



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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NB: The Scottish Parliament website has been redesigned, and they have not set up forwarding between the old and new sites. As a result many Scottish Parliament links in previous issues of Political Affairs Digest will no longer lead to the relevant items. To find these items you will need to copy details such as the ID number of the written answer or motion, or key words, such as the subject matter and name of MSP and/or Minister involved, from Political Affairs Digest into the search facility on their new site at www.parliament.scot/search

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House of Commons Written Answers

Weddings: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas (Green) [172966] To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of restricting wedding ceremonies to places of places of worship and some public buildings during the covid-19 outbreak from 12 April 2021 on (a) cancellation and postponement rates and (b) jobs throughout the supply chain.

Paul Scully: Wedding or civil partnership ceremonies can take place in licensed venues that are not expressly required to close under the COVID-19 Regulations. From Step 2, which will be no earlier than 12 April, ceremonies may also take place in venues which are permitted to open for the purposes of providing unrestricted services. This includes any purpose-built wedding venue where that is its sole purpose, and it is not also a hospitality venue or visitor attraction.

Further information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent a wide range of interests in the weddings sector in England, to understand the impact of the pandemic on jobs and businesses.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-22/172966>

Weddings: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas (Green) [172967] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the covid-19 risk from wedding ceremonies in (a) permitted places of worship and some public buildings from 12 April

2021 and (b) outdoor wedding ceremony venues.

Penny Mordaunt: In the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#), the Government has set out the gradual and cautious approach to reopening different sectors in England, guided by science and the data.

We understand the unique significance that marriages and civil partnerships hold in people's lives, but we have to take necessary steps to limit transmission of COVID-19. This includes restrictions on wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, as well as other forms of social contact. By their very nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together, making them particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19.

Alternative wedding ceremonies are permitted in line with the regular wedding or civil partnership rules, in the same locations, at each step.

From 29 March, wedding and civil partnership ceremonies can take place indoors or outdoors in COVID-Secure venues that are not expressly closed by the Regulations, or where a broader exemption applies. Only six people are permitted to attend until Step 2, when limits will increase to 15. This approach allows couples to marry in legally binding licensed venues for wedding ceremonies (where outdoor options are limited) while remaining in line with the reopening of sectors and venues as set out in the roadmap. Wedding ceremonies should follow government guidance to reduce the risk of transmission.

Receptions (of up to 15 people) can resume from Step 2. The evidence shows that it is safer for people to meet outdoors rather than indoors. That is why receptions are only permitted outdoors at this Step and should be in a COVID-Secure venue.

From Step 3, no earlier than 17 May 2021, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted for up to 30 people in COVID-Secure venues that are not required to close, or where a broader exemption applies. Receptions can also proceed with up to 30 people in a COVID-Secure indoor venue, or outdoors, which includes private gardens.

Guidance for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-wedding-and-civil-partnership-receptions-and-celebrations>

At each step, the limits on the number of attendees includes children of all ages, but not workers. For further information, please refer to the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-22/172967>

House of Lords Written Answers

Marriage: Humanism

Baroness Whitaker (Labour) [HL14304] To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the High Court's judgement in *Harrison v Secretary of State for Justice & others*, published on 31 July 2020, what plans they have to introduce legislation to recognise humanist marriages in England and Wales.

Marriage

Baroness Whitaker (Labour) [HL14305] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce legislation in response to the Law Commission's forthcoming review on weddings law.

Lord Wolfson of Tredeger: The Law Commission is conducting a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent.

The Commission launched its consultation on 3 September 2020 and this closed on 4 January 2021. The law on wedding ceremonies is a complex and important area of the law. The Commission considered it essential to conduct an extensive consultation with the wide range of interested groups and individuals who would be affected by reform.

The Commission expects to report to Government with its recommendations in the second half of this year. The Government will decide on provision for non-religious belief marriage, on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-16/hl14304>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-16/hl14305>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2020/2096.html>

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/>

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

Supporting research:

Ethnic, socio-economic and sex inequalities in educational achievement at age 16

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research/ethnic-socio-economic-and-sex-inequalities-in-educational-achievement-at-age-16-by-professor-steve-strand>

Understanding ethnic disparities in involvement in crime – a limited scope rapid evidence review

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research/understanding-ethnic-disparities-in-involvement-in-crime-a-limited-scope-rapid-evidence-review-by-professor-clifford-stott-et-al>

Ethnic disparities in the major causes of mortality and their risk factors

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research/ethnic-disparities-in-the-major-causes-of-mortality-and-their-risk-factors-by-dr-raghib-ali-et-al>

The social mobility of ethnic minorities in Britain in the last 50 years (1972-2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research/the-social-mobility-of-ethnic-minorities-in-britain-in-the-last-50-years-1972-2019-by-professor-yaojun-li>

Northern Ireland Executive

Northern Ireland Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 - 2019

... In 2019, 66% of NILT respondents thought it important that public bodies take into account the needs of minority ethnic communities; while a similar position to baseline (2014: 65%), this was a significant decrease on the previous year (2018: 70%). ...

Overall, at 2019 the proportion of respondents reporting they were prejudiced against people from minority ethnic communities had increased significantly since the baseline and 2018 (2014: 24%; 2018: 20%; 2019: 29%).

Compared with the baseline and 2018, in 2019 there was a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents thinking there is more racial prejudice against people from minority ethnic communities than 5 years ago (2014: 52%; 2018: 41%; 2019: 30%).

Compared with the baseline, in 2019 there was a decrease of 14 percentage points in the proportion of respondents who thought that minority ethnic people participated 'a little' or 'a lot' in public life (2014: 71%; 2019: 57%). ...

In 2019, the percentage of people with friends from minority ethnic communities (53%) was higher than the baseline position (2014: 42%). ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/northern-ireland-racial-equality-indicators-report-2014-2019>

Northern Ireland Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014-2019

https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/racial-equality-indicators-2014-2019-report_0.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

Domestic Abuse Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2709>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

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** new or updated today

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438