

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden, MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

13 April 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing following the publication of guidance relating to Step 2 (12 April) of the England roadmap.

Patiently, we have accepted the distinction between professional and non-professional music activity over the last five months and have delightedly taken up the opportunity to meet in groups of six to play or sing outdoors since 29 March.

However, we are now very disappointed to find that whilst amateur group sports, photography or gardening clubs and other organised activities are able to resume, **non-professional music groups are still not permitted to meet in larger numbers than six in the open air.**

When some of the approximately 14,000 choirs, orchestras, bands and ensembles in the UK comprising near one million participants met in person in the autumn of 2020, these volunteer-led organisations were, thanks to our extensive guidance, able to competently risk assess and mitigate Covid risks, without any infections reported.

The ban on music groups – organised activity just like the adult football clubs that are now meeting outdoors – is therefore not easily understood, by us or our members.

The benefits of singing or playing in a group are well-documented, including by the All Parliamentary Group for Arts and Health report from 2018, and are now desperately needed, following a nose dive in all our mental health during the pandemic.

We fear above all that the next roadmap steps may be delayed, and groups and their participants, having shelved their activity so long already for the public good, may once again be sacrificed to the gods of hospitality and sport, which are not the panacea for everyone.

Therefore, we urge you to allow organised rehearsal activity outdoors by non-professional music groups in Step 2 of the England roadmap and to update the relevant guidance accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



Barbara Eifler, Chief Executive