

Marriage Act 1994 (Section 1); Civil Partnership Act 2004 (Section 6(3A)(a)); The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005

* The enclosed application form should only be used in respect of one property but may include more than one room within the property. If there are other properties which it is felt may be suitable for the holding of civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations/ceremonies additional application forms should be submitted. Each application form should be accompanied by the appropriate fee, currently £1,400.00 (one thousand four hundred pounds) for the initial application or £1,000 (one thousand pounds) for a renewal. Cheques should be made payable to Torbay Council.
* The application must be made by the proprietor of a freehold or leasehold interest in the premises or a trustee of the premises. If successful the applicant will be the holder of the approval which will run for three years from the date on which it is granted. Any change in the ownership of the premises will also change the holder of the approval. Details of any such change, and any change to the premises or responsible person, must be notified to the local authority as soon as possible.
* As may be appreciated the type of property to be approved for civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations/ceremonies must adhere to the criteria which have been agreed between Torbay Council, as the local Registration Authority, in consultation with the General Register Office. Representatives from the local Registration Authority will be required to inspect the property before any decision is made and may need to ask for further information.
* All applications will be processed. If the Authority considers that the property should be recommended as a suitable location for civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations/ceremonies, details will be advertised in the local press. Should any objections be received these will be dealt with by a panel of elected members who have been appointed by the Authority to deal with objections. Applicants and objectors will be kept informed of any relevant decisions.
* Approval, if granted, is for 3 years (thirty six months) from the date of such approval. After such time unless an application for renewal of the licence has been obtained the property will no longer be an approved premise and no civil marriage ceremonies or civil partnership registrations/ceremonies may be arranged. During the period of the approval the Registration Authority will carry out regular inspections to ensure that the standard is maintained.
* Details of approved premises, together with the date of approval, will be kept by Torbay Council as the local Registration Authority. A duplicate copy of this information will be held by the General Register Office at Southport. Amendments to this list will be notified to interested parties within 7 (seven) working days of any decision being made. This may include the granting of a new approval or the revoking of a current approval as a result of a change in circumstances. These details will also be open for public scrutiny during normal office hours.
* Any alterations to the property which may affect the ceremony/registration facility must be notified to the local Registration Authority as soon as details are available. If the Registration Authority consider that these alterations may detrimentally affect marriage services or civil partnership registrations/ceremonies it will have the right to suspend the approval or revoke it, depending on the circumstances. A copy of the inspector’s report together with the Registration Authority’s decision will be forwarded to the applicant, the local Superintendent Registrar and the General Register Office at Southport. It is then the responsibility of the applicant or their representative to notify any couple who may be considering the use of the premises as a location for their marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration/ceremony. Arrangements would then have to be made by the couple with the local Register Office to hold the ceremony/registration at another location. Any costs incurred by the couple as a result of this decision may be recoverable from the applicant.
* Applicants are reminded that the premises should be available for inspection within a reasonable period should the Registration Authority representative(s) and/or the Regional Inspector for the General Register Office wish to attend.
* The premise, the subject of the application, must be a permanent structure and, having regard to its primary use, be a seemly and dignified venue for the solemnisation of civil marriage and the registration of civil partnerships. Regulations issued by the General Register Office preclude marriages from taking place in the open air, in a tent, marquee or any other temporary structure and in most forms of transport.
* Due to the secular nature of civil marriage and civil partnership premises should have no recent or continuing religious connection. This could include any building or room which is still considered to be linked by name, purpose of architecture to any religion.
* Applicants are responsible for checking with the local planning authority whether their premises need additional planning permission for the purposes of holding civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registration/ceremonies. If planning permission is required a copy of the relevant permission will need to be produced for inspection.
* Applicants are responsible for checking fire regulations with their local Fire Safety Officer. If fire certificates are also required these will need to be produced for inspection. Basic fire precautions will also need to be available together with health and safety provisions for the staff and members of the public.
* Applicants are reminded that adequate insurance cover must be provided for the premises and that their insurance company must be advised of the intended future use.
* A suitable notice stating that the property is approved for the purpose of holding civil ceremonies should be displayed at all times. On the day of any marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration/ceremony a further notice should be displayed at major entrances giving directions to the ceremony/registration facility 1(one) hour prior to and during each ceremony.
* Applicants are reminded that if the facility is referred to in any of their advertisements it should not be implied that the local authority or the Registration Service is recommending the premises as a venue for civil marriages and civil partnership registrations/ceremonies.
* In order that the Superintendent Registrar and Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar can be assured of arriving at the premises on time for the ceremony/registration it will be necessary for parking facilities to be provided. The parking areas should be clearly visible to all persons attending the premises and should be as close to the entrance as practicable.
* The name, address and telephone number of a designated responsible person must be provided. This person must be available for at least 1 (one) hour before the ceremony/registration as well as during the ceremony/registration and should be capable of dealing with any problems which may arise. Details of a deputy responsible person should also be provided. In cases of dispute the Superintendent Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar’s decision is final.
* The physical layout of furniture in the Ceremony Room(s) should be agreed in advance with the Superintendent Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar responsible for the Registration District in which the premises are located. On the day of the ceremony the owner of the premises or their representative will be responsible for ensuring that the agreed layout of furniture is adhered to and that the marriage or civil partnership party and guests are ready to occupy the room at the time of the ceremony.
* The ceremony/registration may only take place within the room(s) for which approval has been granted. If the Superintendent Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar attends at the property and finds that an alternative location has been provided the ceremony/registration will not take place. Applicants are also reminded that the number of persons attending the ceremony/registration should not exceed the limits laid down in planning, health and safety or fire regulations.
* During the civil ceremony/registration neither alcohol nor food should be available in the Ceremony Room or any adjoining area (unless this adjoining area is separated from the ceremony/registration area).
* The taking of any photographs and the use of video cameras during or after ceremonies/registrations are at the discretion of the Superintendent Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar and should be discussed in advance.
* If any music is to be played before, during or after the ceremony/registration this must be agreed in advance with the Superintendent Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar who will decide whether the choice is appropriate. Control of the music must also be left with the Superintendent Registrar, Registrar or Civil Partnership Registrar depending on how the music system is operated.
* Applicants should be aware that the granting of this approval does not mean that ceremonies/registrations will necessarily be held within the approved premises. Only if the appropriate Registration Officers are available may a marriage or civil partnership registration take place. It is the responsibility of each couple to ensure that the date and time on which they wish to be married or to register their civil partnership has been discussed with staff at the local Register Office and that a marriage or civil partnership notice has been accepted in the usual manner.
* Applications for renewal of an existing approval should be made between 6 (six) and 12 (twelve) months prior to the date of expiry of the current licence. This will allow time for the application to be processed and, if renewed, for details to be circulated to Superintendent Registrars. Applicants should be aware that Superintendent Registrars are unable to accept notices of marriage or notices of intention for civil partnerships at approved premises beyond the expiry date of an approval unless an application for renewal has been received and is being processed.
* Applicants are reminded that once the application fees of £1,400.00 or £1000.00 have been accepted by the Registration Authority and costs have been incurred no refund will be made.
* If approved premises are not utilised as ceremony/registration venues during the period of approval no refund of fees will be made by Torbay Council as local Registration Authority.
* If (an) additional room(s) to an existing approval is/are added during the 3 (three) year period applicants must provide a suitable plan of the area and pay an administration fee of £100.00 (one hundred pounds). Requests for the room(s) to be considered for inclusion must be in writing and must be accompanied by a cheque made payable to Torbay Council. Once the fee has been accepted and costs have been incurred no refund will be made.
* The Torbay Registration Service may now provide non-statutory naming, renewal of marriage vows and commitment ceremonies. If you would not wish for any of these ceremonies to be held on your premises you will need to so indicate on the application form in the appropriate place.
* The law governing this procedure:

a). allows the Registrar General to issue codes of practice for use by local authorities, those in charge of approved premises and registration officers;

* + 1. requires the owner or trustee of approved premises to allow open access without charge to the room where a marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration is taking place for all members of the public at all times during the ceremony;
    2. requires the parties to a marriage or civil partnership to pay the Superintendent Registrar’s fee determined by the local authority as appropriate to recover the costs of the registration officers attending the marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration. The fee shall be remitted to the local authority.