



COMHALTAS
in Britain

COVID-19 Guidelines

for safe Resumption of Comhaltas Activities

**SOCIAL
DISTANCING
STOP COVID-19**



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Buidéal Gníomhaíochas agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



SOUND SENSE



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COVID-19 Guidelines for safe resumption of Comhaltas activities

Comhaltas in Britain

COVID-19 Guidelines For safe resumption of Comhaltas in Britain activities in response to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

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COVID-19 Guidelines for safe resumption of Comhaltas activities

1 Introduction

These guidelines have been drawn up after research and consultation with various sources of information. However we must acknowledge there is no guarantee of preventing infection when face to face contact occurs.

This document is not intended to supply medical or legal advice, these are guidelines to minimise the risk of infection that will lead to the safe resumption of Comhaltas activities.

This document is relevant to all units and members of Comhaltas, in particular branch committees, tutors, volunteers, students and the parents/guardians of students.

Comhaltas units should ensure that a copy of this document is available in digital or hard copy form to Comhaltas members and anyone attending a Comhaltas activity.

Due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 Pandemic, these guidelines will remain in place until it is communicated otherwise by Comhaltas in Britain.

We remain hopeful that our activities and events will return to 'normal' in the near future, and at all times, we strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our members



2 COVID-19 Guidelines Specific To Organisers of Comhaltas Activities (Branches, Regional and Provincial Committees & Sub Committees)

2.1 Covid Supervisors

a) Each Comhaltas unit must appoint a Lead Covid Supervisor (LCS) (and complete the appropriate form for this appointment See page 21) who has an understanding of current guidelines. Further Covid Supervisors may be required depending on the number of activities and members within the unit or for specific activities / events as deemed appropriate.

b) Each Comhaltas unit will provide contact details of the Lead Covid Supervisor (LCS) to all members and, in the case of branches, to the relevant Regional Committee and ensure that the appointed people receive all necessary support to undertake the role.

c) The responsibility of the Comhaltas Unit & Role of the Lead Covid Supervisor (LCS) will include:

- 1. Covid-19 Declarations:** Ensure that each person wishing to participate in Comhaltas activities submits a properly completed Covid-19 Declaration prior to attendance at any activity or event, and retain these in compliance with GDPR guidelines.
- 2. Safety Information and Protocols:** Communicate and distribute necessary safety information and protocols, including amendments to these guidelines, to all Comhaltas members in the unit.
- 3. Record Keeping:** Ensure that records are kept of attendees at Comhaltas activities. This information will be especially important if contact tracing or other intervention is required. Comply with GDPR regulations at all times.



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4. **Cleaning and Sanitising:** Ensure the regular cleaning and sanitising of all relevant welfare facilities and equipment before and after each activity (e.g. sanitising door handles, seats etc.) and ensure that all participants sanitise their hands on entering the venue of an activity.
5. **Reporting:** Receive reports from members or others concerning the implementation of or compliance with these guidelines and address these appropriately. Make necessary representations to Comhaltas unit with regard to any Covid-19 concerns. Report any areas of non-compliance immediately to the relevant Comhaltas unit and ensure that these areas are addressed.
6. **Latest Information:** Keep up to date on all relevant guidelines from both local and national Government(s) as necessary and in the instance of guidelines or restrictions changing which will have an impact on activities (such as restrictions over the maximum number of people who can attend events or updated PPE guidance), make appropriate adjustments to events to ensure compliance with these guidelines or restrictions.

2.2 Covid-19 Declarations

a) A Covid-19 Declaration (see page 20) must be completed once, before the initial return to Comhaltas activities, by each person (or a parent/guardian in the case of a child) and returned to a Covid Supervisor of the relevant Comhaltas unit. This form will be held by the Comhaltas unit in compliance with GDPR guidelines.

2.3 Preparing Facilities for Activities

a) Each Comhaltas unit must set up protocols and facilities for its activities which ensure and enable attendees to abide by Local/National Government public health advice and these guidelines. A sample checklist is included (page 22) with this document for assistance.



- b)** Appropriate signage and posters, clearly visible and easily understood, should be placed in car parks, at the entrance of facilities, at toilets and at other appropriate locations. These should emphasise Government recommended physical distancing rules (2m at present), hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, avoidance of personal contact, etc.
- c)** Signage and useful resources on preventing the spread of Covid-19 can be downloaded from the public Health England website:
<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk>
Or from <https://www.nhs.uk/your-health/health-issues/covid-19-coronavirus/for-nhs-ggc-staff/general-staff-guidance-resources/resources-posters-and-communications-toolkit/#> in Scotland.
- d)** Comhaltas units should, where appropriate, establish systems for drop off/collection points to avoid congestion and traffic jams appropriate to the circumstances of its activities.
- e)** A suitable isolation space (see 2.7b) must be identified at the venue of each Comhaltas activity in case someone becomes unwell at the activity.
- f)** Hand sanitising facilities must be provided at the entrance of facilities and at other appropriate locations (e.g. classrooms). Hand washing facilities (anti-bacterial soap, paper towels and bin/bag for disposal of used paper towels) must be provided at each toilet. Appropriate bins/bags for the disposal of used tissues, paper towels, wipes etc. must be available and clearly marked. These must be disposed of in a safe manner.
- g)** Toilets must be regarded as high risk and potentially contaminated areas. Ventilation is important; doors and windows should remain open in so far as is reasonable and appropriate. Protocols must be set up for use of toilets suited to the activity and venue; these must be communicated to all participants.

- h)** There should be a regular cleaning programme in place.



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2.4 Cleaning Checklist

- a) The UK Government checklist for cleaning facilities can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- b) The required frequency of cleaning will be different for each unit and depend on the level of use.
- c) Arrangements must be made to collect and safely dispose of waste which is potentially contaminated (e.g. used tissues, paper towels, wipes etc.).

2.5 Scheduling of Activities

- a) Timesheets should be used to clearly show what activities are using what facilities at what times.
- b) The principle of **“come in, attend activity and leave”** should apply.
- c) There should be a minimum of a 15 minute interval between groups of participants departing having completed an activity and the next group arriving, to allow for cleaning and ventilation of the space. This will also help to avoid groups over-lapping.
- d) Depending on the venue capacity and facilities available, Parents / Guardians may be required to ‘Drop Off & Collect’ children rather than remaining on the premises. Be aware of implications this may have on existing Safeguarding arrangements within units and if subsequent DBS / PVG background checks are deemed to be required, these must be completed.
- e) Attendance will be limited to essential personnel and will be recorded by the organising unit at all times for contact tracing purposes. Records should at all times be kept in accordance with GDPR guidelines.



2.6 Check-in Process

- a) Each Comhaltas unit must set up check-in procedures appropriate to its activities which allow for checking that each attendee has submitted a properly completed Covid-19 Declaration and recording attendances in a manner that will facilitate contact tracing, should it be required.
- b) Parents/guardians must not approach check-in areas unless absolutely necessary and, if they do, they must adhere to physical distancing guidelines at all times.

2.7 Protocol if Someone Becomes Unwell

- a) An adult who becomes unwell at a Comhaltas activity must go home immediately. If this is not possible the isolation space should be utilised.
- b) A child who becomes unwell at a Comhaltas activity must be escorted to the isolation space immediately by a Covid Supervisor and one other adult. The child's parent/guardian must be contacted immediately. If there are other members of the same household in attendance at the activity, they must also be escorted to the isolation space immediately. If this protocol requires those present to be in close proximity indoors, everyone present should wear a face mask. The relevant Covid Supervisor and one other adult must stay for the duration of each activity in which children participate in case a child requires isolation. The isolation space must be deep cleaned after being used.
- c) **If you or your child or anyone in your household is unwell do not attend any Comhaltas activity.**

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2.8 Contact Tracing

- a) Each Comhaltas unit must make appropriate arrangements to record attendances at each of its activity in a manner which will facilitate contact tracing by NHS Test & Trace should it be required.
- b) Covid Supervisors will provide contact details of attendees at any activities arranged by their units when requested by NHS Test & Trace, as permitted by the relevant Covid-19 Declarations.
- c) The contact tracing log period of retention is a minimum of 2 weeks post event. Records should then be destroyed in compliance with GDPR guidelines.

2.9 Communication

- a) Each Comhaltas unit must ensure that a copy of these guidelines is available in digital or hard copy form to Comhaltas members and anyone attending a Comhaltas activity.
- b) Each Comhaltas unit must communicate any amendments of these guidelines to Comhaltas members and anyone attending a Comhaltas activity.

2.10 Meetings/Registration

- a) Eliminate all non-essential gatherings and put robust control measures in place for essential interaction.
- b) Meetings and class registration should be held online where possible. If not they should be held in spaces that allow for compliance with Government physical distancing guidelines - currently 2 metres.



c) Registration may need to be considered through digital format e.g. email / google forms with payment through a payment provider e.g. Paypal or bank transfer (BACS)

3 COVID-19 Guidance Specific to Participants in Comhaltas Activities (Members, Tutors, Volunteers, Students, Guardians of Students)

The risk of infection can be reduced by structuring activities into class groups and minimising contact between groups, where possible, therefore it is recommended that a student does not attend more than one class a day as we aim to limit contact. This also applies to the sharing of resources between classes.

3.1: Education and Awareness

- a) Ensure you (or your child) are/is familiar with and follow these guidelines and any amendments to them.
- b) Ensure continued awareness of safety protocols.
- c) Follow advice given in health awareness materials such as posters displayed at Comhaltas activities.

3.2: Pre-attendance Screening

- a) Identify the Covid Supervisors appointed by your branch. If at any time you have concerns about the implementation or compliance with these guidelines, please discuss these with a Covid Supervisor.
- b) Complete the Covid-19 Declaration (one for each person intending to attend Comhaltas activities) and submit it/them to a Covid Supervisor of your branch before your initial return to Comhaltas activities. This document will be retained by the branch and be fully compliant with all GDPR guidelines.
- c) Ensure that a Covid Supervisor of your branch has up-to-date contact details for you (or your child).



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d) You (or your child) must not attend Comhaltas facilities/activities if you (or your child) have:

- had any of the Covid-19 symptoms (i.e. cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms) in the past 14 days.
- been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the past 14 days.
- been a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- been advised by a doctor or required by Government regulation to self-isolate or shield at this time.

3.3: Hygiene

a) Wash/sanitise your hands frequently, but especially on entering a venue and after using the toilets.

b) Practice good cough/sneeze etiquette and dispose of any used tissue in a responsible manner.

c) Avoid touching your face.

d) Bring your own equipment (instrument and associated equipment, pens, paper, music file/folder, water bottles, etc.) and do not share these with anyone else.

e) Avoid touching high contact surfaces, e.g. door handles, light switches.

f) Use a face mask/shield in compliance with current Government guidelines.



3.4: Social Distancing Guidelines

- a) Observe physical distancing guidelines (at time of these guidelines being created, this stands at 2 metres)

3.5: Physical Contact

- a) Avoid or reduce physical contact to a minimum. Do not shake hands.

3.6: Use of Toilets

- a) Where possible use the toilet at home before you arrive to a Comhaltas activity to avoid touching high contact surfaces.
- b) Use toilets at an activity venue as directed by the organisers. On exiting the toilet, wash your hands with anti-bacterial soap, dry them with paper towels and deposit used paper towels in the bin/bag provided.
- c) Only one person should use toilet facilities at any one time.

3.7: Travel to and from Comhaltas Activities

- a) Follow Government social distancing advice in relation to all forms of transport to Comhaltas activities
- c) If travelling by private vehicle, such as a car, only travel with members of the same household.
- d) Avoid the use of public transport where possible; if it is the only option, follow Government guidelines.

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- e) Arrive no more than 5 minutes prior to an activity and leave immediately after the activity.
- f) Depending on the safeguarding arrangements and social distancing guidelines of a particular venue, Parents/Guardians may not be permitted to enter venues. In this instance, Parents/Guardians Must:

Arrive at the approved time

Follow guidelines from organisers as to whether they are required to remain outside, or if they have to return at a specific time

4 COVID-19 Guidance Specific to Tutors

4.1 Guidance for Tutors

- a) Ensure the venue has not exceeded capacity as per guidelines regarding physical distancing.
- b) Tutors/Branch members should arrive at the venue prior to the class to ensure cleaning/sanitizing and physical distancing can be administered.
- c) No sheet music to be given to students. Consider teaching by ear/use whiteboard/chalkboard or alternatively the tune could be emailed prior to class.
- d) Ensure that students use their own equipment (instrument and associated equipment, pens, paper, music files, water bottles, etc.) and do not share these with anyone else.
- e) Tutors to keep the recommended physical distance from all students at all times.



- f)** Do not touch or tune any instrument belonging to a student.
- g)** It is recommended to clean/wipe down your own instruments before returning to class to ensure droplets from previous class are not on your instrument.
- h)** Encourage students to wipe down instruments after class as best practice.
- i)** Students should not swap seats during class
- j)** If you are teaching multi instrumental classes consider the seating arrangements for flute and whistle as they require further physical distancing.
- k)** Discourage wind instruments from blowing through their instrument to unclog them, as this affects the distance that droplets can travel.
- l)** Make sure your room is well ventilated and has good airflow.
- m)** Students are discouraged from using the bathroom. Where necessary bathroom use is limited to 1 person at a time in line with CCÉ Child Safeguarding Statement.
- n)** Classes should be no longer than 40 minutes. Extended periods of time increase the risk of transmission.
- o)** After each class there must be a break of at least 15 minute to change the airflow in the room.
- p)** Tutor should clean down their own workspace after class.
- q)** Parent meetings are discouraged and can be arranged if necessary via phone.

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5 Online Classes

Guidance for Classes which are hosted Online

- a) Branches wishing to use Online Classes are responsible for making the initial contact with the parents/guardians of the students who will be the recipients of the lessons.
- b) Online Classes are subject to the same safeguarding requirements as classes in person. With this in mind, branches should be aware of background check requirements depending on online class arrangements, and tutors should be aware of their own responsibilities with regards safeguarding, i.e. tutors should avoid being involved in a 1-on-1 Online Class in the same way they would avoid being in a classroom environment alone with a child / vulnerable adult
- c) Arrange for permission to be granted by the parents/guardians of the student prior to start of Online Classes, either by text or email.
- d) Be careful with login ID's and passwords, make sure they differ from class to class and that only participants know the login details. Ensure that all online classes use a Password and if using a platform such as Zoom, make sure that the Waiting Room feature is utilised.
- e) Parent/guardian should start the video link and they should also close it down at the end of the lesson.
- f) Parents/guardians are responsible for monitoring Online Classes for all students under 18 years of age. safeguarding and protection of all students must be paramount.
- g) If a branch is utilising the 'Breakout Rooms' feature of a platform such as Zoom, make sure that each 'Breakout Room' is compliant with safeguarding requirements.



6 High Risk Comhaltas Activities **(singing, Dancing & Playing of Wind-Instruments)**

6.1 Wind Instruments

- a)** Due to aerosols, there is a higher level of COVID-19 spread risk with regards to wind instruments (i.e. Whistle and Flute), so the physical distancing must be greater than recommended guidelines.
- b)** Be aware that aerosol production (droplets) comes from both mouthpiece and end of instrument so keep this in mind when seating your students.
- c)** Students must be forward facing, i.e. not in a circle or facing each other.
- d)** Students and tutors should not face each other.
- e)** The room must be well ventilated.
- f)** There must be at least a 15 minutes break between classes that have wind instruments so that aerosol particles (droplets) left in the air can be removed.
- g)** Encourage sanitation of instruments after class.
- h)** Discourage students from blowing through their instrument to unclog them, as this affects the distance that droplets can travel.

6.2 Singing

Due to aerosols, Singing classes may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration should be given to how they are held therefore online classes are recommended where possible.

If singing classes do take place, then the following must be strictly adhered to:



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- a) There is a higher level of risk with regards to singing so the physical distancing must be greater than recommended guidelines.
- b) Students will need to sing forward-facing not in a circle or facing each other.
- c) Students and tutors should not face each other.
- d) Volume of singing has a directly proportional effect on the amount of particles released in to the air, therefore participants and tutors are recommended to sing with a reduced volume where possible

6.3 Dancing

- a) All dance classes must ensure that their activities are consistent with Local/National Government guidelines in relation to physical distancing.
- b) Dancers should avoid hand contact (unless from the same household). Where a dance activity includes hand movement, teach the parts without hand movements.
- c) Treat each team as a bubble and therefore the group members should remain consistent.
- d) Sean Nós dancers should be forward dancing and ensuring physical distancing at all times and restrict movement around the room (dance on the spot).
- e) The room must be well ventilated during class.
- f) After each class there must be a break of at least 15 minutes to change the airflow in the room.
- g) It is recommended that a teacher **does not** tie students' dancing shoes.



COVID-19 Declaration

A separate copy of this declaration must be completed and signed by each person (or a parent/guardian in the case of each child) attending a Comhaltas in Britain activity. This form and its details will be treated with the strictest of confidence and in full accordance with GDPR requirements.

ALL INFORMATION MUST BE RECORDED IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Branch _____

Name _____

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Contact Phone Number _____

I declare that I:

- (a) have read and understood the Covid-19 Guidelines for Comhaltas Activities and agree that I (or the above name child) will abide by these guidelines and any future amendments communicated to me;
- (b) understand and accept the risks posed by Covid-19 to me personally (or the above name child);
- (c) agree to wear Personal Protective Equipement as required.
- (d) consent to attendance records and contact details (name and phone number given above, which I will update if changed) being released for the purposes of NHS Test & Trace
- (e) undertake that I (or the above name child) will **NOT** attend Comhaltas activities if I (or my child) have:

had any of the Covid-19 symptoms in the past 14 days (i.e. cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms)

been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected Covid-19 infection in the past 14 days

been a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of Covid-19 in the past 14 days (i.e. less than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes altogether in 1 day)

been advised by a doctor or required by Government regulation to self-isolate or shield

Signature _____ Date _____

Of the person named above (or a parent/guardian in the case of a child)



Lead COVID-19 Supervisor (LCS) Appointment 2020-2021

ALL INFORMATION MUST BE RECORDED IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Branch _____

Region _____

Lead COVID-19 Supervisor (LCS)

Name _____
(The LCS must be 18 years of age or older)

Address _____

Contact Phone Number _____

Email _____

Signed

Secretary _____ Date _____

LCS _____ Date _____

Please complete this form and return it to your Regional Secretary as soon as possible and retain a copy for your own records

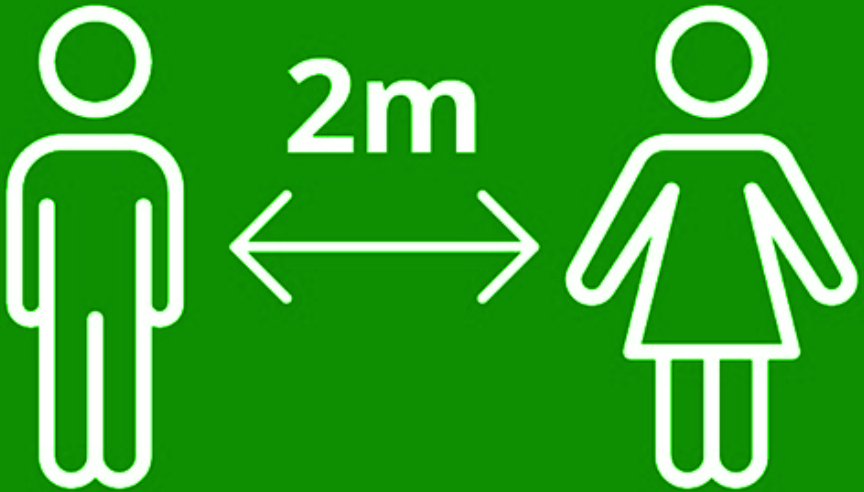
This checklist resource is intended to assist Comhaltas Units in preparing for a safe return to Comhaltas activities.

Checklist	Yes	No
Comhaltas Covid-19 Guidelines available to branch members including tutors, students and parent/guardians of students.		
Lead Covid-19 Supervisor (LCS) is appointed.		
Covid-19 Declarations issued and returned.		
Cleaning and sanitizing equipment available.		
Adequate space to abide by social distancing guidelines		
Contact Tracing measures put in place		
Cleaning Checklist in place		
Isolation space identified		

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SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES IN PLACE



PLEASE KEEP A MINIMUM DISTANCE
OF 2 METRES WHERE POSSIBLE



COMHALTAS
in Britain



**FACE COVERINGS
MUST BE WORN IN
THIS AREA AT ALL
TIMES**



HAND SANITISING AREA



COMHALTAS
in Britain

ONE WAY SYSTEM IN OPERATION



COMHALTAS
in Britain

Comhaltas in Britain
England & Wales - St. Michaels Irish Centre
6 Boundary Lane, Liverpool, L6 5JG

Scotland - 54 Admiral Street,
Kinning Park, Glasgow, G41 1HU

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