

Group name South Oxhey Community Choir (South Oxhey Choirs)
COVID-19 risk assessment for: **Choir rehearsals**
Rehearsal day and time Tuesdays at 7pm
Rehearsal venue Oxhey Wood School Hall



Version number v1.1
Date 27/05/2021
Changes in latest version Updated following school visit and to reflect current rules prohibiting rehearsing indoors.

Linked Documents Oxhey Wood School "RISK ASSESSMENT FOR: School activities during COVID 19 outbreak - opening from March 8th 2021 - version RA012 dated 26/02/2021" - particularly reference to section "Hiring and lettings" on pages 11 and 12
 Based on Making Music advice that choirs can rehearse outside rehearsals under Step 3 of the Government Roadmap which came into effect on 17 May 2021. The risk assessment also covers the potential to rehearse inside in Step 4 which is anticipated from 21 June (subject to confirmation):
<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/can-group-get-back-in-person>

Risk area	Possible mitigations and actions	Responsible
1. Infection rates high/rising quickly		
Local restrictions are applied with little notice		
	Check government guidance prior to each rehearsal (see notes section)	Chair
	Check Coronavirus cases data regularly, including for your local area (see notes section)	Chair
	if there are local restrictions or a local surge in cases, cancel rehearsals for that week.	Committee
	Whole committee decision (communicate via WhatsApp group) or Chair decision if unable to contact committee	
	remember to communicate with:	
	* members / volunteers - by email	Chair
	* members without email - by phone	Membership secretary
	* MD and accompanist - by phone	Chair
	* Venue - by email	Chair
	If decision to cancel after 7pm on Monday, a member of the committee will wait outside school gates between 6 - 7:15pm	Committee

2. Risk to/from individuals to/from group

High/moderate risk/vulnerable individuals attend

check definition of high/moderate risk/vulnerable persons at least once a term (see notes)	Chair
identify high/moderate risk/vulnerable individuals via self-assessment, questionnaire, direct conversation - Member survey asked about vulnerabilities. Current guidance does not require shielding for vulnerable groups and so down to individual choice	Committee
re-evaluate at regular intervals/as guidance changes, e.g. at least once a term	Committee
if allowing attendance, clarify it is attendee's decision, that group's measures cannot reduce risk to zero - ask them to sign that they	Committee
encourage uptake of vaccination PLEASE NOTE YOU CANNOT MAKE THIS MANDATORY to avoid discrimination and because it is not	Committee
encourage members, volunteers, staff (e.g. MD) to use regular lateral flow tests - free home tests available in England	Committee

Infectious individual attends rehearsals

exclude potentially infectious individuals from attending and entering rehearsal venue	Volunteer rota
use on the door questionnaire to stop potentially infectious individuals entering rehearsal venue	Volunteer rota
Four questions to ask (display poster and ask members to confirm):	
1) do they have any of the symptoms: elevated temperature, continuous cough, loss of smell and taste	
2) have they been in close contact with someone with symptoms (see detail on meaning of 'close contact' in risk assessment guidance)	
3) have NHS Test & Trace asked them to self-isolate	
4) have they returned from abroad from an amber or red list country and been asked to self-isolate	
consider testing	Committee
encourage members, volunteers, staff (e.g. MD) to use regular lateral flow tests - free home tests available in England	
use free government testing (England) for essential volunteers or staff (e.g. MD) (not available everywhere...)	
encourage uptake of vaccination PLEASE NOTE YOU CANNOT MAKE THIS MANDATORY to avoid discrimination and because it is not	Committee
legally possible to enforce medical treatment on someone in the UK	

Inability to track & trace when someone falls ill outside meeting

keep register of everyone who attends rehearsals every week, for 21 days (for NHS Test & Trace)	Membership secretary
ensure if anyone falls ill between one rehearsal and the next that they know to contact group and who to contact - email	Membership secretary
email: southoxheychoirs@gmail.com	
Sarah Munn 07766 125969	
Chris Thomas 07734 004708	
if that happens, contact NHS Test & Trace	Membership secretary
AND contact all attendees of last 2 rehearsals; ask attendees to be aware of developing any symptoms and, if they are contacted by	Committee
NHS Test & Trace they may be requested to self-isolate for 10 days from date of attending rehearsal with patient (DO NOT REVEAL IDENTITY OF ILL INDIVIDUAL) - Committee will convene at earliest opportunity to discuss how to communicate to members	
from 24 September (England), it is mandatory for your venue to display an NHS Test & Trace poster with a QR code at the entrance(you should still take an attendance register and also take details manually for those who don't have smartphones/QR code won't scan) - Note: Schools are exempt from displaying QR codes and so decision is with the venue. However, Choir attendance records are sufficient to meet NHS Test & Trace requirements	Venue
cancel next rehearsal and review subsequent rehearsals (See section 1 on cancelling rehearsals)	Committee

Inability to deal with person becoming unwell in rehearsals

send person home immediately	Chair
if you need to call transport for them, seat them on non-upholstered chair, wearing face covering and disposable gloves, by open window or door until transport arrives	
ask person with symptoms to take a test asap and communicate the result to you	Chair
terminate rehearsal immediately and send everyone home, asking them to self-isolate until test result received	Chair
clean rehearsal space carefully	Venue
tell school of a confirmed positive case	Chair
if individual subsequently tests positive - cancel next rehearsal and review subsequent rehearsals	Committee

Complacency means mitigating measures not complied with

Committee

this is potentially the biggest risk going forward, as participants get 'used to' rehearsing again: be very aware and keep this high on agenda
particularly as more and more members of your group are vaccinated / use lateral flow tests - remind them regularly that other mitigations are still necessary and risk is not zero
create posters and signs to display each week at the entrance, by bathrooms, other prominent locations as reminders
remind attendees verbally - at entrance, at break, during rehearsal, as it fits with your schedule
make sure you communicate in ways appropriate to everyone (e.g. consider dyslexia, deafness, vision-impairment etc.)
make it someone's responsibility to do reminders, and rotate that, that increases everyone's buy-in

Non-compliance with measures means risk to other attendees

Committee

make it clear to members that if they do not comply with the measures group has in place, they will be excluded
have a system (like school?) - 2 warnings and you're out, so it doesn't come as a surprise when you do exclude them - after 2 warnings, asked to leave immediately and excluded from next rehearsal. Any subsequent violations, excluded indefinitely until reviewed by Committee
enforce exclusion rigorously - it may make some people cross, but the majority will be relieved and behind you
make it clear that being vaccinated / using regular lateral flow tests does not mean participants can stop using other mitigations and that you will still exclude them if they don't comply

Risks to some members from meeting or NOT meeting in person

decide on balance of risks between potential for physical harm (picking up Covid-19) versus mental harm (loneliness, social isolation) - Regularly reviewed by Committee at least once per term

Committee

3. Behaviour of attendees/individual safety measures

Individuals spread or breathe in virus-laden particles

Committee

set out expected behaviour:

- 1) 2 metre social distancing AT ALL TIMES, this means before, during and after musical activity, during breaks.
Remind people that maintaining social distancing and no mixing or social interactions between identified groups is an absolute pre-requisite of being allowed to meet for activity
- 2) sneeze/cough into tissue/crook of arm (if not wearing a face-covering)
- 4) no hugging, hand-shaking, lingering to chat in rehearsal venue before/after; chat, if you wish, outside, at 2m distance...
- 5) and repeat again: in break, by all means chat, but remain at 2m distance
- 6) wearing of face-coverings in the rehearsal venue mandatory (this can be a cloth face covering, does not need to be medical grade)

clarify for singers that they should bring several face-coverings, as they are ineffective when wet through - minimum of 2 per rehearsal and bring plastic bag to store used face coverings

have a box of disposable face coverings on hand for those who don't bring one

encourage uptake of vaccinations PLEASE NOTE YOU CANNOT ENFORCE THIS

encourage use of regular lateral flow tests - free home tests available in England

Individuals spread/pick up virus by touching shared surfaces

Committee

set out expected behaviours:

- 1) avoid touching shared surfaces as much as possible
- 2) sanitise/wash hands on arrival, departure, before/after break, after bathroom visit
- 3) bring your own and do not share equipment - music stands (MD/accompanist), sheet music (all - no sharing between members)
- 4) use allocated seat and keep all their own equipment and personal belongings by and in that space
- 5) bring your own water

have paper towels and sealable plastic bags on stand-by for those who forget; remember safe disposal afterwards

encourage uptake of vaccinations PLEASE NOTE YOU CANNOT ENFORCE THIS

encourage use of regular lateral flow tests - free home tests available in England

4. Rehearsal space

Is venue Covid-19 secure?

Committee

find out if they are – have they published their risk assessment, is it Covid-19 compliant - CONFIRMED - school has shared their risk assessment with us

check against COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities (link in notes)

if they are not – find a different venue

Guidance prohibits singing indoors if more than 6 singers are present

No indoor rehearsals until guidance is updated

Rehearsals will take place outdoors on school playground at front of school grounds until guidance updated to permit indoor rehearsals. Committee

Weather forecast will be considered each Monday and decision taken to cancel if forecast is for heavy showers or persistent rain.

Members to dress appropriately for cool weather or light showers.

Seating to be set out to allow minimum of 1m between each singer and 2m between each vocal section (SATB) (each section has fewer than 30 members). There is to be clear separation between vocal sections with no mixing or social interactions to ensure compliance with legal rules prohibiting groups over 30 people. Guidance allows for multiple groups, each containing fewer than 30 people, provided the groups are kept separate throughout the activity. Committee

Musical Director (MD) and accompanist to be minimum of 3m from singers Committee

Ensure social distancing at all times, not just during singing/playing Committee

consider: entrance/exit, route to bathrooms, socially distanced queues at any of these points, one way routes and floor markings Venue

Access to school required for collection of chairs, setting up power cable for piano, and access to toilets Committee

Face-coverings to be worn at all times when any choir member, volunteer, MD or accompanist enters the school Committee

No one way routes marked in school building - numbers in school building will be kept to a minimum and access only for volunteers setting / clearing up or for access to toilets. Potential congestion point at door-way, only one person to enter or exit through the doorway at a time. Committee

Maximum of one person to be in the male and one in the female toilets at a time. Members to remain socially distanced while queuing. Committee

ONCE GUIDANCE PERMITS INDOOR REHEARSALS - Is space large enough (floor and volume) to be safe?

No indoor rehearsals until guidance is updated

Hall is 10.5m x 13m plus stage. Maximum occupancy in school hall is 30 choir members (plus MD and accompanist on stage area) to enable 2m social distancing between chairs - 6 rows of 5 chairs facing the stage, front row 2m from stage and MD to stand on stage 1m behind stage edge (so 3m from front row). Committee

Members will remain in their allocated chair space throughout the rehearsal.

Find out first how many of your members currently willing/able to return in person - survey completed in May 21 Committee

Preference for outdoor rehearsals on school playground at front of school grounds if weather permits as added precaution and also allows for face coverings to be removed while singing Committee

Reduce numbers rehearsing to ensure radius of 2m around each singer/player and 3-5m distance to MD Committee

Reduce numbers rehearsing to ensure social distancing of 2m is possible at all times, not just during singing/playing Committee

Consider: entrance/exit, route to bathrooms, route to break area, socially distanced queues at any of these points - follow one way routes and floor markings applied by school Venue

No one way routes marked in school building. Fixed start and end times to rehearsals. Entry only to building and hall between 6:45 and 7:00pm, no exit permitted during this period. Exit only to building and hall between 8:30 and 8:45pm, no entry permitted during this period. Venue

Maximum of one person to be in the male and one in the female toilets at a time. Members to remain socially distanced while queuing. Venue

ONCE GUIDANCE PERMITS INDOOR REHEARSALS - Build-up of aerosols	Committee	
<p>Even when indoor rehearsals allowed, we may continue to rehearse outdoors on school playground at front of school grounds if weather permits as added precaution and also allows for face coverings to be removed while singing</p> <p>When inside, open high windows and fire exits (note: if windows available high up, that is ideal - warm air travels upwards and gets drawn out that way)</p> <p>Heating on is not a bad thing, especially if upward ventilation/high level windows available; also heat dries out virus particles</p> <p>During cold weather: encourage members to dress appropriately. Consider closing doors and windows but build ventilation into your schedule: before rehearsals, in break, afterwards</p>		
Build-up of virus on shared surfaces		
<p>If using venue chairs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) volunteers to wear disposable gloves when moving chairs 2) clean chair back-top and sides (areas likely to be touched) with sanitiser spray before and after use 3) limit number of volunteers handling such shared equipment <p>Keep a register of who does it on what date; provide gloves and hand-sanitiser</p> <p>Cleaning of shared surfaces - tables, light switches, door handles - before and after rehearsals</p> <p>Cleaning of facilities: bathrooms, sinks, kitchens</p>	<p>Volunteer rota</p> <p>Volunteer rota</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Venue</p> <p>Venue</p>	
Covid transmission in bathroom facilities		
Aerosols in air	<p>ensure social distancing maintained when queueing for toilets</p> <p>remind everyone of requirement of no mixing or social interactions between identified groups at all times</p> <p>remind everyone of social distancing of 2m to be maintained at all times - rule of one person in toilets at a time</p>	<p>Committee</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Committee</p>
Contaminated surfaces	<p>ensure cleaning before and after rehearsals, more frequently if few facilities for many people</p> <p>Choir will have own supply of sanitiser spray and paper towels to clean any surfaces which may be touched by multiple members (e.g. chair handles after set-up, piano etc)</p> <p>encourage hand washing - soap, paper towels, poster reminding, poster with handwashing technique</p> <p>provide hand sanitiser on way into toilet facilities</p>	<p>Venue</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Committee</p> <p>Committee</p>

Queueing points and traffic flow (applies to all rooms / areas)

Difficulty of maintaining 2m social distancing	Think about pathways and routes throughout the rehearsal venue needing to allow for 2m social distancing	Committee
	Arrival will take time (register/pre-assessment/temperature): manage queueing	Committee
	No one way routes marked in school building	
	When rehearsing outside: Numbers in school building will be kept to a minimum and access only for volunteers setting / clearing up or for access to toilets. Potential congestion point at door-way, only one person to enter or exit through the doorway at a time.	Committee
	When rehearsing outside: Entry to playground through side gate presents potential congestion point. Fixed start and end times to rehearsals. Entry only to playground between 6:45 and 7:00pm, no exit permitted during this period (if a member requires urgent exit, a Committee member will temporarily suspend entry and hold people in a queue in the carpark while the member wishing to leave is escorted out). Exit only from playground between 8:30 and 8:45pm, no entry permitted during this period.	
	When rehearsing inside: Fixed start and end times to rehearsals. Entry only to building and hall between 6:45 and 7:00pm, no exit permitted during this period (if urgent exit required, a Committee member will escort the choir member to exit through the main school entrance or through fire escape). Exit only from building and hall between 8:30 and 8:45pm, no entry permitted during this period.	Committee
	consider using: posters/signs, tape on floor, barriers/cones, volunteers/stewards	Committee
	Leaving after rehearsal - consider staggering it; reminder not to linger and socialise inside - leave one row and/or section at a time	Committee
	Queueing for the toilets/routes to and from toilets/inside the toilets - rule of one person in toilets at a time	Committee
	one way routes are very helpful for people, as they do the job of social distancing for them, ditto floor tape – make it easy!	Venue

Rubbish

Committee

Contaminated material not properly disposed of to be discussed with venue - whose responsibility? Whose binbags/bins? Where to dispose binbags to? - choir to bring own bin
dispose of rubbish safely after rehearsals
provide volunteers with gloves, hand sanitiser, soap/towels

Cost

Committee

Measures that are possible/deemed necessary are not affordable

discuss with venue – can they reduce rent/take on some of the costs, e.g. cleaning?
consider member subscriptions and how many might be able/willing to increase their subscription
look at your budget – are there other costs which can be reduced in compensation? e.g. sheet music costs, concert costs
Costs not an issue at the moment but will keep under review

Other users of venue Committee

Activity before yours leaves legacy of droplets/a€ Rehearsals start at 7pm
Arrival to set up at 6pm to set up - sufficient time after end of school day
Choir members to arrive between 6:45 - 7pm
When rehearsing outside: Enter through side gate between carpark and playground - maintain 2m queueing while waiting to sign in
When rehearsing inside: Enter via side entrance, keeping away from main school entrance - queue outside, 2m apart
Areas accessible to Choir members will be school hall, adjacent corridor and corridor as far as toilets outside school offices

No access to other areas of school to ensure no overlap with other after-school activities
Committee meetings not to be held on school site until further notice so no need to use committee room / family room
(Committee will meet remotely or at private home on Thursday evenings)

5. Your musical activity

Covid-safe placing of individuals during activity

not face to face singing - side by side seating; staggered rows; everyone has 2m radius - hall to be set-up in rows 2m apart with chairs facing stage and 2m between each chair	Volunteer rota
3m-5m between front row of singers and MD - MD to stand on stage at front of hall	MD
consider plastic screens	MD

Participants cannot hear each other/conductor/vice versa Committee

do not just shout or speak/sing more loudly! (increased emission of aerosols)
consider instead a pocket amp/head mic for conductor
if you have some budget/someone with tech, consider mics over the group and feedback speakers to the conductor
weigh up (temporary) unsatisfactory musical experience against social isolation and (long-term) danger of group drifting apart
Section to be reviewed by Committee once rehearsals commence

Substantial numbers cannot attend in person Committee

This will be the case if restricted to 2m social distancing inside
Consider asking choir members to book in advance if they plan to attend rehearsals each week (via email or online booking form) - first come first served basis. If a member is refused access, they are given priority to attend on the following week

Virus spread through use of piano/equipment Committee

Piano to be sanitised before and after rehearsal - consider use of choirs own electric piano (this will be the case when rehearsing outside) - need to borrow amp from All Saints' church

Virus spread through sheet music Committee

remind members to bring own music sheets to all rehearsals - **no music sheets to be provided** Committee
in all cases, remind constantly not to share and only to use own set of music Committee

Aerosol transmission through prolonged exposure Committee

rehearse outside if weather permits (all rehearsals will be outside until guidance is updated)
face coverings to be worn at all times while inside (including when singing)
incorporate ventilation into your time planning
constantly remind attendees of the requirement of 'no mixing' and to be socially distance at all times

Increased aerosols through high volume sound MD

reduce volume of singing – fewer aerosols produced
reduced volume of singing also means less need for participants to breathe deeply
i.e. also reduces risk of 'hoovering up' a large amount of aerosols through in-breaths
singing some consonants can also increase aerosol production (– this is perhaps not the moment to insist on clear and strong articulation)
adapt what you do in rehearsals (e.g. focus on harmonies, rather than articulation; listening rather than fortissimo)
adapt repertoire temporarily to work on quieter pieces with less 'air-intensive' techniques

Aerosol transmission to/from conductor facing the group

Minimum 3 between front row of singers/accompanist and-MD MD
consider use of plastic screen MD
Beware – aerosol can travel above; it can act as 'virus trap' not cleared by ventilation; who will clean, properly? Venue
face coverings at all times while inside including choir members, MD and accompanist Committee
consider MD to use pocket amp and head mic so does not have to shout to make themselves heard MD

Accompanist exposed to Covid-19 via singers and/or piano Committee

check if can use school piano or consider use of Choir's electric piano (need to borrow amp) - Choir's electric piano will be used
when rehearsing outside
only usual/official accompanist to use piano – no-one to casually bash through their notes
clean piano thoroughly before and after rehearsals
ensure accompanist hand sanitises before/after
accompanist to turn own pages to avoid compromising social distancing
No-one to face accompanist to sing/play; if proximity to piano needed, then side by side with pianist and 3-5m distance
consider positioning of piano in relation to singers – 3-5m from singers

6. Ancillary activity

Provision of refreshments is source of transmission

ask participants to bring their own water
no refreshments or water be sold or provided due to risks of transmission

Arrival/departure compromises 2m social distancing

Committee

stagger arrival/departure times - leave in seating rows and/or sections (both inside and outside)
remind of expected behaviours: no lingering on arrival or departure to chat to friends
absolute requirement of no mixing or social interactions between identified groups
absolute requirement to be socially distanced at all times (2m minimum)
to go straight to allocated space on arrival and to leave hall straight away on departure – chatting can be done outside!
consider using signage, one way systems, volunteers, tape on floor

Collection of subs and sale of merchandise, tickets, SOX Box etc is source of transmission

Committee

encourage all members to sign up to pay subs by standing order or bank transfer
if not, option to accept contactless card payments for subs

if only option is to pay subs in cash, ask members to provide correct amount in sealed envelope with their name written on the
ideally pay subs for term in one go, or pay multiple weeks at a time
all sales of merchandise, raffle tickets, SOX Box etc to be suspended until further notice

7. Transport to/from rehearsals

Attendees pick up Covid on the way to/from rehearsals

Committee

discuss with members, so that they are aware of desirable hierarchy of transports:
walk, cycle, own car – ideal
shared car – use face coverings, open windows, sit far from each other
public transport least good, but trains better than buses better than underground - unlikely many members come by public transport, but some may come by taxi which should have COVID safe measures in place

8. Your organisation

Desirable/necessary risk management measures unaffordable

Committee

do you want to put off meeting again in person for a few months? - Plan to resume rehearsals from 8 June 2021
carefully cost up one-off investments (e.g. pocket amp/mic for conductor) with new ongoing commitments (venue?)
consider cleaning materials, disposable stuff (e.g. gloves, coffee cups etc.), extra binbags - cleaning to be done by school but Choir to have own supply for cleaning materials and hand sanitiser
are you saving costs elsewhere?
are you able to increase your income (e.g. voluntary increased subscriptions)
insurance: your activity will be covered, provided it follows official guidance and has been risk-assessed, so that you are not acting negligently - NO ADDITIONAL COST
No immediate actions - section to be regularly reviewed by Committee (at least twice per term)

(too many) volunteers needed to run rehearsals

Committee

Rota of volunteers (from current Choir membership) to be drawn up by committee
do you want to go ahead now with in person rehearsals?
carefully work out the number of people you will need – can those attending to play/sing help with a task in rotation?
if not, where will you find the volunteers you need?
consider burnout risk if it's always the same suspects or if you expect too much of a single person

Loss of income from membership subscriptions

Committee

will you/are you providing a 'reduced service' and are members therefore going to expect a reduced charge?
you have additional costs – can careful communication with members enable you to cover those from subscriptions?
consider those who are able to pay more
consider those who are able to pay less – and who may have lost their job over this or struggle with finance as a family

consider subs level for resumption in June (only part of term) - request full subs if members can afford but allow for a reduced rate (£35 instead of £50 for term?)

Loss of reputation due to rehearsing/not rehearsing

Committee

you are obliged to consult your stakeholders, i.e. your members, volunteers, music professionals (MD, accompanist), venue

ensure you communicate whatever you decide (rehearsing/not rehearsing) thoroughly to all the stakeholders
communicate with the public, i.e. potential members or volunteers, past or potential audiences etc.
Share with public our risk assessment on our website
Share risk assessment with venue
Share risk assessment with MD and accompanist
Share risk assessment with members (on request?)
Section to be regularly reviewed by Committee (at least twice per term)