



REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS DEATHS, MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

Darlington Registration District

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Getting married in an approved venue or hotel

Congratulations on choosing Darlington as a venue for your marriage. Darlington has some amazing venues to host your wedding ceremony from a railway museum, a theatre to a range of hotels from town centre boutique to castle and country house. You can tell we are really proud of our town !

The following information will help you plan and understand what will happen on the day.

Arrival times.

Two registrars attend each wedding, one will be performing the wedding ie, saying the words, the other will be registering the marriage ie. making the legal record of the wedding.

The registrars will arrive at the venue 30 minutes before the start of the ceremony. We use this 30 minutes to meet the couple being married and also anyone who has a key role in the ceremony. You will not start the wedding unprepared !

The usual format when we arrive is:

- 30 minutes before the wedding starts - meet the groom and any best man, ring bearers and ushers. We will do this in the ceremony room and also meet any photographers, videographers and musicians that you might have and ensure that any recorded music that you might have is ready for the ceremony.

- 15 minutes before the ceremony starts – meet the bride, anyone escorting the bride down, any bridesmaids and flower girls. We will explain the order of walking down the aisle and meet any additional photographers and videographers that you have with you. Please be ready for us when we arrive.
- The venue will bring the guests into the marriage room.

Pre ceremony questioning

When we first meet the couple being married the registrar registering the marriage will need to ask you some questions to ensure that the information we will record in the marriage entry is correct.

This is similar to the information that you were asked at your notice of marriage appointment. You don't need any proof of identity or address with you on the day.

We will also ask you who the witness are that will sign the marriage entry with you. They don't need any proof of identity with them either.

Some of the information we ask you, particularly about your parents, can be sensitive or upsetting. If this is the case we can see you alone and in private to find out this information. Let us know when we arrive if you want to do this.

About the ceremony room.

Each of our approved wedding venues has a number of rooms licensed for civil marriages and civil partnerships and each of those rooms has a maximum capacity of people who can be present for the ceremony.

If you are unsure of this and worried that you will be over the maximum capacity then you should ask the venue what the maximum capacity is or you can contact us.

We do have the right not to proceed with a wedding until the capacity is within licensed numbers.

Alcohol is not allowed in the ceremony room. The venue will be aware of this and will ask guests to leave drinks outside of the room until the ceremony has finished.

Outdoor weddings

Many of our couples choose a venue with the option of an outdoor ceremony and knowing some of the facilities that our wedding venues have they have fantastic backgrounds for the ceremonies and photographs.

Of course this is England and one thing we can't order to our needs is the weather ! You should ensure that there is a back up plan for an indoor ceremony and ask the hotel the arrangements for when a final decision has to be made about holding the ceremony inside or outside.

If the weather did change during the ceremony we cannot stop and begin the ceremony again in another location, once started we must continue with the ceremony. We will ensure that the legal parties to the wedding ie, the couple being married, the two witnesses and the two registrars are under cover at the licensed gazebo or structure and the guests can stay or relocate inside.

Music

You will need to provide the hotel or venue with music for the ceremony and you should check with them in what format they want it ie, CD or MP3 or streamed. You will need music for:

1. Seating of the guests
2. Entrance of the bridal party
3. Signing the marriage schedule and the official photographs
4. Exit of the couple

We do not need to know what your choice of music is but it must not be religious in content or intent eg. a hymn.

Photographs

We understand the importance of photographs and are here to help official photographers and videographers make the most of the ceremony. We will meet them when we arrive on the day, some are already familiar with the venue and some will welcome some ideas to make the most of the ceremony. Guests will have an opportunity to take photographs at the end of the ceremony after you have signed the legal paperwork.

Witnesses

Two witnesses are required to sign the marriage schedule with you and the couple being married, the two witnesses and the two registrars constitutes the legal wedding party.

Your witnesses must be aged 16 or over but can be anyone present for the duration of the ceremony. They can be friends, family or your own children (age permitting). Witnesses are not required to bring an identification on the day with them.

Seating arrangements

The hotel or venue will help you plan the seating for the ceremony. Some couples are traditional and separate families, bride to the left, groom to the right but many couples mix their guests. We would recommend that you reserve seating for parents, best men, bridesmaids, flower girls, ushers, witnesses and other key family members who you want to have priority seating. The couple being married usually stand throughout.

Bridal party entrance

Some couples walk down the aisle together but most stick to tradition with the groom waiting at the front of the room and the bride makes an entrance escorted by a parent or family member with an entourage of bridesmaids, flower girls and page boys.

You should think of the order of those walking down the aisle with you and usually the bride and the person escorting her down the aisle would be at the back of the bridal party ie the last to walk in.

Ceremony choices and personalising your marriage ceremony.

We understand and encourage you to personalise your marriage ceremony to be able to allow other people present to take part and also to reflect your wishes to each other. The words that we say are now standard but you will still be able to personalise your ceremony by:

- Choosing your vows and words you say to each other.
- Including readings for your guests to say.
- Including a candle ceremony
- Including promises to your children

We no longer offer a pre-wedding meeting to discuss the ceremony.

We have improved the information we give to you to help make your choices and understand what will happen on the day of the wedding. Once we have your wedding questionnaire returned to us that is all we need before seeing you on the day of the wedding.

If you are getting married at one of our approved hotels for weddings than we attend all of their open days and you can meet us there to discuss the ceremony if it helps you.

Religious content in ceremonies

The purpose of a civil ceremony is that it is a non-religious marriage. Couples have a distinct choice of a religious ceremony in a church or a civil marriage in a register office or approved venue such as a hotel. Only a registrar can marry a couple at a register office or an approved venue

However, we respect that couples have customs and traditions which they may want to acknowledge and include in the ceremony.

We want you to enjoy your wedding day as much as possible and for the marriage ceremony to be personalised to meet your needs. No two weddings are same. If you have any questions or ideas that you would like to include in the ceremony, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Otherwise see you on the day !