



Getting married

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats on request by contacting 0161 770 6666. For further information please see our detailed fact sheet Information for all.

Where can I marry?

A marriage can take place at:

- A register office
- At a building approved for civil marriage
- Any other religious building that is registered for the “solemnisation” of marriage

What is a civil marriage?

A government official rather than a vicar, clergyman or religious leader carries out a civil marriage. The government official is called a “registrar” or a “registration officer”.

The marriage ceremony takes place in a register office or another approved building rather than a religious building.

Can I marry in any building?

Since a change in the law in April 1995 you can have a civil wedding ceremony in buildings other than register offices.

To arrange a wedding in an approved building, you must first get in touch with the venue to make a booking. You should then contact the register office in the district where the building is to make sure that the registration officer can attend your wedding.

However:

- You must tell the register office where you live not where the building is (please see the **what must I do by law** section)

- You must give the “marriage authority” to the register office in the district where the building is (please see the **what must I do by law** section for an explanation of the marriage authority)

Can I marry in any religious building?

Yes, if:

- the religious building is registered for marriage
- if the building is in the same registration district as you live

However:

If the building is not registered for marriage you must also arrange for a civil ceremony at the register office to register the marriage.

A registration officer may also need to attend the ceremony.

If the building is not in the same registration district you need to prove that the building is a regular place of worship for both of you. If you cannot do this you will need to give “notice” to the register office that is in the same district as the building (please see the **what must I do by law** section for an explanation of giving notice of marriage).

If there is no registered building in the registration district in which you live, you will be allowed to marry in a building in the nearest registration district that has one.

What must I do by law?

By law you must give public notice of your plan to be married.

Marriages in the Church of England

If you wish to be married in the Church of England you should first speak to the vicar. There is usually no need to tell the registry office. The vicar will arrange for the “Banns” to be called on three Sundays before the day of your ceremony or for a common licence to be issued.

Other marriages

If you are not getting married in the Church of England, you must let the Register Office know that you are planning to marry. You can tell the Register Office up to 12 months before the wedding date but you must tell them at least 15 days before the wedding date.

You need to tell the register office in person, and both partners need to be there. This is called “giving notice of marriage”; your notice of marriage is displayed on the notice board at the register office for 15 days.

The Registrar will ask you and your partner questions about yourselves, and you will be required to show a number of documents.

After giving notice of marriage, the register office will issue a “marriage authority” 15 days after both parties have given notice. The marriage authority is valid for twelve months from the date on which you give notice. You will have to pay for this.

How do I get a copy of the marriage certificate?

You will get a copy of the marriage certificate after the ceremony. A fee of £3.50 is payable for a marriage certificate on the day of the marriage.

If you or the person you wish to marry are subject to immigration control you will need to show papers that prove you can marry in this country. If you live in the North West you can only give notice to either Blackburn with Darwen, Kendal, Carlisle, Manchester or Liverpool registry offices.

For a full list of register offices that you can attend please see:

www.gro.gov.uk/Images/dro_tcm69-14324.pdf

For further advice please see:

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/generalcaseworking/marriageorregisteringcivilpartne or contact The Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR9 2BY, telephone 0870 606 7766.

What is a civil partnership?

Civil partnership is different from marriage; it is a new legal relationship that is just for same sex couples.

From 5th December 2005 two people of the same sex can form a civil partnership by signing a registration document. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 means that same-sex couples, who form a civil partnership, are treated in the same way in many legal matters as opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.

The Woman and Equality Unit has published some frequently asked questions (FAQs) about civil partnerships:

www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/lgbt/faq.htm

Contacting us

If you would like more information about getting married you can contact us by:

Writing to or visiting

The Register Office, Chadderton Town Hall, Middleton Road, Chadderton,
Oldham OL9 6PP

If you are visiting the office, please telephone 0161 770 3708 to make an appointment first. The opening hours are 9.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

Phoning

0161 770 3708

Faxing

0161 770 3729

Emailing

registrars@oldham.gov.uk

For further information you can log onto the General Register Office website www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/ or telephone 0151 471 4805 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday).

For further information about planning a wedding you can log onto the Wedding Guide Website: www.weddingguide.co.uk

Another useful website is www.hitched.co.uk

We value your comments and suggestions

We want to provide good quality service for people in Oldham and as we are a public service you have a say in what we do. We want you to be completely satisfied with our services but to ensure this we need to know what you think. What do we do best? Where could we improve things? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Only by listening to you can we give you the service you deserve.

If you wish to make a comment about our services you can e-mail us on

customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk

or you can phone us on 0161 770 4191

or you can write to us: Complaints Officer

Strategy and Resources Directorate

PO Box 160

Civic Centre

Oldham, OL1 1UG