

## Revised guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 (February 2025)

### Overview of circumstances in which entertainment activities are not licensable

16.5 There are a number of exemptions that mean that a licence (or other authorisation<sup>[footnote 18](#)</sup>) under the 2003 Act is not required. This Guidance cannot give examples of every eventuality or possible entertainment activity that is not licensable. However, the following activities are examples of entertainment which are not licensable:

- activities which involve participation as acts of worship in a religious context;
- activities in places of public religious worship;
- education – teaching students to perform music or to dance;
- the demonstration of a product – for example, a guitar – in a music shop;
- the rehearsal of a play or performance of music for a private audience where no charge is made with a view to making a profit;
- Morris dancing (or similar)<sup>[footnote 19](#)</sup>;
- Incidental music – the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music if it is incidental to some other activity<sup>[footnote 20](#)</sup>;
- Incidental film – an exhibition of moving pictures if it is incidental to some other activity<sup>[footnote 21](#)</sup>;
- A spontaneous performance of music, singing or dancing;
- Garden fetes – or similar if not being promoted or held for purposes of private gain;
- Films for advertisement, information, education or in museums or art galleries;
- Television or radio broadcasts – as long as the programme is live and simultaneous;
- Vehicles in motion – at a time when the vehicle is not permanently or temporarily parked;
- Games played in pubs, youth clubs etc. (e.g. pool, darts and table tennis);
- Stand-up comedy; and
- Provision of entertainment facilities (e.g. dance floors)<sup>[footnote 22](#)</sup>.

16.6 As a result of deregulatory changes that have amended the 2003 Act<sup>[footnote 23](#)</sup>, no licence is required for the following activities:

- Plays: no licence is required for performances between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, provided that the audience does not exceed 500.
- Dance: no licence is required for performances between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, provided that the audience does not exceed 500<sup>[footnote 24](#)</sup>.

- Films: no licence is required for 'not-for-profit' film exhibition held in community premises between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day provided that the audience does not exceed 500 and the organiser (a) gets consent to the screening from a person who is responsible for the premises; and (b) ensures that each such screening abides by age classification ratings.
- Indoor sporting events: no licence is required for an event between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, provided that those present do not exceed 1000.
- Boxing or wrestling entertainment: no licence is required for a contest, exhibition or display of Greco-Roman wrestling, or freestyle wrestling between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, provided that the audience does not exceed 1000.
- Live music: no licence permission is required for:
  - a performance of unamplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, on any premises.
  - a performance of amplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day on premises authorised to sell alcohol for consumption on those premises, provided that the audience does not exceed 500<sup>[footnote 25]</sup>.
  - a performance of amplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, in a workplace<sup>[footnote 26]</sup> that does not have a licence, provided that the audience does not exceed 500.
  - a performance of amplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, in a church hall, village hall, community hall, or other similar community premises, that is not licensed by a premises licence to sell alcohol, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance from a person who is responsible for the premises.
  - a performance of amplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, at the non-residential premises of (i) a local authority, or (ii) a school, or (iii) a hospital, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance on the relevant premises from: (i) the local authority concerned, or (ii) the school or (iii) the health care provider for the hospital.
- Recorded Music: no licence permission is required for:
  - any playing of recorded music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day on premises authorised to sell alcohol for consumption on those premises, provided that the audience does not exceed 500<sup>[footnote 27]</sup>.
  - any playing of recorded music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, in a church hall, village hall, community hall, or other similar community premises, that is not licensed by a premises licence to sell alcohol, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance from a person who is responsible for the premises.
  - any playing of recorded music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, at the non- residential premises of (i) a local authority, or (ii)

a school, or (iii) a hospital, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance on the relevant premises from: (i) the local authority concerned, or (ii) the school proprietor or (iii) the health care provider for the hospital.

## **Live music**

16.26 Live music is licensable:

- where a performance of live music – whether amplified or unamplified – takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day;
- where a performance of amplified live music does not take place either on relevant licensed premises, or at a workplace that is not licensed other than for the provision of late night refreshment;
- where a performance of amplified live music takes place at a time when the relevant licensed premises are not open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises<sup>[footnote 52](#)</sup>;
- where a performance of amplified live music takes place at relevant licensed premises, or workplaces<sup>[footnote 53](#)</sup>, in the presence of an audience of more than 500 people<sup>[footnote 54](#)</sup>; or
- where a licensing authority intentionally removes the effect of the deregulation provided for by the 2003 Act when imposing a condition on a premises licence or club premises certificate as a result of a licence review<sup>[footnote 55](#)</sup>).

16.27 In any of the above circumstances, unless the performance of live music is appropriately authorised by a premises licence, club premises certificate or TEN, allowing it to take place could lead to enforcement action and, where relevant, a review of the alcohol licence or certificate.

16.28 A public performance of live unamplified music that takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day no longer requires a licence under the 2003 Act in any location. An exception to this is where a specific condition related to live music is included following a review of the premises licence or club premises certificate in respect of relevant licensed premises.

16.29 As a result of the amendments to the 2003 Act, section 177 of the 2003 Act now only applies to performances of dance<sup>[footnote 56](#)</sup>.

## **Key terms used in relation to live music**

16.30 Under the live music provisions, “music” includes vocal or instrumental music or any combination of the two. “Live music” is a performance of live music in the presence of an audience which it is intended to entertain. While a performance of live music can include the playing of some recorded music, ‘live’ music requires that the performance does not consist entirely of the playing of recorded music without any additional (substantial and continual) creative contribution being made. So, for

example, a drum machine or backing track being used to accompany a vocalist<sup>[footnote 57]</sup> or a band would be part of the performance of amplified live music. The performance of a DJ who is merely playing tracks would not be classified as live music, but it might if he or she was performing a set which largely consisted of mixing recorded music in a live performance to create new sounds<sup>[footnote 58]</sup>. There will inevitably be a degree of judgement as to whether a performance is live music (or recorded music) and organisers of events should check with their licensing authority if this consideration is relevant to whether the activity is authorised by a licence or certificate. In the event of a dispute about whether a performance is live music or not, it will be for the licensing authority initially and ultimately, for the courts to decide in the individual circumstances of any case.

16.31 A “workplace” is as defined in regulation 2(1) of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and is anywhere that is made available to any person as a place of work. It is a very wide term which can include outdoor spaces, as well as the means of entry and exit.

16.32 A “relevant licensed premises” for the purposes of this chapter is one which is authorised to sell or supply alcohol for consumption on the premises by a premises licence or club premises certificate. Premises cannot benefit from the deregulation introduced by the 2012 Act by virtue of holding an authorisation for the sale or supply of alcohol under a TEN.<sup>[footnote 59]</sup>

## **Recorded music**

16.33 No licence is required for recorded music where it takes place on premises which are authorised by a premises licence or club premises certificate to be used for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises. However, recorded music remains licensable:

- where the playing of recorded music takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day;
- where the playing of recorded music takes place at a time when the relevant licensed premises are not open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;<sup>[footnote 60]</sup>
- where the playing of recorded music takes place at relevant licensed premises in the presence of an audience of more than 500 people; and
- where a licensing authority intentionally removes the effect of the deregulation provided for by the 2003 Act (as amended).<sup>[footnote 61]</sup>

## **Licence conditions**

### **Live Music or recorded music**

16.36 Any existing licence conditions<sup>[footnote 64](#)</sup> (or conditions added on a determination of an application for a premises licence or club premises certificate<sup>[footnote 65](#)</sup>) which relate to live music or recorded music remain in place, but are suspended between the hours of 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day where the following conditions are met:

- at the time of the music entertainment, the premises are open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;
- if the music is amplified, it takes place before an audience of no more than 500 people; and
- the music takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day.

16.37 Whether a licence condition relates to live or recorded music will be a matter of fact in each case. In some instances, it will be obvious that a condition relates to music and will be suspended, for example “during performances of live music all doors and windows must remain closed”. In other instances, it might not be so obvious: for example, a condition stating “during performances of regulated entertainment all doors and windows must remain closed” would be suspended insofar as it relates to music between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day to an audience of up to 500, but the condition would continue to apply if there was regulated entertainment after 23.00.

16.38 More general licence conditions (e.g. those relating to overall management of potential noise nuisance) that are not specifically related to the provision of entertainment (e.g. signage asking patrons to leave quietly) will continue to have effect.

16.39 Chapter 9 of this Guidance sets out how a licensing authority must determine applications for a new licence or to vary an existing premises licence. Licence conditions imposed, in accordance with paragraphs 9.42 to 9.44, for live or recorded music activities will only apply if the activity meets the criteria of having more than 500 people present, and/or the activities are taking place between 23.00 and 08.00.

16.40 These conditions will, in effect, be suspended between 08.00 and 23.00 if a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music takes place before an audience of 500 people or fewer, but will remain on the face of the licence for when these activities may take place under other circumstances.

16.41 Where a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music on relevant licensed premises is not licensable, it remains possible for anyone to apply for a review of a licence or certificate, if there are appropriate grounds to do so.<sup>[footnote 66](#)</sup>

## **Beer gardens**

16.42 Beer gardens are often included as part of a premises licence or club premises certificate. Live amplified music that takes place in a beer garden is exempt from licensing requirements, provided the beer garden is included in the licence or

certificate applying to the relevant licensed premises, and the performance takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day before an audience of 500 people or fewer.

16.43 Where a beer garden does not form part of the relevant licensed premises and so is not included in plans attached to a premises licence or club premises certificate, it is nevertheless very likely that it will be a workplace<sup>[footnote 67](#)</sup>. Paragraph 12B of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act says that a performance of live music in a workplace that does not have a licence (except to provide late night refreshment) is not regulated entertainment if it takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day in front of an audience of no more than 500 people. Note that the exemption in paragraph 12B does not apply to the playing of recorded music.

16.44 However, a licensing authority may, where justified<sup>[footnote 68](#)</sup>, impose a licence condition that relates to the performance of live music in an unlicensed beer garden being served by any associated premises licence or club premises certificate. Provided such a condition is lawfully imposed, it takes effect in accordance with its terms.