

There is a legal duty of care as a singing group to each other and to the public.

Introduction

A **hazard**, as defined by the 'is something that can cause harm', and a **risk** 'is the chance, high or low, that any **hazard** will actually cause somebody harm

Without proper preparation and planning suspected/confirmed cases of Covid-19 can put singers and public welfare at risk. Aside from the obvious health concerns there can be significant reputational damage.

Before going back into rehearsals every singing group should complete a Covid-19 specific risk assessment to identify what measures will need to be implemented to control the risks associated with the transmission of Covid-19.

Risk Assessment covering exposure to Covid-19 will differ from one group to another. The purpose of this guide is to pose the questions that need to be asked so that appropriate risk assessments may be created specific to your place of assembly and include all group members and other third parties.

Context

Before the risk assessment is undertaken, the assessor must first ask:

- who is doing what and how?
- where they are doing it and
- who is likely to be affected by these actions?

Understanding the tasks or activities is vital to assess exposure and to qualify any subsequent control decisions.

Risk Assessment Hazard

The risk assessment must recognise the virus as a hazard. It should reflect that the virus is spread in minute water droplets and aerosols that are expelled from the body through;

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Talking, singing, breathing

⇒ The virus can be transferred to the hands and from there to surfaces.

⇒ It can survive on surfaces for a period after transfer (depending on such things as the surface type, its moisture content and temperature).

⇒ The risk assessment should conclude that if it is passed from one person to another, while many survive infection, some may die from the disease.

⇒ It should be regarded as a high hazard.

Likelihood

Exposure

Consideration must be given to how exposed people are to Covid-19. There are a list of questions to consider and this is not an exhaustive list, as your specific place of assembly will have specific considerations along with other factors to consider:

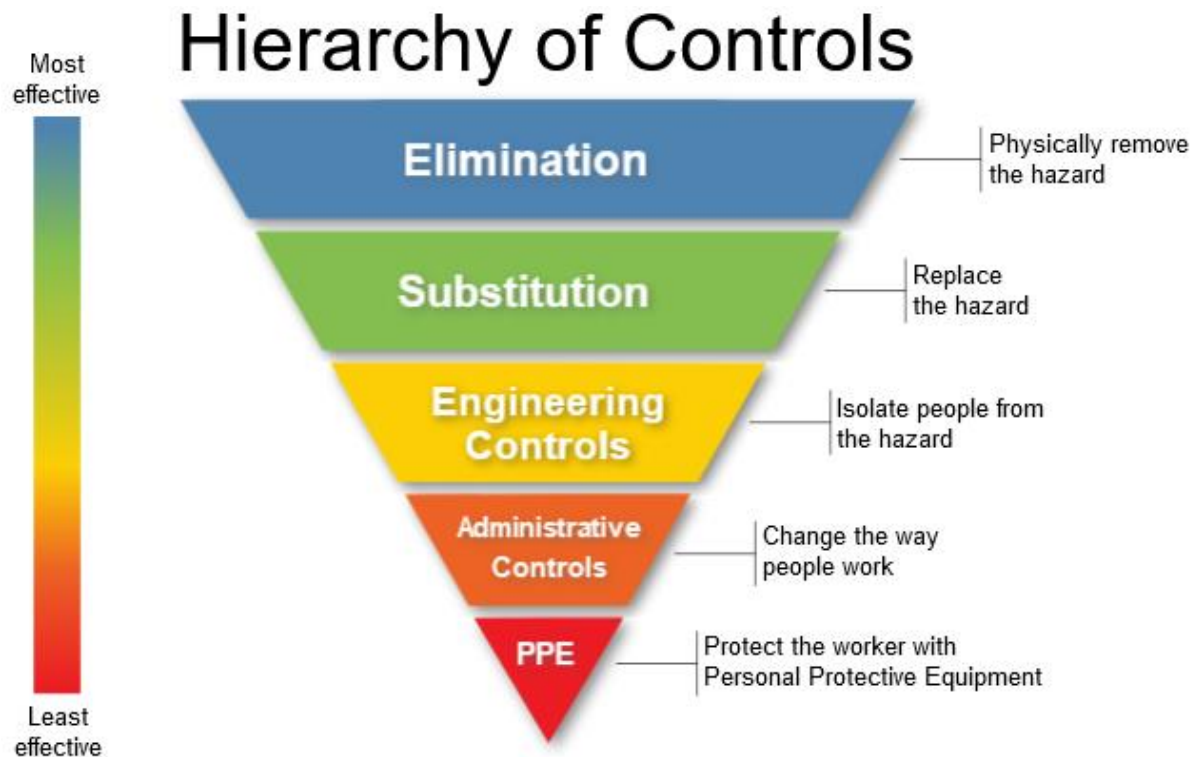
1. How might people come into contact with infected people, how frequently and for how long?
2. How do singers travel to practice and does this expose them to public crowds?
3. Do you know who within the group are in the vulnerable groups, with underlining medical conditions which makes them more susceptible to the disease? How do you capture this information?
4. Do you know who have people in their household who may have increased exposure to the disease?
5. If someone in a singer's household must isolate, what will you require your singer/member to do?
6. The increased risk of exposure where singers meet people who may be carrying the virus?

Once the answers to the questions are understood, controls to mitigate them can be better considered and implemented.

Control

The safety of hierarchy of control can serve you well in considering what can be done. Any mitigating controls devised and implemented must reduce the exposure of singers, venue workers, contractors and members of the public.

Control considerations must include identification of those who may have the disease, preventative measures of what to do and if a group member or member of the public has contracted the disease. In other words, there may be elements of management systems design to think about. Decisions about what may be done must be realistic and reasonably practicable: achievable given the resources you have.



Elimination

Elimination is the best form of control. Can we eliminate the virus? Rehearse at home

Substitution

Can practice of singing be replaced for a period of time, where the group focuses on other requirements or moves its practice online as part of a blended learning approach?

Engineering Controls

Engineering controls are things which place a physical barrier between the person and the hazard or provide mechanical reduction of the hazard.

Screens: Placing screens between people

Ventilation: Rehearse outdoors and if indoors ensure the space is suitable with proper ventilation and space (the larger a space the better!)

Administrative Controls

Administrative Controls provide the best options for most singing groups. The risk assessment must consider how you will keep the assembly space and equipment clean, adjust your rehearsal practices and ensure people are safe.

Questions and Considerations about designing a safe workplace should include:

1. Can you redesign the rehearsal space to maintain social distancing?
2. Can you repurpose rooms to spread singers and others out?
3. Do you need to consider reducing the number of singers required to practice in an area? (e.g. singers rehearse remotely from home)

4. Identify the places where people find it difficult to avoid one another (entrance/egress points, foyers/reception, security points, lifts, canteens toilets resource rooms, hot desks)?
5. What measure can you put in place to reduce these busy points. (phased rehearsals, practice rotations, breaks, closures)?
6. Can you provide more handwashing or sterilisation facilities around the assembly space?
7. Identify the places where most people commonly touch (e.g. door handles, control panels, lift buttons, handrails, kettles etc)?

Cleaning

Cleaning is a vital control. Agree with the venue what is needed for rehearsals and who will undertake the required cleaning with clear responsibility on returning to practice. Have you:

1. Considered how you keep commonly touched surfaces sterile and how much more frequently they need to be cleaned?
2. Are you using an effective strength cleaner to kill the virus?
3. Have you amended cleaning checklists to ensure all areas that need it, are being frequently cleaned?
4. Considered the impact on your cleaners or contract cleaners? Make sure people have what they need when cleaning as regards PPE etc.
5. Agreed a cleaning schedule with your rehearsal space, pre and post rehearsals. Can the venue leave materials there for the group to assist as part of the venues cleaning procedure?
6. As they clean the viral loading on cloths/ mops will increase, do they have enough to be able to change frequently?
7. Where and how do they dispose of contaminated cloths/ waste bins of tissues?

Equipment

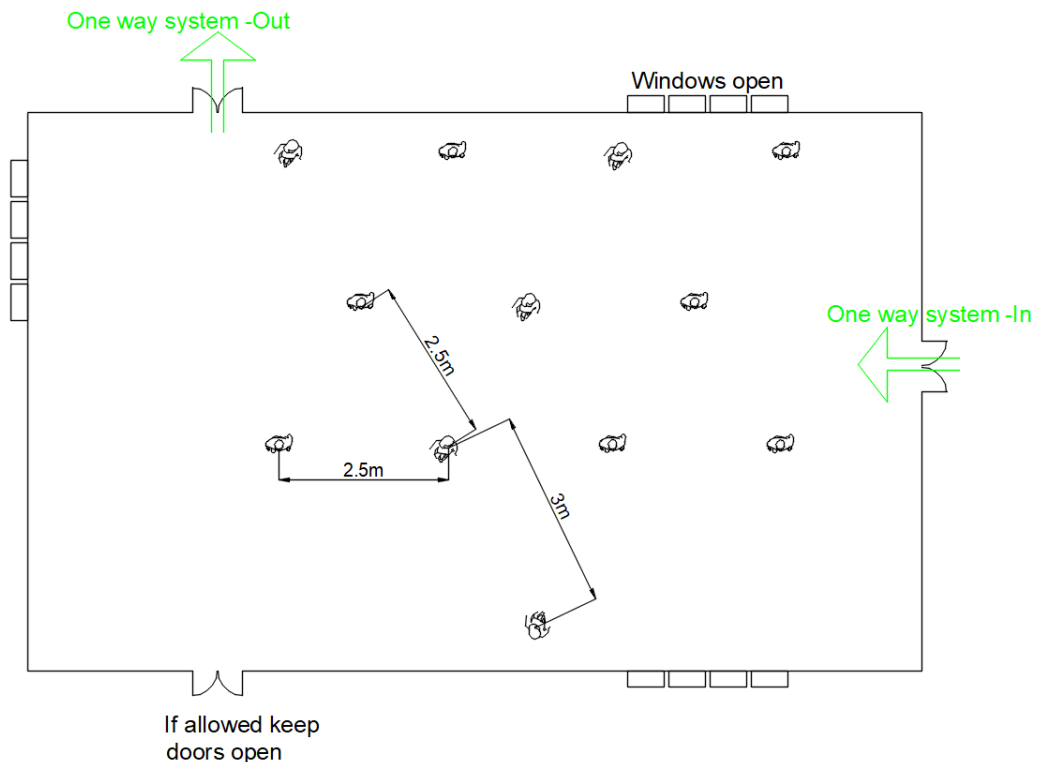
Question and consideration about rehearsal equipment

1. Can equipment be allocated to an individual rather than shared?
2. If equipment must be shared, then how will it be cleaned between uses? (e.g. chairs, desks microphones, pianos/keyboards, chairs and music stands.
3. If someone falls ill with Covid-19, what deep cleaning process will be necessary on the equipment they have been using and the areas of the building they may have been in contact with?
4. What washing / hand sterilising facilities are available to singers and public, how frequently should they wash their hands to reduce potential viral load and spread on equipment and in the environment.

Safe Systems of Choral Work

Question and consideration about Safe Systems of Choral practice.

1. Can group singing work be reorganised to avoid singers being in contact with one another? When this cannot be avoided, can the time they are in contact be minimised or can they perform facing away from one another? Can they rehearse/perform in one row rather than several rows? (One row is preferable)



2. Can you decrease exposure time through limiting actual singing time with regular breaks? Advised – 1 hr indoors with regular ventilation breaks – break to air the room for 5 mins every 15 mins.
3. Rehearse outdoors.
4. What do your singers need to know about the disease and how they might contact if going to and from practice, or from their household?
5. How will you deliver this knowledge?
6. How do you ensure choir members know what Covid-19 controls are required in their work?
7. Do the singing group members know how they can reduce exposure to the virus travelling to and from rehearsals/performances? Has advice been provided?
8. What process have you got for singing group members to report possible infection or exposure, and what do you then require them to do?
9. Advice on Covid-19 is constantly changing, how will you keep current with advice and how will you update your singing group?
10. What do your singing group managers/committees need to know to enable them to supervise effectively? How will this be communicated and how will they be held accountable for delivering this requirement?
11. Where visiting singers are used, how will you ensure their compliance on applying Covid-19 controls? (what changes are necessary to your induction programme)?
12. Are singers complying with the new control measures and if not why not?
13. How do you manage people with additional needs?

14. What provisions are there in your singing groups for supporting people with increased levels of anxiety in this pandemic or for those who have suffered personal loss as a result?
15. All singers are encouraged to download the HSE Covid-19 track and trace app.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the last resort in the hierarchy of risk control. It is considered the weakest control because it relies on people using it correctly. It introduces many possibilities for error.



Considerations include:

1. At this point, singers are recommended to wear faceshield and mask as per the image above.
2. If gloves are provided, the virus can still be transferred on the surface. If the wearer then touches their face, they could contract the disease. – Look at frequent hand washing, or sterilisation is a better option.
3. Consider the safe disposal of all PPE, either an available general waste bin (not recycling) or bring home for disposal.

Risk Management

Finding answers to the questions posed will provide a list of possible controls that can be implemented. A risk assessment does NOT control risk. It is the actions of individuals who apply controls that mitigate the risk control action plan making it clear who will do what and by when. The successful delivery of this plan must be monitored, reviewed regularly and updated with new guidance documents when issued by the HSE, NPHE and Government. Currently within Northern Ireland singing in community/amateur settings is currently not allowed but this is being monitored on an ongoing basis from Public Health Northern Ireland.

Spending effort on developing controls bespoke to your rehearsal space/venue circumstances is a waste of time unless performance is monitored over time. Plans need to be in place for routinely reviewing the effectiveness of the controls. It is vital to ensure that these controls are maintained and even improved as our knowledge about the virus, its transmission and its control develops.

Risk Assessment Procedure

1. Assess the likelihood of the hazard occurring
2. Access the impact of the hazard occurring
3. Establish the Risk (Likelihood x Impact)
4. Plot the risk on the Risk assessment matrix
5. Reduce the risk with reduction/management measures as appropriate
6. Establish the residual Risk

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals having recurring negative test-results (see Sports, Wiener Philharmonie, Thomaner) • No Risk reducing measures necessary 	Very low Risk
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observance of Minimum Distance (radial 2m/6^{1/2} feet, or 1,5m lateral and 2m in front, staggered arrangement) • Outdoors • Closed spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very large („Cathedral-Situation“) - High air exchange rate (HAVAC (6/h)) or sufficient intermittent ventilation (CO₂-traffic light) - Wearing surgical masks while singing - Specific Measures in Brass-/Wind Instruments (Shields, condensation water) 	Remarkable reduction of Risk
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abnormalities during entrance screening • No observance of distances (radial 2m, or 1,5m lateral and 2m in front), • Too many people in a room • Insufficient ventilation 	High Risk
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of Risk awareness • Absence of Risk reducing measures 	Ultra-High risk

Spahn/Richter 2020: Risiko Management Corona in the field of music

Fig. 3: Four levels with assessment of the infection risk depending on the risk-reducing measures (based on the risk matrix according to Nohl 2019)

Figure 1 <https://www.mh-freiburg.de/fileadmin/Downloads/Allgemeines/RisikoabschaetzungCoronaMusikSpahnRichter17.7.2020Englisch.pdf>



Sample Risk Assessment Form

Step 1: Identify Hazards	Step 2: Assessing the Risks			Step 3: Additional Control Measures (further actions needed)		
What are the hazards?	Who is at risk?	Current Controls (What are you already doing?)	Level of risk? (Your estimate of the remaining risk level, based on the current controls. For example High, Medium, or Low)	Additional Controls needed (Further action to reduce the remaining risk level to as low as possible)	Action by whom and by when?	Date Completed

Risk Assessment Completed By: _____

Date _____



Sample Risk Assessment No.1 – Slips, trips and falls

Step 1: Identify Hazards	Step 2: Assessing the Risks		Step 3: Additional Control Measures (further actions needed)			
What are the hazards?	Who is at risk?	Current Controls (What are you already doing?)	Level of risk? (Your estimate of the remaining risk level, based on the current controls. For example High, Medium, or Low)	Additional Controls needed (Further action to reduce the remaining risk level to as low as possible)	Action by whom and by when?	Date Completed
Slips, Trips and Falls Can cause serious injuries For example fractures, head injuries	Everyone – employees and visitors	Clear, unobstructed, slip-resistant pedestrian routes (Including entrances and exits) are provided and maintained Adequate lighting is provided and is appropriate for the work being carried out Absorbent materials and warning signage are available for dealing with spills Spills are cleaned up immediately Mats are properly located, fitted and secured Good house-keeping practices are in place and are maintained Slip resistant footwear is provided and worn by kitchen staff	Medium	Changes in levels are avoided if possible or are adequately highlighted where necessary - steps outside the side entrance are dark and hard to see Trailing cables and leads are re-routed, removed or secured – not done in the main office	John Smith by August 2018 John Smith by 30th June 2018	

Risk Assessment Completed By: Joe Bloggs

Date: 28th June 2018