



# Marriage Ceremony Guide

A guide to planning your special day in  
the London Borough of Wandsworth



## WELCOME

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### **Congratulations on your forthcoming ceremony.**

Whether you would like a grand affair, or a simple ceremony, here at Wandsworth we aim to create a ceremony which is personal to you. We will do everything we can to make your special day run smoothly, leaving you to enjoy the big day, happy and worry-free.

The following pages are a guide to help you plan your wedding ceremony, with useful information and FAQs.

There are three ceremony styles for you to choose from; the Traditional, the Contemporary and the Minimalist ceremonies.

Please complete the Ceremony Planner to let us know your choice of ceremony; music; vows; and reading(s). Please note that no religious words, prayers or songs may be included in the ceremony. We ask that you return the planner to us no later than two weeks before the ceremony (including copies of any readings).

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## BEFORE THE DAY...

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### **Giving Notice**

Before getting married you must each give 'notice' at your local register office, or, if one/both of you are foreign nationals subject to immigration control you must attend a designated register office.

Your marriage ceremony cannot take place if you have not given your notice. Notice can be given up to 12 months before the date of the ceremony, but no less than 28 days before. It is wise to give yourself ample time to do this, to allow for any unforeseen complications that may arise.

This notice period may be extended to 70 days where couples who are subject to immigration control are referred to the Home Office under the Immigration Act 2014. Please ensure you give notice in time for your planned ceremony.

Please read the guidance on our website if you are giving notice at Wandsworth Register Office, or consult your local register office for advice.

It is not necessary to have booked a time and date for your ceremony before giving notice, but you must have decided upon the venue where the ceremony will take place. Each notice is only valid for one venue and should you change your mind, a new notice will need to be given and the fee paid again.

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## ON THE DAY...

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### Arriving on time

You must arrive and be ready to meet the registrars no later than 15 minutes before your ceremony is due to begin. This is because the registrars will have to go through paperwork with you before the ceremony takes place. They will confirm the information that you gave when giving notice. This will be done in a private room without your guests present and takes a few minutes.

When planning your travel to the venue please allow for traffic and any disruptions or events that are taking place in the area. The registrars will have other ceremonies to attend throughout the day and will not be able to wait if you are late. Please be on time to avoid disappointment.

*Please make sure that you read our terms and conditions.*

### During the ceremony

You will make two legal declarations in front of your witnesses, guests and the registrars; the first is where you declare your freedom to marry and the second is where you take one another as partners in marriage. You do not need to memorise these words, you will simply repeat them bit-by-bit after the registrar.

In addition to the legal vows, you may choose to say one of our sentimental vows, or you can write your own personal words (so long as they do not have any religious connotations or come from a religious text). You can either memorise them or have them written down.

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After your vows have been declared (and your rings exchanged, if applicable) the registrar will ask you to sign the register with your usual, current signature; even if you are planning to change your name after your marriage, you do not sign in the new name at the ceremony.

Before you sign you must check the details very carefully. Any errors in the information can be easily corrected at the time of the ceremony, but it can be a very complicated, costly and lengthy process to correct mistakes later on. Your signature is your confirmation that the information is correct.

After signing you will be presented with your marriage certificate. If you ordered extra certificates these will be available to collect from the Register Office three working days after the ceremony. Alternatively, they can be posted to you on request for a small fee.

**Please send your completed ceremony planner, no later than 2 weeks before the ceremony to [registeroffice@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:registeroffice@wandsworth.gov.uk) or Register Office, Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PU**

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### **Can we meet the registrar who will be conducting our ceremony in advance?**

Unfortunately it is not always possible for us to arrange for you to meet the registrar who will be performing your ceremony ahead of the day. If you have any questions about your ceremony that have not been answered in this guide, please call or email us and we will be happy to help. If you wish to discuss your ceremony in person we will do our best to accommodate an appointment within our usual working hours. This will be subject to availability and dependent upon other service demands. Pre-ceremony appointments are not offered to those marrying in the Register Office, Victoria Room or Alexandra Room.

### **What happens if the information we gave at the time of giving notice has changed?**

Any changes in age, occupation or address can simply be updated on the day of the wedding. However if your name, marital status or gender has changed you will need to bring documentary evidence to support the facts.

### **Who can be our witnesses?**

Please bring at least two people with you who will act as your witnesses, as we cannot provide witnesses for you under any circumstances. Witnesses can be of any gender, relationship to you and should preferably be over 18. It is essential that they speak and understand English. They do not need to bring identification. If either you or your partner requires an interpreter, the interpreter must act as a witness. You are legally required to have two witnesses only but up to four witnesses' signatures can fit comfortably on the register page.

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### **What happens if we want to bring more guests than anticipated?**

Every room has a maximum occupancy that cannot be exceeded. Please make sure that you do not bring more guests than permitted as they will be refused entry. If you are having your ceremony at the Victoria Room and your guest list increases we may be able to change your booking to the Alexandra Room, providing it is available and you have given enough notice. Please be aware that there is an administration fee to make changes to any ceremony, so changing rooms will incur additional costs.

### **Can we decorate the room or throw confetti?**

If your ceremony is at one of our approved venues then it may be possible to decorate, please ask the staff at the venue. Unfortunately it is not possible to decorate any of the rooms at the Town Hall.

Please check with your venue if confetti is permitted. If you are having your ceremony at the Town Hall then confetti can only be thrown outside the building. Biodegradable confetti is available to purchase from the Register Office reception.

### **Is there parking at the Town Hall?**

If you are having your ceremony at the Town Hall on a weekday then parking on site is strictly limited to one car per wedding and is given by prior arrangement only. There is paid street parking and large car parks very nearby. For weekend ceremonies there is more parking available at the rear of the Town Hall and you may request up to two parking permits allowing you to park in the courtyard. *There can be no admission to the courtyard parking without a valid permit.*

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### **Can we be kept separate from one another before the ceremony?**

At some venues it may be possible for the couple to be kept separate before the ceremony starts. It is advisable to check with the registrar beforehand if this is going to be possible as the registrar will not assume that you want to be kept separate unless you tell them so. It is not possible to be kept separate before ceremonies in the Register Office or Victoria Room.

### **How long will the ceremony last?**

The average civil ceremony lasts for 20-30 minutes, but this depends on any additions you make to the ceremony (such as readings). If you are having your ceremony at the Town Hall please expect to be here for about an hour from the point of arrival, which must be no later than 15 minutes before the ceremony start time.

### **Can we play music and have readings in the ceremony?**

You may be able to play music or include a couple of readings to personalise your ceremony (please note: readings cannot be included in Register Office ceremonies). Music can be live, or recorded, but please check the facilities at your venue. The music and readings you include cannot have any religious connotations, such as hymns or passages from holy books. If you are having your ceremony at the Town Hall we can manage the playing of recorded music which can be on CD, USB or devices that connect via an audio cable. If your ceremony is elsewhere then please ask the staff at the venue.

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### **What about photography and recordings?**

You may have a professional photographer or have photos taken by friends and family. There will be an opportunity for everyone to take pictures, but we ask that photography is not distracting or disruptive. If your ceremony is taking place at the Town Hall we ask that your photographer be considerate of the other ceremonies taking place, being patient whilst other parties finish taking photographs and also giving way so that subsequent parties can begin to take theirs. You will have a few minutes to take photographs on the Marble Hall staircase, but will be asked to move on if blocking the way for others.

### **Can the Town Hall accept deliveries of flowers or champagne? And is there somewhere at the Town Hall where we can celebrate after the ceremony?**

Unfortunately we cannot accept any deliveries relating to your wedding, and drinks should not be brought to have at the Town Hall.

Although there is no facility for your ceremony reception to be held at the Town Hall, the borough of Wandsworth has a variety of attractive options for your on going celebrations, the nearest being the Civic Suite which is just next door. For availability and costs please contact the venues directly.

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### How can we get copies of our certificate?

You may purchase multiple copies of the certificate in advance if you wish and it is advisable to do so as you may need to provide them to various authorities after the ceremony. In purchasing your certificates prior to the ceremony you will get them for the cheapest price, as the price of certificates increases incrementally after the ceremony has taken place.

The certificates that you order prior to your ceremony can be posted to you, at a cost, by either recorded delivery or special delivery. Alternatively you can return to the Register Office to collect the certificates three working days after your wedding ceremony.

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We hope that you have all the information you need to plan your ceremony and make it a special day to remember with much joy and happiness. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

The Register Office, The Town Hall,  
Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PU

(020) 8871 6120

[registeroffice@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:registeroffice@wandsworth.gov.uk)

[www.wandsworth.gov.uk](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk)

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