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Introduction

This revised and extended edition of Marriage and Civil partnerships in the UK, (revised to **2020**) will be invaluable to either the layperson who wishes to know more generally about heterosexual marriage, civil partnerships and same sex marriage, or for the student or professional who wishes to know more about the detail of the law.

The book is structured in such a way that the initial chapters dealing with the respective areas provide a general overview, with the subsequent chapters dealing with the finer detail.

This book covers marriage generally, the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 and the Civil Partnership Regulations (Same Sex Couples) 2019, also The Marriage (Same Sex Couples Act) 2013. Chapters 1 and 2 provides an overview of marriage generally, plus divorce and dissolution, chapter 3 The Civil partnerships Act 2004, whilst chapters 4-9 provide more detailed provisions of the Act. Chapter 10 provides a detailed overview of the 2013 marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Also covered is the impact of COVID 19 on marriage ceremonies.

The book will act as an ideal introduction to the law and procedure of marriage and civil partnerships and also same sex partnerships and is suitable for both students, professionals and laypeople who wish to keep up to date with this area.

The Impact of COVID 19 on Weddings and Civil Partnerships generally

On 23 March 2020, the UK Government responded to the unprecedented pandemic sweeping across the world by introducing an equally unprecedented lockdown in England, with the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland immediately following suit.

What Are the Latest Rules for Weddings?

The new wedding guidelines, announced on 29th June, implemented a series of rules for weddings. These include social distancing, hand washing before the exchange of rings and avoiding singing.

Here's what the Government advice says:

Ceremonies must be kept “as short as reasonably possible” and limited to the legally binding parts. No more than 30 people may attend, including the couple and staff at the venue. Ceremonies must be in a “COVID-19 secure environment” with guests following the 2 metre rule, or “1 metre plus” where extra safety measures like masks are used. The floor should be marked with tape or paint to help people maintain social distancing. No food and drink can be consumed as part of the service, such as during a communion. Hands must be washed before and after rings are exchanged; as few people as possible to handle the rings. Couples and officiants are not allowed to speak with raised voices, such as when exchanging vows.

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Raised voices should be avoided, so recordings are recommended instead of singing, and music played at a level where guests do not need to shout over it. Playing wind or blown instruments should be avoided

Mitigate risk factors by avoiding face-to-face seating, reducing the number of guests in an enclosed space, improving ventilation, using protective screen and face coverings, and restricting access to non-essential areas

Regarding receptions, the rules state: “Any receptions that typically follow or accompany marriages or civil partnerships are strongly advised not to take place at this time. “Small celebrations should only take place if following social distancing guidelines – i.e. in groups of up to two households indoors, or up to six people from different households outdoors.”

From 29th June, outdoor ceremonies were allowed to take place in Scotland, with a maximum of eight guests. In Northern Ireland, ministers are now allowing outdoor weddings for up to 10 people.

The Welsh government has also lifted the ban on weddings in Wales as long as they are small enough to maintain social distancing measures.

The impact of Coronavirus on our lives has been huge, and for anyone who has a wedding planned in 2020, the current situation has thrown up a lot of questions and concerns about how their wedding day will be affected. With this latest announcement raising more questions than answers, it’s still a difficult time for couples and venues as they look clarity on how weddings can go ahead.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships in the UK

When Will Weddings Be Allowed to Take Place Again?

Places of worship and licensed venues opened for wedding ceremonies and civil partnerships of less than 30 people were allowed from 4th July 2020 in England. The government in Northern Ireland are allowing outdoor weddings for up to 10 people, while there is no set limit on Welsh guest numbers but they must remain small enough to maintain social distancing.

As of June, indoor weddings in Scotland are still banned, and couples may only may outdoor with a maximum of eight guests.

Of Course, the situation outlined by the government and the devolved assemblies relates to this moment in time and will change over time.
