



COMHALTAS

COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR COMHALTAS UNITS & ACTIVITIES SEPTEMBER 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are drawn up after consultation with various sources of information. However there is no sure way to prevent infection that involves face to face contact. 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, management of centres, 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 facility or a Comhaltas activity.

2 COVID-19 GUIDELINES SPECIFIC TO ORGANISERS OF COMHALTAS ACTIVITIES

2.1 Covid Supervisors

- a) Each Comhaltas unit must appoint a Lead Covid Supervisor (LCS) (See [Section 6](#) below) who has an understanding of current guidelines. Further Covid Supervisors will be required depending on the number of activities and members in the unit.
- b) Each Comhaltas unit will communicate the details of the Lead Covid Supervisor (LCS) to all its members and, in the case of branches, to the relevant County Board 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 attending, 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 in light of this.
 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 Comhaltas unit and ensure that these are addressed.
 6. **Latest Information:** Keep up to date on all relevant guidelines from the Government, HSE, HSA and CCÉ. Guidelines can change on a regular basis and it is important that units recognise and adjust to these changes. Current Government guidelines can be accessed at:
<http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

2.2 Covid-19 Declarations

- a) A Covid-19 Declaration (see [Section 5](#) below) 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 Government public health advice and these guidelines. A sample checklist is included 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 emphasize 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 HSE website: <http://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- 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 below) 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.

2.4 Cleaning Checklist

- a) The HSE checklist for cleaning facilities can be accessed at <http://www.hsapc.ie/a-z/lifestages/childcare/samplecleaningscheduleandchecklist/> it contains a log which can be adapted to suit the circumstances of each unit to ensure that key touch-points have been cleaned.
- 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) 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 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) The Branch "CHILD PROTECTION POLICY" documents should be amended to include 2.7 (b)
- d) **If you or your child is unwell do not attend any Comhaltas activity.**

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 the HSE.
- b) Covid Supervisors will provide contact details of attendees at any activities arranged by their units when requested by HSE contact tracers, 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 facility or a Comhaltas activity.
- b) Each Comhaltas unit must communicate any amendments of these guidelines to Comhaltas members and anyone attending a Comhaltas facility or 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 with payment through a payment provider e.g. Paypal.

2.11 Ventilation

- Ensure that rooms are adequately ventilated. This must also be considered when allowing for numbers attending a class. Poor ventilation in crowded indoor spaces is associated with increased risk of COVID-19 transmission; ensuring adequate and appropriate ventilation may mitigate some of this risk. In facilities that rely on natural ventilation (i.e. opening windows), the following additional suggestions are made:
 - Open windows as much as possible during class time, weather and comfort permitting.
 - Use an indoor air quality meter to monitor CO2 levels, and ventilate the room when indicated.
 - [Click link for information on Ventilation in facilities.](#)

3 COVID-19 GUIDANCE SPECIFIC TO PARTICIPANTS IN COMHALTAS ACTIVITIES

(Members, Tutors, Volunteers, Students, Parents/Guardians of Students, Guests)

Step 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.

Step 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).
- 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 (i.e. less than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes altogether in 1 day); or
 - been advised by a doctor or required by Government regulation to self-isolate or cocoon at this time.

Step 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.

Step 4: Social Distancing Guidelines

- a) Observe physical distancing guidelines; this is 2 metres until further notice.

Step 5: Physical Contact

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

Step 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.

Step 7: Travel to and from Comhaltas Activities

- a) Follow Government social distancing advice in relation to all forms of transport to Comhaltas activities
- b) If possible, walk or cycle to the venue.
- 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.
- e) Arrive no more than 5 minutes prior to an activity and leave immediately after the activity.
- f) Abide by established drop off/collection points to avoid traffic jams.
- g) Parent/Guardians must return at the appointed collection time.
- h) Parents or guardians not directly involved are not permitted to attend or observe the activity.
- i) Parents/guardians of students with specific medical conditions can remain in car park in case of emergency, providing they adhere to all guidelines in place.

4 COVID-19 GUIDANCE SPECIFIC TO TUTORS & HIGH RISK COMHALTAS ACTIVITIES

(Singing, dancing and playing of wind instruments)

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.

4.1 Guidance for Tutors

- a) Ensure the venue only holds the number of students as per guidelines re' physical distancing.
- b) Tutors/Branch members should arrive at the venue prior to the class to ensure cleaning/sanitizing and physical distancing can be set up.
- 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.

4.2 Online Classes:

- 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) All music, song and dance tutors providing the ONLINE class are required to have a current vetting with Comhaltas. If vetting is required branch rúnaí is requested to provide NVB1 application form. Contact tomas@comhaltas.ie if this NVB1 form is required.
- 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 essential people know the details.
- 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 are paramount.

4.3 Wind Instruments

- a) There is a higher level of 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.
- 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.

4.4 Singing

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:

- 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.

4.5 Dancing

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



COMHALTAS

5 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 Ceoltóirí Éireann activity. This form and its details will be treated with the strictest of confidence and in full accordance with GDPR requirements.

Branch (IN BLOCK CAPITALS): _____

Name (IN BLOCK CAPITALS): _____

Name of Child (IN BLOCK CAPITALS): _____

Parent/Guardian Name (IN BLOCK CAPITALS): _____

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 Equipment 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 HSE authorised contact tracing; and
- (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); or
 - been advised by a doctor or required by Government regulation to self-isolate or restrict your movements at this time.
 - returned into Ireland from a non-green list country in the last 14 days?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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

6. LEAD COVID-19 SUPERVISOR (LCS) APPOINTMENT 2020-2021

Craobh: _____

Contae: _____

Lead COVID-19 Supervisor – (LCS)

Name: _____

(The LCS must be over 18 years of age)

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone _____

SIGNED:

Rúnaí: _____

Dáta: _____

LCS: _____

Dáta: _____

**Please return this form to your County Board Rúnaí 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.**

<u>CHECKLIST</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
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.		
Adequate ventilation in the facility.		