

Update on 'Rule of Six' regulations from the Minister of Faiths, Community and Local Government: 18 September 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Do I need to arrange my seating into groups of six rather than in households?

No. The total number of people attending worship is limited by how many people can socially distance within the venue. Seating should enable everyone to practise social distancing from those they don't live with.

The maximum number of people that you should socially interact with in a place of worship is six, particularly when leaving or arriving.

Q. Can you stop social distancing within a group of six?

No. Everyone should continue to practise social distancing when mixing with people they don't live with or are not in a support bubble with, even within a group of six.

Q. How does the rule of six work for Friday prayers etc where the activity is communal, and not in groups?

The number of people able to attend a place of worship is determined by the number of people the space can safely contain while all attendees adhere to social distancing of 2m between households, or 1m with additional safeguards. You should only enter and leave the venue together, and socially interact, within a group of up to six, whether this six consists of one household or multiple households. Where group members are from different households, they should maintain social distancing of 2meters, or 1meter with additional safeguards

Q: Can groups socialise with one another after worship/ study?

No, groups of six should not mix within the venue and should leave in the group they arrived in. Everyone, at all times, needs to limit social contact as much as possible.

Q. Does the exemption for Places of Worship cover faith groups hiring other venues (or outside spaces) for communal worship?

Yes, it is the activity of communal worship that is exempt from the law against groups of more than six people from gathering.

A faith group can host a prayer service or communal worship at a hired venue that is Covid-19 secure, with the same restrictions as a place of worship.

Q. Does the exemption cover faith groups gathering in outdoor public spaces for communal worship?

Yes, it is the activity of communal worship that is exempt from the law against groups of more than 6 people from gathering, rather than the place of worship.

This means that a faith group can host a prayer service or communal worship in an outdoor public space, with the same restrictions as a fixed place of worship.

In order to do so, they must undertake a rigorous risk assessment for the event alongside the private owner or relevant local authority, and ensure that safeguards are in place to allow for strict social distancing between attendees.

All attendees should provide contact details for the purposes of NHS Test and Trace.

This exemption does not apply to private spaces such as gardens.

Q. Does the exemption cover faith groups gathering in outdoor private spaces, such as gardens, for communal worship?

No. The “rule of six” applies to all private dwelling spaces, including gardens. Only six people are permitted by law to gather in a private garden. We do understand that this may cause challenges for communities planning to host religious services in private, however the regulations have been changed given the public health risks associated with private houses and gardens.

Q. Are prayer groups/ study groups for adults meeting in Places of Worship capped at six?

No, there can be multiple groups of six people doing the same activity provided that these groups do not mingle. Faith groups can organise prayer and study groups, both at a fixed Place of Worship and at a hired venue that is Covid-19 Secure venue. If the group is hiring a venue, they must undertake a rigorous risk assessment for the event alongside the private owner or relevant local authority, and ensure that safeguards are in place to allow for strict social distancing between attendees. All attendees should provide contact details for the purposes of NHS Test and Trace.

Q. Can six adults meet for worship in a house if the children are asleep?

The law is clear. If there is any risk that a group of more than six will mix (including young children) then this must not happen.

Q. Are activities for children and young people, such as youth groups, allowed more than six attendees?

Yes. Activities for children organised by a business, charity or other public organisation, taking place at a COVID-19 secure premise, will be able to continue without applying the 6 person limit to the children involved or to the organisers. Such activities also must not take place in private dwellings. Out-of-school settings and youth groups are exempt from the rule of six but protective measures still apply; that there should be no more than 15 children per small, consistent group and should have at least one staff member per group. For the purposes of this exemption, young people are below the age of 18. If at a hired venue or outdoors, they must undertake a rigorous risk assessment for the event alongside the private owner or relevant local authority, and ensure that safeguards are in place to allow for strict social distancing between attendees.

All attendees should provide contact details for the purposes of NHS Test and Trace.

Q. Are community workshops, support groups, keep fit, bereavement groups, Employment drop ins etc in community venues allowed?

Most formal support groups will still be able to take place and some will be able to have any number of people present. Informal groups can still take place in Covid Secure premises (but not private homes) with multiple groups of six, provided that these groups do not mingle.

Q. What's the rule for weddings, funerals and life-cycle events

The gatherings rule of six does not apply to weddings or religious life cycle ceremonies or funerals given their importance in people's lives, but attendance continues to be limited to 30 for such standalone events. This means people can mingle with other guests present beyond the numerical limit of six, though should continue to practise social distancing when mixing with those they don't live with or outside of their support bubble. However, people and venues must strictly follow the guidance on conducting these gatherings safely. The cap of 30 is now set out in law, rather than just guidance, this means that there can be fines where the rule of 30 is not adhered to.

Q. Do people working count within the 30 people limit for weddings, funerals and life-cycle events ?

Anyone working is not included as part of the 30 person limit.

Q. Can all life cycle events have receptions after?

No. The exemption only covers the ceremonies, and does not include receptions after other life cycle events. Weddings are the only exception.

Q. Are Choirs/bands (I.e. more than 6 people singing/playing) permitted for 'performances' in PoW? (Amateur choirs are capped at 6)

Performing professional choirs will be regarded as being at their place of work and on that basis will not be subject to the rule of six - but they will of course need to follow the guidance published on the performing arts. We are discussing and agreeing with Government Departments how the new rules will impact amateur choirs and will update our advice as soon as we can.

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