

Risk assessment for COVID secure rehearsals

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

As lockdown eases across the UK music groups can start to think about getting back to meeting and rehearsing in person. Guidance varies in each nation, but for all, doing a risk assessment of your activities and putting measures in place to reduce risk is vital.

Updated 14 September to include: *Scotland guidance (Step two), face coverings guidance ('Mitigations' in Step three, and 'Behaviour of attendees and individual safety measures')*, *info about HEPA filters/air purifiers, 'The rehearsal space')*, *updated template risk assessment for rehearsals*)

Updated 17 September to include: *Wales lockdown measures (16 Sep), insurance, England guidance (14 Sep), updated risk assessment tool example*

Updated 21 September to include: *Specifically about the rule of 6 (Step two), evaluate the risk of not meeting against the risk of meeting (Step 4), Communication, updated risk assessment tool example, example risk assessment from a Making Music member group*

Updated 29 September to include: *local restrictions, on definition of close contact and updated template risk assessment*

Where do you start? We hope this helps and provides a useful checklist under each of the headings you will want to consider when planning a return to meeting in person – the first stage on the road back to some sort of ‘normality’.

But this document does not give you answers; just possible solutions. Only you know your group and your participants and will therefore be able to design the best medium and long-term future for your group. Risk assessing and managing a return to activity may look like a mountain to climb, but you have been running your group successfully, perhaps for a long time, so we know: you can do it.

This guidance assumes you have done some future planning already, that is, you have decided on whether your group will hibernate (no activity at all), operate only online for now, or prepare for a possible partial or full return of group activity in person in line with the most recent government guidance. And that you have decided for a full or partial return to in-person activity.

If you haven't done any future planning already, then take a [look at our resources](#) and find out before you go any further if a majority of your members supports you working towards a return to in person activity.

Please note also this document is about rehearsals or other group activity NOT involving a live audience – see separate [guidance on performing to an audience](#).

Step one – get the whole committee on board

Step two – understand what you can and can't do

Step three – do some research

Step four – talk to your stakeholders

Step five – do your risk assessment

Template risk assessments

Documents you will need to create

Communciation

Step one – get the whole committee on board

Easily written, not always easily done. But it is important because ultimately the whole committee – whose members may also be charity trustees – is jointly responsible for the activities of the group and the well-being of participants when they take part in those activities. Everyone on the committee should therefore be involved in the decision-making process, even if they are not the ones doing the risk assessment themselves or putting practical measures in place on the day.

Appointing someone to head up the COVID-19 risk assessment and risk management is a good idea. If numbers allow, you could appoint a sub-committee to investigate options further and agree on how and when the individual or sub-committee reports back to the committee for a decision. The sub-committee could include volunteers who are not in the committee – [see our guidance on committees](#) for more info on how a sub-committee can operate.

Step two – understand what you can and can't do

Check latest government guidance on meeting and rehearsing in person. This changes, so keep relevant links handy and look at them regularly, certainly before making changes or taking decisions. Also consider local variations to lockdown measures (see below).

[England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and now [Wales](#) (16 Sep) have issued guidance about whether and how non-professionals can meet to make music in a group. Wales has not, at the time this was last updated (14 Sept).

[Our resource](#) on what you can and can't do will always give you a summary of the current situation, including numbers allowed to meet.

On 14 September, in England (and in similar versions in the other nations of the UK) the 'rule of six' was introduced for social gatherings. The Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (England) have clarified (17 September) that planned risk assessed activity by organisations, provided there is no mingling, can continue to go ahead, under their performing arts guidance. We only note this here to illustrate that the guidance and rules created for individuals are often or even usually distinct from those created for organisations; it is these latter ones which are relevant for music groups (all UK nations).

Specifically about the 'rule of six', as it does also apply in other nations, the DCMS guidance is confusing by referring to 'sub-groups of six' when music groups meet. This is easy to understand in relation to actual performances (i.e. don't accept a group booking for more than six people, and then distance that group booking from the next one), but in relation to rehearsal, we believe it is clearer to think of each attendee as a sub-group of one – and every single person therefore needs to be socially distanced from every other person at all times: during the activity, before and after, during the break, in the toilet queue. The only exceptions would be, e.g. a parent and child or partners from one household attending together.

The reason for emphasising this is that in order to avoid permission for organised activity to meet to be withdrawn again, it is vital that we can prove that rehearsals do not lead to mingling, i.e. high risk activity, and that we are able to plan and execute socially distanced rehearsals. 'Sub-groups of six' is likely to introduce confusion and therefore lead to less rigorously maintained distancing.

We would like to make it clear that this is Making Music's view, not official guidance. But having lobbied long and hard for the possibility of those groups meeting again that can and want to, it is now in your hands to do so in a way that will not lead to another shutdown. Therefore we would urge everyone to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's most carefully at all times, not just for the benefit of their own group, but all groups across the whole of the UK.

Also check NHS guidance for individuals for definitions of who is at high or moderate risk, who is considered vulnerable and what is recommended for people in those categories. This also changes, especially as new research or evidence becomes available, so do check regularly and certainly before making changes/taking decisions.

Some general points from the DCMS guidance for England (best practice for all nations):

- “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. 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.” (Introduction section)
- “Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law.” (section 1.1)

Not following government guidance is not against the law, but we strongly recommend that you adhere to it wherever possible or articulate why you are not following it, if you decide to act differently. Not following the guidance could open you up to claims of negligence if someone catches COVID-19 as a result of attending a rehearsal you have organised, which could lead to a loss of trust from your participants and venue, and damage your group’s reputation.

Your group insurance will cover you for your activity, provided you have not acted negligently, so this is another good reason for following guidance closely and for creating a comprehensive risk assessment and implementing as many risk mitigation measures as you are able to as a group.

Step three – do some research

Do some background reading/watching/listening of at least some of the research and guidance from other countries. We have collated a lot this for you in our [research resource](#). This will help you understand what the issues may be, according to the scientists, and what others have already implemented and how successfully.

You also need to keep an eye on infection rates and local restrictions in your area at all times – it is more likely, going forward, that this will have an impact on your group. There is a [dedicated page on local restrictions and lockdowns](#) - (England), ([Wales](#)), ([Northern Ireland](#) - these are the general restrictions, have not found a local restrictions page) and ([Scotland](#)).

A note on local restrictions (we suspect these will be key in the coming months):

England – (29 September): all the local restrictions currently in place (apart from West Midlands, see below) include the following clause:

If you operate a business or organise events within the affected areas you should take steps to ensure people do not socialise with people they do not live with, in line with COVID-19 secure guidance.

This means, as advised before, that you must, if you meet for in-person rehearsals, at all costs avoid social interaction and mingling. Keep every single person separate and 2m distant from each other throughout the activity, including arrival, break and departure.

West Midlands local restrictions do not include this clause, but they say:

When meeting friends and family you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) you must not meet in a group of more than 6. Further detail can be found in the guidance for meeting others safely including associated exemptions.

Meeting others safely includes the exemption that '*venues following COVID-19 Secure guidelines will be able to continue to host more people in total*'.

So again be very careful and mindful not to allow social interaction during your planned and risk assessed activity.

Scotland – (29 September): all the local restrictions do not change the general guidance on Making Music groups' activity.

Wales – (29 September): every single one of the current local restrictions in place says in the FAQs

Can I still see people outdoors?

Yes, up to a maximum of 30 people can meet outdoors but for the time being they will need to be people who also live in the [name of locked down local authority] area. You should continue to socially distance from people outside your household.

Therefore if you have been meeting outside in a maximum group of 30, then you can continue to do so, but you should be social distancing to 2metres at all times.

Northern Ireland – (29 September): no local restrictions in place that we have found.

Public Health England also publish daily data (and longer term comparisons) on cases, testing and deaths for UK, nations, regions, local authorities by size, if you want to keep an eye on trends in your area.

Very short summary on what are currently considered infection routes for Covid-19

- Aerosols; lighter than air, believed to be able to linger in the air like a cloud for a length of time yet to be established, in quantities which may or may not be sufficient to infect someone breathing them in; research still also has to determine how long it takes for those aerosol particles to dry out and stop being infectious; further considerations are whether aerosols, if breathed in, especially if you take deep breaths in order to sing or blow into an instrument, could travel further into your respiratory system.

Mitigations: as knowledge still limited, harder to pin down; agreement:

- open air carries fewer risks
 - if indoors, then large volume spaces preferable (floor space and height of ceilings, the Germans call this ‘cathedral-like’ spaces)
 - indoor spaces need to have good ventilation, ideally air conditioning which removes used air upwards; and/or has filters fitted; no system that recycles air; no fans
 - importance of social distancing, 13 August DCMS guidance is for 2m, and states that this is never to be compromised for non-professionals
 - spending less than 15mins face to face with others in enclosed space
 - face coverings are now mandatory in all four nations of the UK in almost all indoor public spaces, including places of worship and community centres, frequently used by members for rehearsals. There are some exceptions – check the updated government advice ([England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#)).
- Droplets; emitted through breathing, sneezing, coughing; heavier than air, passed on directly or through shared surfaces on which they fall or are deposited on through people’s hands. Virus can remain viable on surfaces for up to 3 days (depending on the surface), hence....

Mitigations: hand-washing; regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces; not touching face, especially mouth or eyes; not sharing equipment or surfaces; coughing/sneezing into tissue/crook of arm

Step four – talk to your stakeholders

Members

The committee is on board; you’ve done your research. Now can you find out what your members think and want?

You may have regular Zoom meetings with your group – but is everyone there? Probably not, so ideally you want to find a way to sound out your members which allows everyone to have a say – if possible, anonymously. People may be worried about admitting that they are scared or that they can’t afford to come back to the group, for example.

Tools which can be used are Google forms or SurveyMonkey (free for 10 questions or fewer). Or you can use the [survey which we have put together for you](#). You can simply send the link to your group members and then get in touch with us when you are ready and we will email you the answers for your group.

This may not work for everyone - are they online, can they manage an online survey? You could also send out our survey as a pdf or word doc via email or print and post it if necessary (ideally with a stamped addressed envelope). If the survey is emailed back as an attachment, save it separately from the email, so anonymity is preserved to some extent.

Or you may prefer to create your own questionnaire – you might still find our [survey resource](#) useful as a starting point when considering what questions to ask your group.

Always give deadlines, but in this instance work really hard to get an answer from absolutely everyone, so that you don't find yourself acting only on behalf of those that shout loudest. If necessary, resort to telephoning people, in confidence, to sound them out.

Why do we think this is important?

The guidance makes it clear that you need to consult your participants, initially when you set up safe ways of working and also once you have started meeting again in terms of responding to concerns raised, and acting on such concerns.

But in addition - Covid-19 is a divisive issue. At one end of the spectrum are people who think all that lockdown is a bit over the top, and at the other end are people who, whether vulnerable or not, are not comfortable leaving the house for any reason.

Do you know where on that scale your members sit? Or how many are more worried or less worried? If you don't, then finding out as precisely as you can, will help you decide if it's worth planning a return right now and what that return should look like (e.g. in terms of numbers and whether you will need instrument deputies, if you do go ahead). And whatever you decide, you need the support your members, after all that's who your group exists for, so it is really important that you spend your time planning something that they will feel able to subscribe to (literally!).

They won't all agree...

Indeed they won't. But it'll be easier for the minority to accept something if you have evidence of what the majority want, rather than just going on gut feeling. And the more detail you have, the more secure your basis will be to plan (e.g. venue size). If you know only 15 members out of 30 will return straight away (for whatever reason), then perhaps you won't need a larger rehearsal space just yet, buying you time to find one for when everyone does return. You'll also know, then, that you need to plan how to include those 15 who cannot attend in person at the moment.

Consider also...

The risks to individuals' mental health through meeting or not meeting in person. For some, this may be the only activity that gets them out of the house (except food shopping) and to undertake something with others.

If they are in a vulnerable category, but choose to attend/express a wish to attend, provided you make clear to them that there will be remaining risks, and that they will always be more significant to someone in their health category, it is then their personal choice and risk assessment to attend your in person meeting or not.

Either way, you need to be understanding, supportive and respectful of your members' choices – provided they do not impinge on the rights of their fellow participants, e.g. by non-compliance with the mitigation measures you put in place.

Put a different way – evaluate the risk of NOT meeting against the risk of meeting, in the way the government might have done for children and schools: they decided in the end that the risk to children of not attending was greater than that of attending. But this is never an easy decision (e.g. in schools – what about the teachers...), but it needs debating.

Your conductor/musical director/accompanist

You need to talk to them to find out their view on all this.

Their personal situation: Are they themselves vulnerable (e.g. age)? Do they live with someone who is? Is the rest of their work, e.g., in a school or another environment into which they cannot risk bringing any Covid-19?

If they cannot or do not feel comfortable returning to any in person rehearsals – consider your options. Can they run the online part of your offering, for those at home, for a part of their usual fee, and do you engage another MD for in person rehearsals? How about sharing an MD with another local group – your MD does all the online, theirs does all the in-person?

Their professional position: Musically, rehearsals either online or reduced in person with social distancing will not be the same as the choir or band rehearsals your MD led before the pandemic.

Are they willing to adapt? Are they happy to get on top of the technology? Do they not wish to engage with this new environment?

You will need to establish the answers to these questions, in order to know whether this is the MD, still, for you, or whether you need to consider other options.

See also our resource on [Working with your MD.](#)

Volunteers

You may find that in this new world you need (more) volunteers to help you run and manage rehearsals, for instance signing in people on arrival, reminding people of expected behaviours, for traffic management in the break, certainly initially, as systems bed in.

Once you have worked out which risk mitigations you are putting in place, and therefore what needs to be done before/during each weekly rehearsal, you can assess whether you have enough people to help, and of course make sure that their health & safety is also considered and they are provided, where appropriate, with gloves, face coverings, etc..

Your rehearsal space

The venue you usually rehearse in and your working relationship with them 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 be thinking not just about your group, but all the other groups using their venue all through 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 Covid-19 secure, so that your activity can take place in it. That your venue is Covid-19 secure is one of the conditions of your activity being allowed to take place, as stipulated in the guidance.

Once you have found out that the venue is happy to welcome you again and that they are Covid-19 secure, your first step will be to find out under what conditions, i.e. what their risk assessment is that you will have to work to.

- Ask to see it and make sure you are satisfied it addresses the risks as you see them.
- Go and see the venue and look at their measures for yourself.
- Think about your requirements and how they fit with the venue's RA and procedures:
 - Are there any risks specific to your rehearsals that might not be covered by the venue's RA? Can these be accommodated? How?
 - Are there elements of your rehearsals that might be difficult to fit within their RA? Speak to the venue about options:
 - Some venues might not budge and you have to either find a way to work within their procedures, or look elsewhere
 - Some might be flexible and open to different options if things are done safely. Be wary of changing too much as their staff might be used to their approach.

All the above should be done with the venue – they know the site and will advise you on

how best to manage your rehearsals.

If there are usually staff on hand in your rehearsal venue, then make sure there is clarity about what they are responsible for (e.g. cleaning) and what your group is responsible for.

If your venue is not Covid-19 secure or you don't think what they have done is sufficient, then consider if it is the right venue for you. It's your activity and your members, and they will see you – quite correctly - as responsible.

The size and layout of your venue will dictate what you can and can't do and whether it is still suitable for your rehearsals. Guidance says you should maintain social distancing of 2 metres at all times. The obvious consideration here is the capacity and layout options of the area you usually rehearse in. But you also need to think about:

- entry and exit points - capacity and layout options, do arrivals need to be staggered, or is signage to remind about social distancing enough? Is there space to queue?
- the capacity of other areas (toilets, areas used during break, if there is one etc)
- how people will flow from one area to another , e.g. is there enough room to have one-way systems

Also consider how well ventilated the venue is or can be (find out more in ventilation below).

However great your venue's RA and procedures, you still need to do your own risk assessment for your activity. Where appropriate, it should of course reference and/or build on the venue's one, but it is your activity which it is your responsibility to risk assess.

Please note: your RA should be published on your website and made available to anyone attending rehearsals (members, MD, volunteers etc.), in advance of attending.

Step five – do your risk assessment

Now you should have all the information you can get down to some risk assessment!

What are you trying to do with the risk assessment?

Risk assessment for coronavirus safety has two purposes. Firstly, to reduce to as low as possible the chance that someone infectious with coronavirus is present at the rehearsal. Secondly, in the unlikely event that someone infectious is at the rehearsal, the risk of transmission – through all possible routes – is minimised.

The guidance says 'organisations have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures'. Life is never entirely risk-free and you cannot reduce the risk to zero, but you need to do what you can within the

constraints of your resources – or decide to not start activity just now, if you feel you cannot put enough risk reducing measures in place (e.g. cost, lack of volunteers).

One other thing to bear in mind is that the guidance says you must not disadvantage people with protected characteristics. So consider when you create your risk mitigation plan who may not be able to understand or comply with measures (e.g. there are people exempt from wearing face-coverings.).

More broadly, you are also working to reduce the risk of your group members leaving or the group falling apart because members disagree about how to proceed or feel left out, one way or another.

A risk assessment will also allow you to balance all that with what is compatible with your musical activity (is there any point to rehearsals in person with one horn, 3 violins and a percussionist only?) (On the other hand, might it be easier to build confidence with a smaller group initially while the new procedures are bedding in?).

And finally you need to risk assess what is financially possible for your group – it may be that a large enough rehearsal space is available, but not affordable.

New in England: ‘priority actions to take’

Added to the performing arts guidance (England) on 14 September, they give a handy overview (for all nations) of the minimum seven steps you should consider in order to minimise risks:

1. Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment. Share it with all your stakeholders
2. Clean more often. Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask attendees at rehearsals and volunteers to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.
3. Ask participants to wear face coverings in any indoor space or where required to do so by law. Some exemptions apply. Check when to wear one, exemptions, 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 people your customers can follow. 2 metres is still regarded as the standard distance to abide by.
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 attendees customers and audience members for 21 days. From 18 September, this will be enforced in law. Some exemptions apply. Check Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace for details. **Please note, from 24 September you must also register for and display an NHS Test & Trace poster with a QR code at the entrance to your event.**

7. Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away. If someone planning to attend a rehearsal 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.

Here we should add as a priority to ensure that 'no mingling' (England formulation) takes place between participants (see note above). This equates to the previous instruction that social distancing of 2m must never be compromised during the activity. We would suggest therefore, as this is a priority in all nations, albeit expressed in slightly different language in different governments' guidance, that you use strict social distancing as the chief principle that you should achieve through your mitigation measures.

General risk factors to consider - overview

1. **The current infection** rate in your area: the UK as a whole may be high/low, but is there a spike in your area or no cases at all?

Your risk assessment can carry a link to the relevant government page and your commitment to checking it on a regular basis. Local restrictions are now also increasingly used, so do check those pages regularly.

2. **Risk to individuals** from group, and from individuals to group:

Should high risk/ vulnerable individuals be excluded for now in general; if any of them do want to attend, how do you make it clear that they do so at their own risk? (Over a certain age, risk is substantially increased. See the data from the Office of National Statistics). You should identify who your high risk individuals are as part of your risk assessment, either by direct conversations, self-assessment or questionnaire.

What about weekly risks from attendees: how do you ensure that no-one with symptoms or who has been in touch with someone with symptoms attends the rehearsal? You could send out a pre-rehearsal questionnaire like this [sample questionnaire](#), or ask questions as you register people for rehearsals (recording their answers), refusing entry to anyone who answers 'yes' to any of the questions. We have a [sample pre-rehearsal questionnaire](#) (Word doc) you can use as a starting point.

Track and trace: you already have your members details, but not everyone attends each week; make sure you take a register at each rehearsal, so that if someone falls ill, you know who they may have been in contact with. You need to keep this for at least 21 days in case you are asked to share it with the NHS Track & Trace service. From 18 September this is mandatory in England. See guidance. Also in England from 24 September you must [register and display an NHS Test & Trace poster with a QR code](#).

A note on the meaning of 'close contact' – how is that defined and therefore when should people self-isolate (definition from NHS, assume applicable UK wide)?

Tell people you've been in close contact with that you have symptoms

- You may want to tell people you've been in close contact with in the past 48 hours that you might have coronavirus.

What does close contact mean?

- Examples of close contact include:
 - close face to face contact (under 1 metre) for any length of time – including talking to them or coughing on them
 - being within 1 to 2 metres of each other for more than 15 minutes – including travelling in a small vehicle
 - spending lots of time in your home, such as cleaning it

They do not need to self-isolate unless they're contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service. But they should take extra care to follow social distancing advice, including washing their hands often.

From: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

3. The behaviour of attendees and individual safety measures:

- Pre-assessment before arrival; it is crucial that you do what you can so that no-one with symptoms of Covid-19 or who has been in contact with someone who has symptoms in the last 7 days enters your rehearsal room;
- you may consider measuring everyone's temperature, but: these thermometers are not thought to be very accurate; most people are already infectious before having a raised temperature; many people are asymptomatic with Covid, so would not present a raised temperature, but still be infectious. So it may not be worth it.
- perhaps therefore better to ask and record the answers; and deny anyone access who answers yes to any of the four questions
- Individuals' behaviour in the room prior/after activity/during breaks; how do you prevent complacency? Build in reminders – in posters, verbally, make it someone's task;
- How will you deal with non-compliance? This could threaten your risk management measures, so you would be perfectly within your rights to ask them to leave; but perhaps warn members that this would be the ultimate consequence, after 2 warnings, and explain why: it is for everyone's safety
- Face-coverings are now mandatory in most enclosed public spaces in all four nations of the UK, including places of workship and community halls, frequently used by members for rehearsals. Check full guidance for inclusions and exemptions (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland). You therefore need to make them mandatory in your rehearsal room (except whilst actually playing the trombone/clarinet/etc.....). Consider though that there are people exempt from wearing face coverings.

- For singers, ask members to bring more than one to rehearsals; singing tends to wet them through quickly and when wet, they are no longer effective
- For wind instruments the guidance says you are not required to wear a face covering if 'you are undertaking exercise or an activity and it would negatively impact your ability to do so'. This means players could and should still wear face coverings at any time they are not actually playing their wind/brass instrument.
- Gloves – make disposable gloves available for those who do have to share equipment (e.g. person setting up chairs or percussion) or those who will end up touching shared surfaces (e.g. volunteers managing register etc)

4. **The rehearsal space:**

- Most important factor 1: the size/volume and layout, in order to facilitate and maintain rigorous social distancing of 2m at all times; consider therefore also access and traffic flow to/from entrance/exit/bathrooms/break area, how pinch points can be avoided
- Most important factor 2: the ability to ventilate the venue adequately, so that no accumulation of aerosols is possible; this could be air-conditioning, in which case ideally it draws the used air upwards, and should use outside air; or opening of windows and doors in the break.
- You might invest in a CO2 'traffic light' monitor (approx. £85 from Amazon), as other harmful particles in the air have been found to be present if CO2 is too high. It can give a helpful indication – but it is not a magic bullet; always use in conjunction with other measures.
- Use this monitor to experiment with the air and ventilation in the rehearsal space before your first rehearsal, then use it in rehearsals to make sure the space is properly ventilated before participants arrive, in the break, and after the rehearsal (for the next user). Plug-in HEPA filters/air purifiers have also been suggested by some members. However, please note that those that cover large volume spaces do not come cheap, e.g. £250 for one covering 140 square metres. There are much cheaper ones for smaller spaces.
- Equipment: minimise the amount of equipment used, fullstop; and especially the amount of equipment from the venue; put away, or ask them to put away, anything you won't need, so that people aren't tempted to, e.g., lean against things – someone will have to clean them afterwards! You might even ask members to bring their own chairs. If that is not possible, make sure chairs are handled by a minimum of designated persons, wearing gloves, and are disinfected before and after rehearsals. Ask the venue for hard chairs (no upholstery), as they will be easier to clean. If not possible, ask people to bring their own or consider investing in a cheap set yourself.
- Facilities/toilets/sinks: look at them in terms of spacing and social distancing (if a block with several cubicles) and where/how a queue for them could be managed; also discuss cleaning with the venue – will they/will you? Plus you want to make sure there are soap and paper towels always available – who is responsible and covers the cost?

- Cleaning: you would want to have the space/equipment cleaned before your rehearsal, but is that your responsibility or the venue's? if they do it, will you incur additional costs? And who cleans at the end?
- What products will be used by you/venue? Consider allergies!
- Rubbish disposal: you would want to make sure there are enough rubbish bins, so that, e.g. disposable gloves or face coverings can be disposed of safely; discuss with venue if you need additional bins and who will dispose of rubbish after your rehearsal, and where? The venue may have changed procedures as well, compared to pre-Covid-19.
- Cost; what will your rental now be and will there be additional items to be charged? Some venues are bending over backwards to have groups back and are offering really helpful rates, especially if they have received some supportive funding from elsewhere; others who haven't may have to recoup their full costs, which could be increased compared to pre-Covid.
- Other users of the venue before or after your group; it would help you to find out who/what they are, to evaluate the risk of infection to your participants and for you to determine what pre-meeting cleaning and ventilation regime you need to implement; and whether there's enough of a gap so participants do not meet/cross over, creating pinch points you cannot control.
- Each person should have an allocated space for their chair and items; that space should be marked by you on a seating plan, so that if someone falls ill, you are able to pinpoint who sat next to them during rehearsals.
- You could combine attendance register and seating plan - ideally, people always sit in the vicinity of the same people, minimising the risk of transmitting to many, if they were to be infectious.

A note on plastic screens; they are not necessarily the answer to keeping infection down in a rehearsal room – the way aerosols travel, it seems screens would have to be very tall; also, they may actually act as 'virus traps' which would not get cleared by ventilation; and someone has to clean them....

5. **The musical activity:**

- rehearsal length; as aerosols and droplets will accumulate over time, keep rehearsals as short as possible – difficult to know what that means, but we have seen recommendations stipulating 60 mins as the maximum, with short bursts of between 15 and 30 mins;
- equipment to be used; only individuals' own to be used, ideally, and no sharing (e.g. of music stands, mutes, rosin etc.) allowed
- if band instruments are being used, create a handling and cleaning regime (this page talks about guitars, but also includes links to cleaning tips for all different kinds of instruments by many organisations)

- sheet music: each person to have a set, no sharing, take home and bring back each time.
 - Either: scan parts in, email to participants who then print out – acceptable for copyright if you have bought or hired the music and are just using for practise (destroy when finished with)
 - Buy/hire: electronic copies which participants print out – a number of publishers now offer limited digital licences.
 - Hire/buy sheet music in the normal way, issue to participants in sealed plastic folders to take home and leave sealed for 72 hours before using. Their set is only for them to use.
- placing of individuals during activity; face to face is to be avoided if possible; back to back or side by side is much better. If you are a small choir, having the singers in one line may work; for larger groups you could consider staggered rows, with each person, of course, having a radius of 2m around them.
- do not forget those who cannot attend, either this week, or for a while; create a plan for their rehearsal and continued training
- consider MD/accompanist position in relation to singers/players; there should be 3m-5m distance between the front row of singers/players and the MD; does s/he need a pocket amp and head mic to be heard by everyone?
- Special considerations for instruments where spit accumulates in the tubing and needs to be emptied out during rehearsals: ask members to bring a towel and plastic bag to take it away in, for this purpose; or perhaps an old takeaway carton; or provide, certainly as back-up, lots of paper towels
- Special considerations for wind/brass instruments, especially flutes and trombones which appear in some tests to push out aerosols over quite a distance: consider greater radius around them (e.g. 3m); and/or bell coverings ('shower cap for the trumpet'); this is less about the science, than it is about confidence for the instrumentalists sitting in front of or in the 'firing line' of these instruments.
- Special considerations for singing: the louder the voice and the more consonants used, the more aerosols are produced; consider even more than 2m distance between singers; consider also not singing too loudly; practise consonants over Zoom next time, and just use humming to get the harmonies right when you meet in person...
- Percussion: the equipment may be the percussionist's own or be stored at the venue. Normally, they might have help setting up. Now they may have to do it by themselves or have a restricted number of named and registered helpers with disposable gloves (to be disposed of safely afterwards); percussionist should bring own drumsticks or be issued a set in a sealed plastic bag which they take home and leave sealed for 72 hours before use. They should not share that set.
- Keyboard/piano: to be disinfected before and after use, nobody but designated keyboard player should use the instrument during a session, unless disinfected between users.
- Page turning for pianist not encouraged - necessitates proximity and touching the music.

- Standing round the piano to bash notes with the accompanist not encouraged. If necessary, singer should not face pianist; better to face in the same direction as pianist; keep 3m distance between singer and pianist.
- Rehearsal times: can they be adjusted so that those on public transport don't have to travel at the busiest times?

6. **Ancillary activity:**

- Refreshments; ideally, do not provide – ask everyone to bring their own. If refreshments are provided, maintain social distancing at all times. Use disposable cups or use a dishwasher. If cups are collected and transferred in a box, the person responsible for cleaning them must take full precautions (gloves, hand washing) when loading the dishwasher.
- Breaks; ensure enough space to allow social distancing is available away from the rehearsal area which will need ventilating in the break; is there an outside space for people to go to? Wherever the break space is, consider the traffic to/from it and the rehearsal area and toilets, how to avoid pinch points and therefore ensure continued social distancing.
- You might usually not have a break, or now consider rehearsals without a break, but it is likely that you will need to have one, in order to ventilate the rehearsal space, unless you keep your rehearsals to no longer than 30 mins
- Hand hygiene; provide sanitiser in various places, e.g. at entrance, by bathrooms; also ensure there is soap and paper for hand-washing and a poster with hand-washing technique displayed
- Arrival/departure from the rehearsal room: social interaction to be strictly distanced and arrival/departure at staggered times to be considered, plus distanced queueing; maybe in the past people just drifted in, but now you will have an entrance procedure and signing in protocol, so this may potentially create places where larger groups form; work to avoid this
- Personal items (coats, bags, etc.); many people arrive from work, or have large instrument cases, or just lots of outdoor clothes, especially in winter; think about where these will go – encourage people to keep them near their own chair/space; perhaps allocate a space for large instrument cases, but ensuring they can be spaced, not touching, and not necessitating their owners coming too close to each other when (un)packing

7. **Transport to/from rehearsal:** a large area of risk, so you need to think about this carefully and encourage your members to think about the least risky mode of transport

- Public transport – least favoured as it involves sharing enclosed spaces with many others; if necessary, remember face coverings and trying to maintain social distancing; even here there are worse/better means of transport: trains better than buses better than underground (in terms of ventilation and ability to social distance)

- Own car – very good in terms of low Covid risk (though bad for the environment...); is there parking at the venue?
- Shared cars – to be avoided if possible, but if unavoidable (or someone otherwise cannot ever attend), then use face coverings, sit as far from each other as you can in the car, have windows open if at all possible
- Cycling – very good in terms of low Covid risk; are there places at the rehearsal venue to lock up bikes securely?
- Walking – very good in terms of low Covid risk; consider umbrellas, wellies, big wet coats in winter time and where they might be put in the venue.

8. **Your organisation:** the risk here is that you take on more than you can manage, so this is also a risk you should consider and work to mitigate

- additional costs (one-off/ongoing); one-off costs may include a CO2 monitor, HEPA filter/air purifier, and a pocket amp for your MD; ongoing costs could be disinfectant, hand sanitiser, more rubbish bags etc., but most crucially the possibility of a different, larger venue
- (additional) volunteers needed; most groups don't find it easy to find enough people to help out, whether on the committee or for events; so if your risk assessment plans for 4 volunteers at each rehearsal – is that realistic? Where will those volunteers come from? Perhaps a rota system, so everyone plays their part (though consider where it is best to always have the same people working together on one task, as a 'bubble'.) And it should not always be the usual suspects, or they will definitely have burn-out soon!
- 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 will you need to pay your MD for either or both versions? And what about those members of yours who have lost their job over corona – 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

All measures together cumulatively reduce risk

With the measures you may consider for reducing the risk of Covid-19 being spread amongst your members in rehearsals, it's not a question of either/or; the more of these measures you can put in place, the more you will reduce the risk. Just because your venue has excellent ventilation, doesn't mean you should not use face coverings as well or reduce the length of rehearsals.

Remember what you are trying to do is reduce the risk as much as possible, so hurl as many measures at it as your group can manage.

Template risk assessments #Template risk assessments

We have two template RAs, one is an 'example' document with suggestions of the sorts of things you might include. You can use this document as starting point and adapt it as you see fit. The other is a blank version of the example document that you can populate yourself, if you prefer to start from scratch.

[Download the template risk assessment \(example\)](#)

[Download the template risk assessment \(blank\)](#)

Note: both documents are Excel spread sheets

One of our member groups have created a really useful risk assessment that you can download that may also help.

[DOWNLOAD risk assessment from member group \(example\)](#)

Documents you will need to create

1. Risk assessment; re-evaluated at intervals, depending on how situation evolves, e.g. once a month, once a term, when guidance changes, when infection rate falls/rises, agreed and reviewed with your venue
2. Risk assessment to be done with each individual participant now and periodically. This could be achieved through a self-completed questionnaire:
 - Are they/someone they live with/care for considered high risk by NHS?
 - Are they/someone they live with/care for considered moderate risk/vulnerable by NHS (e.g. aged over 70, certain underlying health conditions)?
 - We have a [sample pre-rehearsal questionnaire](#) (Word doc.) you can use as a starting point.
3. Checklist for each in-person meeting
 - Preparation needed before arrival at venue
 - Set-up of space needed prior to meeting
 - During meeting: arrival - pre-entry questions; register; hand hygiene
 - During meeting: running of activity
 - During meeting: breaks, bathrooms, ventilation
 - During meeting: emergencies (someone feels ill)
 - End of meeting: manage departure, clean
4. Consider what signage and posters you need to create

Communciation

.... Is crucial:

1. With venue/space
2. With musical professionals you engage

3. With members and volunteers: before, during rehearsals, ongoing (e.g. reminders, changes); share plans and assessments and links to relevant NHS/government guidance with members, so they know you're following official advice
 4. You must consult with members and other stakeholders (e.g. MD, volunteers) prior to making your plans, then you must share your RA with them; you must continue to act on their feedback, adapting/tightening rules etc.
 5. You must show the world that you're Covid-19 compliant (publish your RA/ a shorter version, e.g. on your website); put up a poster saying you have risk assessed and are compliant, e.g. outside your rehearsal venue (if passers-by are likely to hear you and perhaps especially so if rehearsing outside in a public space); you could include links to the performing arts guidance and/or your RA.
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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.