**Government Guidance on Performing Arts Activity During the Pandemic**

**This document has been prepared by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in consultation with representatives of the performing arts sector, Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE):**

**https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts**

This guidance covers all stages of the performing arts roadmap and will help organisers plan activity when it is permitted. Organisers should only use this guidance in line with current national and local restrictions. From Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, new national restrictions will be in force in England to control the spread of coronavirus. During this period, performing arts venues can continue to operate under Stages 1 and 2 of the performing arts roadmap. This means:

* performing arts professionals may continue to rehearse and train, and perform for broadcast or recording purposes
* other than for this purpose, theatres, concert halls, grassroots music venues and entertainment venues must close. Professional dancers may continue to use dance studios.
* **non-professional activity, such as amateur choirs and orchestra, cannot take place**.
* where any staff can work from home, they must do so

Seven steps to protect yourself, your staff and your customers during coronavirus.

1. **Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment.** Share it with all your staff. [Find out how to do a risk assessment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#shops-1-1).
2. **Clean more often.** Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask your staff and your customers to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.
3. **Ask your customers to wear face coverings** in any indoor space or where required to do so by law. That is especially important if your customers are likely to be around people they do not normally meet. 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 your customers 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 customers and audience members for 21 days. Display an official NHS QR code poster so that customers and visitors can ‘check in’ using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details. 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.
7. **Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away**. If a staff member (or someone in their household) or a customer has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell, they should be isolating.

Although audiences are not permitted in venues during the period of national restrictions (5 November to 2 December), **there are five more things you need to be aware of if you are a performing arts venue planning for the return of audiences in the future:**

* **Take proactive steps to encourage audiences to support the safety of the event.** Discourage activities which can create aerosol (such as shouting, chanting and singing along), seat individuals rather than allowing them to stand to help maintain social distancing, clearly communicate that individuals who should be isolating should not attend, and provide information on how the event will run.
* **Limit the number of audience members** so that capacity is at a level that allows social distancing to be maintained, in line with the relevant rules on meeting others safely.
* **Limit the number of performers as far as possible and use teams, groups or partnering** to reduce the number of people individuals have contact with, for example, where social distancing may be impractical (such as intimate or fighting scenes in theatre, dancing, costume fitting, hair and make-up).
* **Limit the duration of opportunities for social interaction** as far as possible, including rehearsals and performances.
* **Encourage working outdoors** and refer to [outdoor events](https://www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/index.php/11-features/14-keeping-workers-and-audiences-safe-during-covid-19) guidance if you’re organising outdoor activities.

These are the priority actions to make your business safe during coronavirus. You should also read the full version of the guidance below.

National restrictions begin in England from 5 November. [Find out about the new restrictions and what you can and cannot do.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november)

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From Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, new national restrictions will be in force in England to control the spread of coronavirus. During this period, performing arts venues can continue to operate under Stages 1 and 2 of the performing arts roadmap. This means that:

* performing arts professionals may continue to rehearse and train, and perform for broadcast or recording purposes
* other than for this purpose, theatres, concert halls and entertainment venues must close
* professional dancers may continue to use dance studios
* non-professional activity, such as amateur choirs and orchestra, cannot take place
* where any staff in performing arts organisations can work from home, they must do so.

The UK is currently experiencing a public health emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that employers, employees, the self-employed, volunteers and non-professionals take steps to keep everyone safe. This document is to help performing arts organisations, venue operators and participants including those who are employers, employees and self-employed, volunteers and non-professionals in the UK understand how to work and take part in the performing arts safely, and keep their audiences safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2m apart from those they do not live with.

This document includes guidance for training and rehearsal, and managing audiences and venues or premises, in line with the law and current social distancing advice. We understand how important it is that you can work safely and support your employees’ and customers’ health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and not contribute to the spread of the virus. Evidence on the most effective steps that can be taken to limit the transmission of the virus continues to be regularly reviewed. This guidance may be updated in the future in response to changing scientific understanding.

We have developed a five-stage roadmap to bring our performing arts back safely. These five stages of the phased return to performing arts are as follows:

* **Stage One** - Rehearsal and training (no audiences)
* **Stage Two** - Performances for broadcast and recording purposes
* **Stage Three** - Performances outdoors with an audience and pilots for indoor performances with a limited socially-distanced audience
* **Stage Four** - Performances allowed indoors and outdoors (but with a limited socially-distanced audience indoors)
* **Stage Five** - Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

This guidance sets out how performing arts organisations can prepare for and deliver their activities at each of these five stages. This means that not all the guidance set out here will be relevant immediately; organisations should adopt the guidelines insofar as the government permits activities to proceed. Where a premises or venue delivers a mix of services, only those services that are permitted to be open should be available.

**This guidance sets out how performing arts organisations can prepare for and deliver their activities across the stages of the roadmap. This means that not all the guidance set out here is relevant immediately; organisations should adopt the guidelines insofar as the government permits activities to proceed, but can use other parts of the guidance to plan for other stages of the roadmap. Where a premises or venue delivers a mix of services, only those services that are permitted to be open should be available.​**

**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, although they should note that different guidance and rules apply to professionals and non-professionals. . Organisations have a duty of care to volunteers and non-professionals to ensure as far as reasonably practicable they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. This guidance around working safely during COVID-19 should ensure that volunteers and non-professionals are afforded the same level of protection to their health and safety as employees and the self-employed. This guidance also sets out how organisations will want to think about managing audiences.**

Additional mitigations, such as extended social distancing, were previously required for singing, wind and brass given concerns that these were potentially higher risk activities. DCMS commissioned further scientific studies to be carried out to develop the scientific evidence on these activities, which has allowed us to reconsider appropriate mitigations.

However, these studies have indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in and attending events that is likely to create risk. We are continuing to develop more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should therefore consider:

* Maintaining social distancing wherever possible in professional environments. **Non-professional activity cannot currently take place.**
* Ensuring activity takes place outside wherever possible, including performance
* Limiting the number of performers as far as possible (with non-professionals being restricted by rules on [meeting with others safely](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing)
* Limiting the number of audience members, noting that capacity should be maintained at a level that allows social distancing to be maintained. At present audiences are not permitted to attend performing arts performances.
* Limiting the duration of social interaction opportunities (eg. rehearsals or performances) as far as possible
* Taking steps to improve ventilation as far as possible and whenever possible, both through the use of mechanical systems and opening windows and doors
* Taking steps to encourage audiences to support the overall safety of the event, including discouraging activities which can create aerosol (such as shouting, chanting and singing along), seating individuals rather than allowing them to stand (to help maintain social distancing) and the other mitigations outlined in this guidance. At present audiences are not permitted to attend performing arts performances.
* Continue to take the other vital steps outlined in this guidance, including preventing unwell people from attending, maintaining cleanliness, supporting contact tracing and other mitigating measures.

By considering and adopting these measures cumulatively, the overall risk of the event will be reduced.

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. See the bullets above and section 3 for further details.

We hope this guidance gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand how important it is to work safely and support your workers’, volunteers’ and participants’ health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and not contribute to the spread of the virus. The government is clear that workers should not be forced into an unsafe workplace and the health and safety of workers and participants, and public health, should not be put at risk. Currently, where any staff in performing arts organisations can work from home, they must do so.

Following the implementation of pilots of socially distanced indoor performances in July, this guidance has been updated with additional measures and clarifications arising from how these performances were managed. We expect that this document will continue to be updated over time. Readers should take particular note of changes in relation to track and trace, face coverings and managing audiences. Whilst audiences are not permitted to attend performing arts performances at present, this guidance provides advice for the point when audiences are able to return to performing arts events.

If you have any feedback for us, please email [performingartsguidancereview@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:performingartsguidancereview@dcms.gov.uk).

**How to use this guidance**

This document sets out guidance on how to train, rehearse, perform and manage audiences safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in performing arts workplaces and environments. This guidance only relates to activities permitted by government regulation.

Each organisation, self-employed person or participant will need to translate this guidance into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of their business or activity, including the size and type of organisation, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as an organisation or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors, volunteers, participants and other people, as well as your employees.

To help you decide which actions to take, you need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. As part of this risk assessment, you should understand and take into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics, such as those who are hearing or visually impaired.

This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.

**What do we mean by ‘performing arts returning to training, rehearsal and performance’?**

This guidance applies to those who engage in activities in the performing arts including but not limited to performers (actors, singers, dancers, musicians, other performers), coaches, support workers, choreographers, costume designers, set builders, accompanists, directors, stage managers and other creative, technical and operational production team members; and to the premises and venues in which performing arts activities take place. It applies to training, rehearsal and pre-production activities, and performances which take place with or without a live audience, wherever these activities occur.

References to concert halls include dedicated grassroots music venues. Grassroots music venues host music and other programming artists that perform in front of audiences.

This guidance is likely to be relevant and should be considered in a wide range of circumstances including but not limited to: [music production](https://www.ukmusic.org/covid-19/guidance/), [film](http://britishfilmcommission.org.uk/guidance/regarding-covid-19-coronavirus/), advertising, [television production](https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/tv-production-guidance-managing-the-risk-of-coronavirus-in-production-making-v1.pdf), [places of worship](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july), [outdoor events and festivals](https://www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/index.php/11-features/14-keeping-workers-and-audiences-safe-during-covid-19), indoor unseated music venues, [bars and restaurants](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery#takeaways-4-5). Where relevant, it should be read alongside the specific guidance relevant to particular settings. In particular, learning professionals in the performing arts should look at guidance for [schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools) and [out-of-school settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak). For further information on performing arts in education, training and childcare settings, please see the [guidance for education and childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#ooss).

**The guidance contains information that is relevant both for those working in the professional performing arts, those who participate in the performing arts on a non-professional basis, and for the owners, operators and users or hirers of premises or venues when they are used for performing arts.** Recognising that within the performing arts it is common practice to operate both in your own and in third parties’ premises or venues, and to hire equipment from third parties, collaboration between groups, organisations and businesses will likely be needed to give proper effect to this guidance.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the latest [government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus). It will be updated regularly as government advice changes, so please ensure you are working from the latest version. At present, it should be noted that no audiences are permitted to attend performing arts performances and non-professional activity can not currently take place.

**Social distancing in performing arts environments**

It is a requirement for venues and organisers to ensure appropriate social distancing, through signage, layout, ventilation and entry numbers management.

Everyone should follow the guidance on [social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing). Where you cannot stay 2 metres apart you should stay more than 1 metre apart, as well as taking extra steps to stay safe. For example:

* wear a face covering: In England, you must wear a face covering in the following indoor settings. The latest list can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing)
* move outdoors, where it is safer and there is more space
* if indoors, make sure rooms are well ventilated by keeping windows and doors open

**Professionals operating under the performing arts guidance**

You must maintain social distancing in the performing arts environment wherever possible. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular professional activity, organisations should consider whether that activity needs to continue, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff, workers, participants and audiences. Mitigating actions include:

* Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
* Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
* Using back-to-back or side-to-side positioning (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
* Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by considering the use of ‘fixed teams, groups or partnering’ (so each person works with only a few others). For example, where social distancing may be impractical due to the degree of proximity required (such as intimate/fighting scenes in theatre, dancing, costume fitting, hair and make-up), fixed teams could be operated as follows:
  + Grouping individuals into fixed teams that work together throughout a production or project or for specific periods to minimise the risk of transmission beyond these fixed teams
  + Minimising transmission risk between fixed teams when they mix outside their team during a rehearsal or performance and during breaks or moving around a premises or venue
  + Ensuring that there is no swapping between designated fixed teams. This is to reduce the risk of whole team impact in the event of a worker contracting COVID-19
  + Including any support workers for disabled workers or performers as a member of the fixed team
  + Note that it is unlikely that this fixed team approach will be possible in non-professional environments or where professional performers work with more than one group or organisation simultaneously
* Using screens where feasible to separate individuals or fixed teams from each other where they cannot achieve social distancing

Social distancing applies to all parts of a premises or venue, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, dressing rooms, canteens, foyers and bars, and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing. Assessing the capacity of any space to be used and appropriately managing this to maintain social distancing.

**Non-professionals operating under the performing arts guidance**

**Non-professional activity should not take place at this time**.

[Social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing) applies to all parts of a premises or venue, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, dressing rooms, canteens, foyers and bars, and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing. Assessing the capacity of any space to be used and appropriately managing this to maintain social distancing.

**In this section**

* [1.1 Managing risk](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#shops-1-1)
* [1.2 Sharing your risk assessment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#shops-1-2)
* [1.3 Test and trace](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#shops-1-3)

Objective: That all employers and organisation carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment.

COVID-19 is a public health emergency. Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19 and in particular organisations should consider the risks to their workers, participants and any audience. **As a performing arts organisation, an employer or as an operator of a premises or venue, you also have a legal responsibility to protect workers, volunteers, audience members, users and others from risk to their health and safety. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.** During the period of new national restrictions (5 November - 2 December) where staff can work from home, they must do so.

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your organisation and the places where you operate addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures, and taking account of the needs of those with protected characteristics. You should also consider the security implications of any decisions and control measures you intend to put in place, as any revisions could present new or altered security risks that may require mitigation. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your environment. If you have fewer than five workers or participants, or are self-employed, you don’t have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment. Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. The Health and Safety Executive has [guidance for business on how to manage risk and risk assessment at work](https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm) along with [specific advice to help control the risk of coronavirus in workplaces](https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm).

Employers and organisations have a duty to consult their people on health and safety. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. The people who do the work or activity are often the best people to understand the risks in that environment and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously. You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn’t one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of your workers or participants creates a culture where relationships between employers/organisations and workers/participants are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, workers and participants should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of health and safety policies in partnership with the employer or organisation.

Employers or organisations and their workers or participants should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.

Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or your local authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance, where possible. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Additional mitigations, such as extended social distancing, were previously required for singing, wind and brass given concerns that these were potentially higher risk activities. DCMS commissioned further scientific studies to develop the scientific evidence on these activities, which has allowed us to reconsider these additional mitigations.

However**, these studies have indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in and attending events that is likely to create risk. We are continuing to develop more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should therefore consider:**

* **Maintaining social distancing wherever possible in professional environments. Non-professional activity cannot currently take place.**
* **Ensuring activity takes place outside wherever possible, including performance**
* **Limiting the number of performers as far as possible. Non-professional activity cannot currently take place.**
* **Limiting the number of audience members, noting that capacity should be maintained at a level that allows social distancing to be maintained. At present, audiences are not permitted to attend performing arts performances.**
* **Limiting the duration of social interaction opportunities (eg. rehearsals or performances) as far as possible**
* **Taking steps to improve ventilation as far as possible and whenever possible, both through the use of mechanical systems and opening windows and doors**
* **Taking steps to encourage audiences to support the overall safety of the event, including discouraging activities which can create aerosol (such as shouting, chanting and singing along), seating individuals rather than allowing them to stand (to help maintain social distancing) and the other mitigations outlined in this guidance.**
* **Continue to take the other vital steps outlined in this guidance, including preventing unwell people from attending, maintaining cleanliness, supporting contact tracing and other mitigating measures. At present audiences are not permitted to attend performing arts performances.**