

**SOCIAL DISTANCING OPTIONS**

**ANNEX H: PUBLIC GATHERINGS INCLUDING MASS EVENTS**

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**CURRENT MEASURES:**

- Gatherings of more than 2 people (from different households) are not permitted
- This includes social events, including weddings, baptisms and other religious ceremonies. Funerals can be attended by close family or members of the same household
- This policy also means that mass events, such as cultural and sporting events are banned

**Part 1: MEASURES PROPOSED**

The following options are proposed in a phased approach:

1. **Permit mixing of groups of 2 or more households - initially outside only.** Over time, this could be extended to larger groups of households and to enable mixing in private, but this would be harder to enforce.
2. **Permit more attendees at funerals** e.g. allow friends and wider family to attend, subject to a maximum number defined by the venue. Potentially set an overall limit on numbers.
3. **Permit religious services, with limited numbers present dependent on the available space.**
4. **Permit weddings with close family and members of the same household.** This will allow for people to get married if they have a pressing reason to do so, but not yet to host a full celebration. Potentially set an overall limit on numbers.
5. **Permit closed-door concerts, cultural events, sporting or other similar events to take place for broadcast** (subject to ongoing contractual considerations - the sectors are already exploring options).

These measures could be segmented in a number of ways, and would all need to be subject to social distancing guidelines (2m gap etc.).

**Part 2: BENEFITS OF THESE MEASURES**

- **Economic:** Enabling sporting and cultural events to take place will enable these sectors to generate income – through broadcasting and advertising, or more if the events were pay-per-view. At the very least, it would allow for contractual obligations (e.g. around football broadcasting) to be fulfilled, mitigating some significant financial or legal risks. Funeral homes income streams would be more secure. Likely economic confidence to be an intangible benefit of this change.
- **Non-Covid health:** Increased mental health wellbeing due to increased opportunities for social contact, religious services, and new broadcast content.
- **Social:** Providing additional opportunities for social contact, particularly family visits, and for religious services, will help to mitigate the risks of other societal harms (hard to quantify).

- Fairness: Reduces impact on cultures that have large extended families (unable to attend funerals), attendance at marriages and religious services to benefit faith groups in particular.

### Part 3: RISKS OF THESE MEASURES

- Covid health: Permitting increased interactions of small numbers in outdoor spaces, subject to social distancing (1 and 2) is unlikely to have a significant impact on infections. This is heightened in the case of indoor gatherings (3 and 4) - particularly given the challenges of ensuring social distancing at religious services. The infection risk could staging of mass events (5) is dependent on numerous factors - we are starting to work up principles and guidance of how this can happen safely.

An increased number of people gathering will heighten demand for PPE, which could impact on supply to frontline settings.

- Public Services: Additional enforcement may be required for mass events to ensure members of the public do not try to attend – this could create excessive burdens on the police at this time. It will also be extremely difficult to effectively enforce increased gatherings (particularly if these happen in private).
- Fairness: Where possible, the mass events policy should set (co-designed) guidelines that would be up to the individual organisations to follow. If not, enabling some sporting and cultural events and not others may lead to challenges from governing bodies e.g. National Cricket Board challenging a decision to allow football, or one theatre company challenging a decision to stage another's show. Similarly, there is a risk that some religions or settings cannot facilitate weddings or services with social distancing in place – either putting people at greater risk, or meaning they cannot benefit from the policy to the same extent. Preventing older people or those with health conditions from attending religious services may also create a risk of discrimination, though arguably justifiable.
- Sustainability: Closed door mass events would work for a limited period, but would be difficult to maintain for longer periods without infection risk, and an increased risk of the public attempting to attend.

### Part 4: POTENTIAL MITIGATION TO ADDRESS THESE RISKS

- Clear guidance: Maintaining a clear headline message that the public must be particularly careful when gathering in larger groups – staying 2m apart and washing hands frequently.
- PPE: Encouraging/enabling those attending larger gatherings or facilitating mass events to wear PPE, particularly gloves and masks. This would be particularly the case for wedding officiants etc. (though would exacerbate demand-side risks)
- Safer environments: Requiring settings (such as concert venues, religious premises, registry offices) to submit clear risk assessments to local authorities, setting out the measures they are imposing, including maximum capacities for different venues to maximise spacing.
- Segmentation: All these options could be segmented to limit larger gatherings to lower risk cohorts e.g. by imposing age limits, preventing attendance of those with higher health risk etc.
- Isolated environments: Those involved in mass events could be required to self-isolate for 7/14 days prior to events so that these are essentially sealed environments (the Premier

League has been discussing proposals along these lines). Alternatively, sporting events could be held at neutral venues, mitigating the risk of additional people trying to attend.

- Forward look: The sustainability of these measures would likely be reliant on managing the public's expectations of when large private events will be possible, and when mass events will be open to (limited numbers of) the public e.g. within 2-3 months, subject to specific tests. Otherwise, there is a risk that increasing numbers of the public seek to attend closed door events.
- Track and Trace: See below.

#### **Part 5: IMPLICATIONS OF TRACK, TRACE AND TRACE FOR THESE MEASURES**

- Efficient Test, Track and Trace will be critical to mitigating the risk of increased gatherings leading to infection risk.
- Officiants at weddings (and potentially the small number of attendees), religious services or larger funerals, as well as people involved in facilitating mass events could be required to undergo proactive testing in advance, and only be allowed to attend if clear. This would be more challenging to require for members of the public attending funerals or religious services.
- Attendance at any of the formal events could be required to download the Track and Trace app (though this may be unenforceable). This could also be strongly encouraged for those gathering in outdoor spaces.