



Application for Civil Ceremony Licence

Application pack: Applying
for a licence

May 2025

Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Applying for a licence to hold civil ceremonies | 2 |
| Before you apply | 2 |
| Premises Requirements | 3 |
| Conditions for Approval | 5 |
| Additional Information | 7 |
| Renewal..... | 7 |
| Revocation..... | 7 |
| Reviews | 7 |
| Registration | 7 |
| Guidance for Marriages on Approved Premises | 8 |
| Guidance for Civil Partnerships on Approved Premises | 9 |

Applying for a licence to hold civil ceremonies

Licensing a venue to hold civil ceremonies in Essex involves a detailed process to ensure that the location meets all legal and regulatory requirements. This process is designed to guarantee that the venue provides a suitable and dignified setting for such significant events. From ensuring accessibility and safety standards to meeting specific criteria set by local authorities, obtaining a license is a crucial step for any venue aiming to host civil ceremonies. This guide will walk you through the essential steps and considerations to successfully license your venue, ensuring it becomes a cherished place for couples to celebrate their special day.

Before you apply

Before you make your application please read and understand the information contained within this pack.

Application Fee

We will consider all applications completed in full before the application fee is required. Once the venue has received approval to be authorised then a non-refundable payment of £2,290.00 will be due.

Applicant

The application must be made by the person who will hold the responsibility for the licence, this is the 'Responsible Person'. This person will ensure the licence requirements will be adhered to for the duration of the licence.

Premises Requirements

1. **Suitability:** The venue must be appropriate for marriages or civil partnerships, considering its primary use, location, construction, and condition. The premises must, in the opinion of the authority, be seemly and dignified. The primary use should not demean or disrepute the proceedings.
2. **Public Access:** The venue must be regularly available to the public for marriages or civil partnerships. Private houses are not eligible. Under the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007, discrimination based on sexual orientation is unlawful.
3. **Fire Safety:** The venue must meet fire safety standards as determined by the authority, in consultation with the fire authority.
4. **Non-Religious Premises:** The venue must not be primarily used for religious purposes. Occasional use by a religious group may be acceptable if other criteria are met.
5. **Identifiable Rooms:** Rooms used for ceremonies must be clearly defined and separate from other parts of the premises.
6. **Planning Permission:** Ensure no additional planning permission is needed for the venue's use for marriages or civil partnerships. Consult the local planning authority if in doubt.

In addition to the above we will require:

1. **Interview Room:** A separate room for confidential interviews with the Registrar.
2. **Room Size:** The ceremony room must accommodate all attendees.
3. **Accessibility:** The venue must be accessible to disabled persons.
4. **Lighting:** Adequate lighting in the ceremony room.
5. **Toilet Facilities:** Accessible toilets, including for disabled persons.
6. **Parking:** Two free parking spaces for Registration staff.
7. **Telephone Access:** Registration staff must have access to a telephone.
8. **Insurance:** Adequate third-party insurance cover.

Additional guidance:

1. **Venue Types:** Civil marriages or civil partnership formations can take place in hotels, stately homes, civic halls, and similar venues. The venue must be a permanently

immovable structure. Temporary structures and most forms of transport are not eligible.

2. **Dignified Venue:** The venue must be appropriate for the proceedings, which must take place in an identifiable and distinct part of the premises.
3. **Public Access:** The public must have free access to witness the marriage or civil partnership formation and make objections.

Guidance for licencing an outdoor area –

Conditions for Approval

There are numerous conditions that must be satisfied for approval to hold ceremonies in Essex. These conditions ensure that the premises adhere to the legal requirements of the license.

The conditions for approval are as follows:

1. **Responsible Person:** Ensure there is always an individual responsible for compliance with these conditions.
2. **Availability:** The responsible person or a qualified deputy must be available on the premises for at least one hour before and throughout the proceedings.
3. **Notification:** Notify the authority of any changes to the layout, use, name, address, or responsible person of the premises.
4. **Inspection:** The premises must be available for inspection by the authority at all reasonable times.
5. **Notice:** Display a notice stating the premises are approved for proceedings at each public entrance for one hour before and throughout the proceedings.
6. **No Food or Drink:** No food or drink may be sold or consumed in the ceremony room one hour before and during the proceedings.
7. **Separate Room:** The ceremony room must be separate from other activities on the premises at the time of the proceedings.
8. **Approval:** The arrangements and content of the proceedings must be approved by the superintendent registrar or registration authority.
9. **Non-Religious:** Proceedings must not be religious in nature. They may include readings, songs, or music with incidental references to a god or deity in a non-religious context.
10. **Public Access:** Public access to the proceedings must be permitted without charge.
11. **Advertising:** Any reference to the approval of premises must not imply any recommendation by the authority, the Registrar General, or their officers or employees.
12. **Name Change:** If the name of the approved premises changes after the certificate for marriage or civil partnership document is issued, the former name remains valid for the proceedings.
13. **Evacuation Procedures:** Ensure all attendees are aware of evacuation procedures and actions in an emergency.

14. **Access:** Registration staff must have access to the ceremony room and interview room at least 30 minutes before proceedings.
15. **Furniture:** Provide a suitable table and four chairs in the ceremony room. Chairs for guests should be arranged to allow free access and movement.
16. **Lighting:** Additional portable lighting may be required for signing the Marriage Register or civil partnership schedule.
17. **Amenities:** Provide a box of tissues, carafe of water, and four glasses.
18. **No Smoking:** No smoking in the ceremony room one hour before and during proceedings.
19. **Ushers:** Provide ushers to assist guests if needed, under the supervision of Registration staff.
20. **Noise Control:** Ensure proceedings are not disturbed by noise or other activities.
21. **Nuisance Control:** Make efforts to prevent noise, litter, or other disturbances to local residents and neighbours.
22. **Notification:** Notify the Superintendent Registrar of any absence of the responsible person and the name and qualification of the deputy.
23. **Cleanliness:** Ensure the ceremony room is clean and tidy before proceedings.
24. **Indemnity:** Indemnify Essex County Council against any claims for loss or damage to persons using the premises.

Additional Information

Additional details about the application process can be found [here](#).

Renewal

Apply for renewal 6-12 months before the current approval expires. Renewal extends the current approval until the application is finally dealt with.

Revocation

Approval may be revoked if the premises no longer meet requirements or conditions are breached. The Registrar General may also direct revocation for legal breaches.

Reviews

Applicants can seek a review of decisions to refuse approval, attach conditions, refuse renewal, or revoke approval. Reviews are conducted by different officers or committees and may confirm, rescind, or vary the decision.

Registration

Details of approved premises will be held for public inspection and publicized by the Registrar General.

Guidance for Marriages on Approved Premises

Additional guidance for marriages taking place in an approved premises can be found here. Please use this section to provide guidance to couples should they ask.

1. **Contact Registrar:** Couples should contact the superintendent registrar for the district where the premises are situated as soon as provisional arrangements are made.
2. **Registrar Attendance:** The presence of the superintendent registrar and a registrar is required for the marriage. Availability cannot be guaranteed.
3. **Notice of Marriage:** Couples must give notice of marriage in person to the superintendent registrar(s) of their district(s). The notice is valid for 12 months.
4. **Immigration Control:** Additional procedures apply if either party is subject to immigration control.
5. **Dependent Arrangements:** Marriage arrangements depend on the attendance of the superintendent registrar and the issuance of marriage authority.
6. **Non-Religious Ceremony:** The ceremony must not include religious elements. It may include readings, songs, or music with incidental references to a god or deity in a non-religious context.
7. **Content Approval:** The ceremony content must be agreed in advance with the superintendent registrar. Rehearsals cannot be attended by the registrar.
8. **Copyright:** Couples are responsible for any copyright issues related to music, readings, etc.

Guidance for Civil Partnerships on Approved Premises

Additional guidance for civil partnerships taking place in an approved premises can be found here. Please use this section to provide guidance to couples should they ask.

1. **Contact Registrar:** Couples should contact the civil partnership registrar for the registration authority where the premises are situated as soon as provisional arrangements are made.
2. **Registrar Attendance:** The presence of a civil partnership registrar is required for the registration. Availability cannot be guaranteed.
3. **Notice of Civil Partnership:** Couples must give notice of civil partnership in person to the registration authority. The notice is valid for 12 months.
4. **Immigration Control:** Additional procedures apply if either party is subject to immigration control.
5. **Dependent Arrangements:** Civil partnership arrangements depend on the attendance of the civil partnership registrar and the issuance of civil partnership authority.
6. **Non-Religious Ceremony:** The ceremony must not include religious elements. It may include readings, songs, or music with incidental references to a god or deity in a non-religious context.
7. **Content Approval:** The ceremony content must be agreed in advance with the civil partnership registrar. Rehearsals cannot be attended by the registrar.
8. **Copyright:** Couples are responsible for any copyright issues related to music, readings, etc.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

Contact us:
xxx@essex.gov.uk
xxx

xxx
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH



Essex_CC



facebook.com/essexcountycouncil

The information contained in this document
can be translated, and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

Published xxx