room. They need to be aware of that and choose to attend – or not – depending on their own personal circumstances and health.
- their behaviour at the rehearsal or activity you have organised. Provided they receive clear instructions from you as to what they should do and how they should behave (e.g. use hand sanitiser, go outside for the break etc.), then you are fully within your rights to pull them up on their behaviour if they do not conform to those rules. And indeed to make it clear that if there is repeated breach of rules that you may ask them to leave.

Social distancing

It is now no longer a requirement to socially distance in any of the UK nations, but many people are anxious about it and you might decide, or members might request, to keep some level of social distancing. Or you may decide just to ask everyone to give others space and not to assume that suddenly hugging and kisses on the cheek are back on the agenda.

Whatever the decision, you should communicate the approach clearly and ask that people are sensitive to others in the group who may feel different about personal interactions to the way they feel themselves.

See [Risk assessment: Social distancing for more detail](#)

Monitoring cases

To help us make the case for the safety of leisure-time music should restrictions return, we are asking groups to use the WellRehearsed app. It's a free and anonymous rehearsal Covid-19 infection reporting app for leisure-time music groups of all kinds, instrumental and vocal, developed by the Association of British Choral Directors (*abcd*) and Making Music.

It provides statistics on safe group music making during the pandemic, and will help your group, and the sector, in two ways:

- Gathering large amounts of data which can demonstrate the rate and likelihood of Covid infections from making music in a group.
- If anyone does get Covid following an in-person rehearsal, the information it provides will help *abcd* and Making Music to quickly update our protocols accordingly, giving you the most up-to-date advice on how to protect your group.

[Find out more about WellRehearsed.](#)

Section four: Risk assessment

There are 6 priority actions you are asked to take in the guidance to keep attendees safe. These are listed first immediately below.

There are additional points you are asked to consider:

- Each transmission risk (aerosol, droplets, surfaces) and your proposed mitigations (see [What are the risks now considered to be](#), for details)
- A plan in case someone is taken ill at your event or reports symptoms or a positive test shortly after your event. See [separate guidance](#) about this.
- The impact of your plan on people with protected characteristics
- The specific risks of singing, if your group is a vocal group
- The specific risks identified in relation to events (this would include rehearsals)
- Venue traffic flow and pinch points
- Ancillary activity including refreshments/breaks/transport

Making Music suggests you also consider the risks to your organisation of:

- running or not running in person activity
- the financial and administrative implications of your plans and mitigations
- the impact on your members and participants of your plans and mitigations.

The six priority actions

1. Complete a health and safety risk assessment that includes risks from COVID-19

This will include the following 5 points and others in the guidance, e.g. specific ones for events, and points that we have found need addressing for music groups.

You can use [Making Music's new template](#) and see an example from one of our members below. The [Events and Attractions guidance](#) also has a template. It is quite light touch, but useful to see.

2. Turn people with COVID-19 symptoms away

"Staff members or customers should self-isolate if they or someone in their household has a new, persistent cough; a high temperature; or loses/has changes to their sense of taste or smell, even if these symptoms are mild. They must also self-isolate if they or someone in their household has had a positive COVID-19 result, or if they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace." (from the 'Priority actions' section of the [Events and Attractions guidance](#))

Stopping people with Covid coming to your rehearsal is the best way to stop the spread. This largely comes down to personal responsibility on the individuals, but you do have a role to play:

- Remind members about when they shouldn't come to rehearsal and encourage them to consider things like transport routes.
- Don't focus just on Covid. If a member has any symptoms which could be related to Covid or another respiratory disease, such as flu or colds, they should stay away from rehearsals. This is because it could be Covid (additional symptoms have been identified through a large scale study), but even if it isn't, it's best to not spread colds / flu. These symptoms could be:
 - Sneezing
 - Headache
 - Runny nose
 - Loss of smell
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Fever

Encourage members to take regular lateral flow tests (LFT):

- In England the advice changed on 23 November to recommend that people take an LFT if they will be:
 - in a high risk situation that day:
 - in crowded and enclosed spaces
 - there is limited fresh air
 - visiting someone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19
- In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales the recommendation is twice a week (this does not have to be the same day as the rehearsal).

"The use of temperature screening products is not recommended by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, as there is little scientific evidence to support temperature screening as a reliable method for detection of COVID-19, particularly for asymptomatic cases." (Reducing risk to customers section of the guidance).

3. Provide adequate ventilation

There is now an entire section the Events and Attractions guidance on ventilation – we encourage you to read this and act on it, as it is really important. "Make sure there is an adequate supply of fresh air to enclosed spaces where there are people present. This can be natural ventilation (windows, doors and vents), mechanical ventilation (fans and ducts), or a combination of both. Identify any poorly ventilated spaces that are usually occupied (a CO2 monitor may help in some cases) and consider how to improve fresh air flow in these areas."

If people with Covid do unwittingly attend your rehearsal, good ventilation is your best defence against spread. Address this as the number one issue for your activity and with your venue.

Ventilation is about fresh air being brought into a space and potentially harmful aerosol particles being blown away. It is NOT about being freezing cold - you can put the heating on AND open the windows (though obviously this may increase your costs).

There are no hard and fast answers when it comes to ventilation. How well a space is ventilated will depend on many factors (see below). Ultimately the group has to assess the ventilation and decide on appropriate mitigations. It is worth remembering that:

- many spaces are designed to be well ventilated either through natural or mechanical ventilation – make sure you are using these tools, whatever they are in your venue, properly
- use common sense – we can generally tell when an area is poorly ventilated; conversely, if you're sitting in a howling cross wind, the space is probably better ventilated than you need
- there are simple measures you can take to improve and manage ventilation – these will make a difference

- there are no absolute answers: even today's outside weather will influence the air quality inside your hall, so next week you may have to ventilate more, or less, than this week.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have an [excellent resource to help assess ventilation risks](#) and mitigate them. We recommend you read this and have pulled out some key points below.

Understand how well ventilated an area is: there will be several factors that go into that:

- Size of space – not just footprint, but height, too
- The number of people occupying the space
- The activity – singing does carry increased risks
- See the [HSE guidance](#) for more info.

Focus on identifying poorly ventilated areas:

- Where there isn't any natural or mechanical ventilation
- If it feels stuffy or smells bad
- Using CO2 monitors – see below
- If an area is poorly ventilated and can't be improved – consider how suitable it is for your activities
- See the [HSE guidance](#) for more info

Ensuring good ventilation: it's important to maintain good ventilation in well-ventilated areas as well as improving in it in poorly ventilated areas.

- Natural ventilation: (i.e. doors, windows and vents):
 - Take advantage of the natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents.
 - Opening windows, doors and vents even for a brief period can help refresh the air.
 - Ideally, they would be at opposite ends of a room to create cross flow.
 - High up is good too as the heat of bodies (and radiators) in the room will make aerosols rise and be sucked out via high windows
 - Doing a 'purge' and opening them fully will let most fresh air in to the room – this could be done before a rehearsal or during a break
 - As the weather gets colder, we know natural ventilation becomes harder, but it is still important.
 - Opening windows, doors and vents partially and for a short time can still make a difference.
 - Cooler, windier weather increases natural ventilation – so you don't have to open them as wide.
 - Warm clothes and blankets can help.

- Mechanical ventilation: the important thing is that systems bring in new fresh air rather than recirculate air. Recirculation can increase the risk of transmission.
 - Speak with the venue and make sure you understand how the system works
 - Systems should be set to maximise fresh air and minimise recirculation
 - Recirculation units that do not bring in fresh air can remain in operation as long as there is an alternative supply of fresh air such as natural ventilation
 - Fans should not be used in poorly ventilated areas but can be useful in the corners of rooms to prevent build-up of stagnant air, as long as there is also a supply of fresh air, such as natural ventilation
 - See the HSE guidance for more info on mechanical ventilation

CO2 monitors

These are very helpful in determining the air quality in a room; CO2 presence does not mean there is also Covid in the room, but if there is a lot of CO2 it means the air quality is bad and therefore if there was anyone with Covid in the room, there could be a build-up of virus particles.

While CO2 monitors can be useful, they need to be used properly to get useful data. In larger spaces with high ceilings (e.g. churches) the air might not be fully mixed and so CO2 readings are less representative.

We recommend you read the [Health and Safety Executive guidance](#) to understand how to use them – they have a useful table that shows how useful they are for different size rooms and activities.

We have pulled out some key info below.

- Measurements vary depending on occupants and activities and ventilation measures
- Regular readings throughout a day will give the best overall picture – try and work with the venue / other hirers to get a good set of readings
- Look for areas where people will be for an extended period of time and where there is no natural or mechanical ventilation
- Use them at head height near but not immediately in front of people
- Depending on the size of your space you may need more than one

If CO2 monitors are useful in your space, then you should be aiming for:

- levels consistently below 1500ppm
- keeping CO2 levels below 800ppm where there is continuous singing, as recommended in the Events guidance for England

If your readings don't show these levels, then you need to look at increased ventilation measures. See natural and mechanical ventilation above and/or the following.

- Changing venue
- Rehearsing outdoors
- Reducing number of attendees

- Shortening length of rehearsals overall
- Shortening rehearsal sections (e.g. 30mins at a time instead of 45mins)
- Lengthening breaks
- Using face coverings

Although a 'snapshot' CO2 reading is not always useful, if you know ventilation levels in a venue are generally below 1500ppm/800ppm it can be useful to take measurements during a rehearsal and check levels are not rising. If they are, you can take short-term measures to improve levels such as taking a break, doing a purge, or reducing numbers.

Buying a CO2 monitor: You can buy CO2 monitors for around £85-100. Avoid the very cheapest as they are not much use.

Making Music Corporate members test-meter offer [members a discount on a CO2 monitor](#)

Air purifiers: You can buy stand-alone HEPA filter machines but note they are quite expensive (£250 approx.) plus for a room of any size you would need several. One will be enough for a large classroom, for example, approx. 140sqm.

More information on ventilation:

- Government guidance: [Event guidance section on Ventilation](#) (England)
- [HSE guidance](#)
- For more technical guidance including on different air conditioning systems, [read the CIBSE guide](#)
- British Occupational Hygiene Society [ventilation tool](#)
- British Occupational Hygiene Society [ventilation FAQs](#)
- Making Music Guest Speaker Webinar recording: [Ventilation - how can it help manage the risk of Covid transmission?](#)

4. Clean more often

Transmission via surfaces is still a risk, so:

- Continue to provide hand sanitiser and encourage hand washing
- Talk to your venue about pre-clean before your activity, ensure either they or you clean....
- Bathrooms/toilets
- Commonly touched surfaces, e.g. door handles, kettles, taps
- Provide more rubbish 'stations' and ensure rubbish emptied regularly
- Ideally still avoid shared equipment (e.g. music stands – if each person brings their own that also helps with continued social distancing)

"You should not introduce measures which involve spraying people with disinfectants (such as in a tunnel, cabinet, or chamber) under any circumstances. You can find more information about these types of measures in the HSE guidance on disinfecting using fog, mist and other systems." (Reducing risk to customers section of the guidance).

5. Enable people to check in at your venue

This is no longer a legal requirement but is being encouraged, in order to facilitate NHS Test and Trace.

- Whether Test and Trace check-in is available is the venue's decision. If they do it, make sure you know what they are expecting from you
- Regardless of Test and Trace, it's a good idea to keep a register of who turns up for which rehearsal so if someone does fall ill, you can let everyone else at that rehearsal know

6. Communicate and train

Communicate your plans and risk assessments to your members, professionals, volunteers, venue

- Separately, let attendees have a simple sheet of instructions which tells them what is expected of them during a rehearsal
- Have poster and visual information reminders of protocols at rehearsals (e.g. signs on hand washing, social distancing if you decide to maintain it, face coverings, traffic 'controls' etc.). Use the [Making Music Covid poster templates](#).
- Give members the chance to feedback on the measures, attitudes could change as the Covid situation does.

Additional points to consider and address in your risk assessment

Each of the 3 transmission routes (see [What are the risks now considered to be](#))

Aerosols	Droplets	Surfaces
Turn people away*	Turn people away*	Turn people away*
Ventilation	Social distance	Cleaning more often
Face coverings	Face coverings	
	Cleaning more often	

*with: symptoms, positive tests, close contact with someone who has Covid, told to self-isolate, need to quarantine after a visit abroad

Social distancing: You might decide or have to (depending on nation) keep some social distancing measures. Some options are

- 2m at all times
- 2m when rehearsing only
- 1m at all times
- 1m when rehearsing only
- No social distancing but ask people to be respectful of each other's space

- You could limit the number of people allowed in specific areas at any one time (e.g. break room, kitchen, toilets)
- You could have one way and/or queuing systems to control traffic flow at pinch points

Someone becomes ill during a rehearsal: Plan as to what happens if someone is taken ill during a rehearsal or event (unlikely during a short rehearsal, perhaps more so if you're running a full day event, but worth thinking through)

Someone reports symptoms or a positive test shortly after your rehearsal: this is more likely and may need action. See our [separate resource](#) for more information.

Discrimination: The impact of your plans on people with protected characteristics and the clinically vulnerable. Check out the government guidance on this. And also read the 7 Inclusive Principles for Arts and Cultural Organisations to help guide you.

Singing: The specific risks of singing, if your group is a vocal group.

The [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#) guidance says:

“Some activities can increase the risk of catching or passing on COVID-19. This happens where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing, dancing, exercising or raising their voices. You should consider the specific risks of your facility or event, and take additional care to manage situations where there is a higher risk of catching or passing on COVID-19.”

As such we suggest vocal groups address the specific risk of singing in your risk assessment. Some mitigations could include:

- Keep 1m or 2m distance when singing
- Sing side by side (not facing)
- Position singers at the front
- Position singers facing away from or at least 2m from instrumentalists and/or music director/conductor
- Face coverings when singing
- Reduce volume / use microphones
- Only sing in well ventilated spaces
- Take regular breaks

Events: The Events and Attractions guidance has an [Additional guidance for event organisers](#) section. Events – i.e. something for a group of people to attend – would include rehearsals here. You have probably addressed these points already by this stage, but it's worth cross-checking:

- Even outdoors may include indoor spaces (e.g. toilets) where people may gather too close to each other
- Indoors you must address ventilation

- Indoor risks do not necessarily increase with higher numbers of attendees but consider the density of people and adjust number of attendees if venue small
- Risks indoors increase with free movement (e.g. dance floor in night club, so consider seated vs standing choir) because then it's more likely people come into close contact
- Events with 'energetic activity' present a higher risk – this would include vocal groups and singing though you will see they are not specifically referenced here:
- *'Events involving energetic activity: observations from the Events Research Programme indicate that unstructured and energetic activity with a high crowd density may lead to higher airborne transmission risks. This could include activities such as actively chanting and celebrating while attending sporting events, singing along at gigs and concerts, or dancing/singing at a nightclub.'*

Flow and pinch points: Venue traffic flow and pinch points will need to be addressed. Even if you are not using social distancing as one of your mitigations, you still have to ensure that there is no crowding of too many people together in a small space, such as could happen at entrances and exits, in a kitchen, toilet blocks, instrument store room etc.

Ancillary activity:

- Refreshments – none at all? Bring your own? Bring your own cup but you can use the kettle? Is it wise to share cakes or plates of biscuits? What about cleaning before/after – is there someone willing?
- Breaks – where do people take a break and how do they get there? i.e. consider traffic and whether the break area is big enough, how people get there, whether there is enough room to allow people to keep a distance, if they so wish. Ideally have your break outdoors.

Risks to your organisation:

- What are the risks to your group and its objectives if you do run in person events or not?
 - will the group fold?
 - is it perfectly happy online and thriving?
 - Is it able to fulfil its mission with or without in person meetings?

- Can you afford and/or manage the mitigations?
 - Additional costs (one-off/ongoing); one-off costs may include CO2 monitors, HEPA filter/air purifier, a pocket amp for your MD so they don't have to shout; ongoing costs could be disinfectant, hand sanitiser, rubbish bags etc., but most crucially possibly a larger venue
 - (Additional) volunteers needed; most groups don't find it easy to find enough people to help out anyway, so if your risk assessment plans for 4 volunteers at each rehearsal – is that realistic?
 - Income from attendees/non-attendees; think carefully about the fees you charge your members – should there be a higher/lower fee for online or in-person rehearsals? What about members who have lost their job due to the pandemic – will you have additional concessionary rates? All this will influence your plans: the best-laid plans will be no good if you cannot afford to put them in place
 - What are the risks to your members/attendees/participants of meeting in person or not?
 - Is their mental health a critical factor here?
 - What will be the impact on them if you do or don't resume activity?
-

Section five: Final thoughts and templates

"The highest risks of transmission occur when multiple factors are combined. For example, an indoor event with a large number of people mixing in close proximity for a prolonged period of time is likely to present a higher risk than fewer people outside for a shorter period. Transmission can also occur at pre- and post-event activities, such as at restaurants and bars, or on public transport." (from the Phase 1 findings of the [Events Research Programme](#)).

This means that the more mitigations you are able to put in place, the more you will reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 at an in-person rehearsal of your group.

We are all clear that we are not rid of Covid-19; but we are equally increasingly clear that we need to learn to live with it. So understanding about the highest risks for transmission and what measures we can take to reduce those risks will be useful not just for the next few months, but potentially for the next year or more. It's worth the effort of engaging with this topic as best you can!

Risk assessment scoring

Many of you will be aware, perhaps from your 'day job', that usually risk assessments score risks before and after proposed mitigations, by multiplying a number (usually between 1 and 5) for the likelihood of something happening with a number (also between 1 and 5) given to the severity if that event should happen.

For instance, without mitigations the likelihood of someone spreading Covid at a rehearsal might be as high as 5 and the severity of the consequence could be that two thirds of the group in the rehearsal catch Covid and several die, another 5. This would give a combined score of 25 – something that definitely is high risk and needs mitigations.

After implementing mitigations, you might consider the likelihood of someone spreading now reduced to perhaps 2 and therefore the severity of the consequence also to 2, as only a fraction of people, if any, would catch it from the infectious person. The new combined score of 4 could then be considered an acceptable remaining risk to the group – or not: these numbers will depend a lot on your group's situation and also on your committee's and members' 'risk thermostat' which will determine what is found to be an acceptable level of risk. Remember it can never be zero.

We don't offer you any scores or numbers in our risk assessment template because each group's situation will be unique and also because the evidence base for the risks and the best mitigations continues to change.

However, if you would like to use such a scoring system, please find an example submitted by a member group below.

Templates:

[Making Music risk assessment template \(example\)](#)

[Making Music risk assessment template \(blank\)](#)

[Member risk assessment template \(with scoring\)](#)

Note: all documents are Excel spreadsheets

We hope you find this Making Music resource useful. If you have any comments or suggestions about the guidance please [contact us](#). Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the content of this guidance is accurate and up to date, Making Music do not warrant, nor accept any liability or responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of the content, or for any loss which may arise from reliance on the information contained in it.