



Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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Barbara Eifler
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Dear Barbara Eifler,

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 May, regarding the rules for choirs at Step 3 of the roadmap. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Professional performing arts activity is again permitted, following the move to Step 3 on 17 May. Non-professional groups of up to six people can now sing indoors, in line with the rule of 6 applying to many other indoor activities and gatherings, and can perform or rehearse in groups of up to 30 outdoors. In addition, multiple groups of 30 can now sing outdoors, provided the groups are kept separate throughout the activity, in line with other large events that follow the [organised events guidance for local authorities](#).

This is an important step forward in the return of non-professional performing arts activity from Step 2. However, we know that continued restrictions on amateur singing in larger numbers are deeply disappointing to amateur choirs and performance groups across the country who are eager to see a full return to this much-loved activity.

This government knows how frustrating this is and want to assure you that everyone across government wants to ease these restrictions as soon as possible.

Ultimately, we have followed the views of public health experts on singing. We are aware that singing can increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission through the spread of aerosol droplets. A [NERVTAG](#) assessment of transmission of COVID-19 in singing and music events found there was '[...]evidence to suggest that singing can produce more aerosols than normal talking or breathing. Singing for any appreciable amount of time therefore may present a risk for the creation of infectious aerosols and allow for infection transmission.'

The DCMS commissioned [PERFORM study](#) looked into this further and reported that singing at the loudest volume increased the production of aerosol, which was backed up by a [consensus statement from SAGE](#) indicating that 'singing produces more aerosols (a statistically significant factor of between 1.5-3.4 in median number and mass concentration) than speaking at a similar loudness'.

All of these studies highlight the key factors of physical distancing, ventilation and volume, which is why we have published the [suggested principles of safer singing](#).



Since these studies and the work from SAGE, the COIVD-19 context has changed with the emergence of more transmissible strains. This would include the so-called Kent variant B.1.1.7 which research suggests may be 70% more transmissible, and now the variant B1.617.2 first identified in India, which looks to be even more transmissible. This means the risks associated with transmission have increased since these studies were undertaken.

For these reasons, it is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions, so that we can see the impact of this before moving to the next step. The [Performing Arts Guidance](#) sets out what this means for amateur singing in more detail. We are aware that some amateur groups perform in professional contexts, and even in national institutions, such as the Royal Albert Hall. Whilst it is for organisers and venues to determine how to operate in accordance within the relevant guidance and regulations, we would remind you that the limits do not apply to activity taking place for work or commercial activity.

We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation, and that we keep moving forwards. It has been fantastic to see venues open up and the public rising to the challenge of returning to a more normal life safely.

As set out in the roadmap, we hope to remove all legal limits on social contact at step 4, meaning the rules of 6 indoors and 30 outdoors would no longer apply, including to singing. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible and the decision to move to step 4 will be made on 14 June, subject to the four tests for easing restrictions.

We hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

Ministerial Support Team
Department of Culture, Media and Sport

