



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# *Your guide to Marriages*



*Civil  
Partnerships  
& other ceremonies  
in St Helens*



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# Welcome

We are delighted that you are considering holding your ceremony in St Helens.

The St Helens Registration Service will do everything we can to make your day a special and memorable one - one you will look back on with joy and happiness.

Our Registrars are friendly, discreet and experienced and our aim is to ensure your ceremony is perfect for you, whether it is a marriage, civil partnership, naming ceremony, renewal of vows or citizenship ceremony.

This booklet will guide you through the types of ceremony available over which we preside, any legal formalities (where they are required), the documents you will need to provide, and how you can add that extra special touch to the ceremony.

We also offer services at other venues across the borough that have been approved by the Registration Service for civil marriage, partnership ceremonies and other ceremonies.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions and for the latest list of approved venues on 01744 676789.

We look forward to meeting you and conducting your ceremony!



# *Your Civil Ceremony*

Whether you would like to get married or form a civil partnership, just like you, your ceremony should be special, personal and unique.

That's why we offer various options for your ceremony and there are a number of ways you can make your ceremony unique.

These include adding personal vows, music, or poetry readings which are special to you as a couple. Please note that these cannot be religious in nature. Likewise, the room where the ceremony is taking place cannot be decorated with religious icons.

## *Venue Options*

If you would like your ceremony to be held in the St Helens District, you should check directly with us, to see if we can accommodate your special day.

Visit [www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk) for a full list of venues available in St Helens.

If you prefer a small, quiet celebration, we offer a standard marriage ceremony or civil partnership formation at the Register Office. This means a room at the statutory rate, suitable for the couple and two witnesses only.

If you would like to get married or form a civil partnership in an alternative approved venue, you should check availability and prices direct with the venue. Please note that you will still need to contact the Superintendent Registrar to check whether we are available to carry out your ceremony on your chosen date at your selected venue, and our current fees.

# *Giving Notice*

Certain legal formalities need to be taken care of before you can marry or form a civil partnership.

The first and main requirement is for you to give notice of your intention to marry or form a civil partnership. This is a legal declaration that you are both free to marry or enter into a civil partnership with each other.

In order to get married or register a civil partnership, you must be aged 18 years or above.

You must not be closely related to one another and must be free to marry (not be in an existing marriage or civil partnership).

To give your formal notice, you must book an appointment at the Register Office in the district in which you have lived for at least the last seven days.

If you and your partner live in the same district, you should both attend your local Register Office together, although you will be seen separately. If you live in different districts, you need to each give notice in your own district of residence.

Please note that a friend or relative cannot give notice for you, this must be done in person at the appropriate Register Office.





# *Booking and Notice Period*

## *Booking*

A fee applies for securing a date for your ceremony. This fee is none refundable. We cannot guarantee any preferred date and times of ceremonies are dependent on the business needs of the service.

We will endeavour to meet your requirements, although this may not always be possible.

## *Notice Period*

You may give notice of marriage or civil partnership to the Superintendent Registrar no more than 12 months prior to the date of your marriage or civil partnership. The notice is valid for 12 months.

Please note that you cannot give notice until venue for the ceremony has been arranged.

Registrars will advise you when you need to give legal notice. This will need to be done within a certain time frame to secure your booking.



# Documentation

When giving your notice to the Superintendent Registrar, you will need to produce documentation providing evidence of your name, age, marital status, address and nationality.

The documents must be originals (photocopies cannot be accepted)

One of the following documents for name, nationality and age evidence:

- Your passport (must be valid)
- Your full birth certificate showing details of parent/parents
- If you were born after the 1st January 1983 and do not have a passport you will need to provide evidence of your entitlement to British Nationality. You will need to bring your full birth certificate and your mother's birth certificate or passport.
- Any change of name documents issued since your birth must be provided.

For address evidence you must bring one of the following:

- A recent utility bill (as proof of your current address), dated within the last 3 months.
- A bank statement (as proof of your address) dated within the last month.
- A full or provisional driving licence.
- Your annual Council Tax bill, tenancy agreement or mortgage statement.
- You must prove you are free to marry if you have been married or in a civil partnership before with one of the following documents: Decree Absolute bearing the official court stamp or a civil partnership dissolution document. If your evidence of name does not match your decree absolute or dissolution document you will need to provide your marriage or civil partnership certificate.
- Widow or widower evidence if your husband, wife or civil partner is deceased. You will need to produce a death certificate, and also your marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate.
- Foreign Nationals and anyone with EUSS status must ring the Register Office for further advice before booking an appointment.

Depending on your individual circumstances, other documents may also be required. Our Registration Officers will be able to advise you when you contact us.



# *Marriages & Civil Partnerships*

## *Church of England Marriages*

If you wish to be married in a Church of England church, you should speak to the local vicar.

There is generally no need to involve the Superintendent Registrar and you do not need to give notice of your intention to marry if you are marrying by Banns or Common Licence.

Foreign Nationals from outside of the EEA must give notice to a Register Office involving the Superintendent Registrar - please call your local register office for advice.

Banns are formally announced in the parish churches of both betrothed on three successive Sundays preceding the ceremony.

Getting married by Common Licence is intended for persons who are temporarily resident in a particular parish. It has the advantage of not requiring Banns to be published, but your application must be approved by the Bishop (or his surrogate) of the diocese in which you wish to marry.

## *Marriages in Other Faiths or Places of Worship*

If you wish to marry by any form of other religious ceremony, you should first arrange to see the religious leader in charge of marriages at the place in question. This applies whether the ceremony is Christian or as part of another faith.

The religious institution where you get married must normally be in the registration district where you or your partner reside.

Regardless of faith, you will also be required to give formal notice of marriage to the Superintendent Registrar of the district where you both live.

Civil Partnerships or marriage of same sex couples can take place in a Religious Building if the building holds a licence for such ceremonies. Please check with the Superintendent Registrar.

# *Renewal of Vows*

A renewal of vows ceremony provides any married or registered civil partners an opportunity to recognise, celebrate, and reaffirm their relationship.

Although the ceremony has no legal significance, there are a number of reasons why you might want to renew your vows:

- To celebrate a special anniversary.
- To hold a ceremony with your friends and family if you previously held your ceremony abroad.
- To demonstrate your commitment to each other if you have come through a difficult or testing time.

Typically, a renewal of vows ceremony will include vows and re-dedication or giving of new rings.

The ceremony will be conducted by a trained and experienced celebrant who will not be acting in an official capacity, even though they may be a Registrar.

Ceremonies can be held at the Ceremony Room or an approved venue.



We offer a full range of ceremonies and are happy to help you with your special day. Please see our website for further information.



# *Naming Ceremonies*

A naming ceremony provides parents, family and friends with an opportunity to welcome a child into the world, to make commitments of love and support, recognise responsibilities, and share hopes and dreams for the future.

It is also ideally suited to welcome an adopted child or to embrace stepchildren into the family.

A child taking part in a naming ceremony can be of any age.

Although the ceremony has no legal status and is not legally binding on those who participate, it provides a meaningful opportunity to declare before family and friends your pledge to be a good parent or grandparent, or confirm friends' and relatives' special commitments to help in the care and upbringing of your child.

A fully trained celebrant will conduct the ceremony and work closely with you to make sure the occasion is highly personalised and tailored to your wishes. Readings, poetry and gifts for the child can add a nice personal touch.

Ceremonies can be held at the Ceremony Room or any other approved venue. At the end of the ceremony, your family will receive a commemorative certificate, signed by parents, supporting adults and the celebrant.





# *Citizenship Ceremonies*

Under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, all applicants aged 18 years and over who are accepted for naturalisation as a British Citizen are required to attend a Citizenship Ceremony.

During this ceremony, you are required to take the Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen and make a pledge of loyalty to the United Kingdom.

After doing this, as a new citizen, you are presented with a certificate of nationality.

Cultural diversity within St Helens is a cause for celebration and the ceremony provides the opportunity for the borough to welcome new British Citizens and encourage them to take an active part in community life.

St Helens Registration Service provides citizenship ceremonies held in St Helens Town Hall. The ceremonies are usually held in groups and participants may bring up to two guests.

It is possible to arrange an individual or small group ceremony. An additional fee is chargeable for this facility. Applicants for this type of ceremony should contact the Register Office for further details (available dates, times and fees).



## *Fees*

There are statutory fees to pay for giving a notice of marriage or civil partnership. These are set nationally and local fees are revised on the 1st April each year.

Fees are applicable for the attendance of the Registrar at a church. Fees are also applicable for the attendance of the Registrar's at venue ceremonies e.g. Golf clubs or Hotels that hold an Approved Premises Licence. Please check our website for current fees.

A variety of fees are also applicable for venue hire and officiating the other types of ceremony, depending on your wishes and chosen options.

Please contact the Registration Office on 01744 676789 to find out more. You can also email [registryoffice@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:registryoffice@sthelens.gov.uk), or visit [www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk).

Please note that we can only accept credit/debit card payments as we offer a cashless service.







# *FAQs - Regarding Ceremonies*

**1. Can I book a surprise wedding?**

No, each person needs to give their own notice of marriage.

**2. What is the capacity of the ceremony rooms?**

At the Town Hall there are two rooms available The Ceremony Room which seats 60 guests & The Council Chamber which seats 100 guests.

**3. Is there any car parking facilities?**

Monday to Friday there is no on-site car parking available, there are many local car parks with parking available at a reasonable cost. Saturday the Town Hall Car Park will be available for wedding guests.

**4. Can we bring our own flowers?**

Yes you can, but silk flowers are provided. Many brides put their bouquet next to the register when having their pictures taken. We do ask that all flower arrangements are removed at the end of the ceremony as the room may be booked for another ceremony party.

**5. Can we put bows/chair covers on?**

We regret this is not possible as the room may be booked for other ceremonies that follows yours.

**6. Can my dog be a ring bearer?**

We regret that only assistance animals are allowed in our offices.

**7. Who can act as witness?**

You must bring two witnesses who can be family or friends and should be over the age of 18. If an interpreter is needed, then you should also arrange for them to attend. The interpreter must be one of the two witnesses who signs the register.

**8. Is there a dress code and can army personnel come in uniform?**

There is no dress code although we do expect the ceremony to be dignified. Members of the armed forces are welcome to wear their uniform.

**9. Can photographers take pictures during the ceremony?**

Yes, and you will be given a copy of our protocol to give to your photographer.

**10. Is confetti allowed at your offices?**

Yes, as long as it is used outside of the building and is biodegradable.

**11. Can I pay for my wedding in instalments?**

No, the payment options will be explained to you at the time of booking your ceremony. Our office accepts credit cards and payment can be made by telephone.

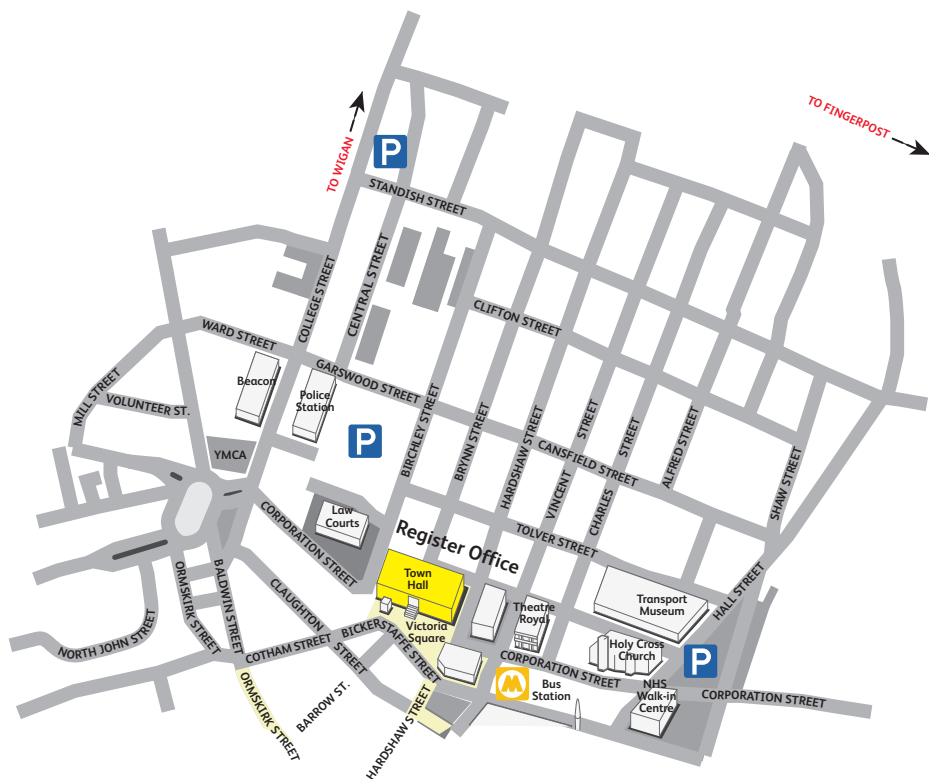


## *Find Us*

Receptions are available at the Town Hall please see our website for further information.

The Register Office is in the centre of St Helens and is easily accessible.

St Helens lies right at the heart of the North West's most important transport network, at the hub of the M6, M62, M57 & M58 motorways.





This leaflet is issued as a general guide and is not a complete statement of the law

**Office Hours:**

Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 4.45pm.

Saturdays by appointment (emergencies only)



St Helens Borough Council

PO Box 512

St Helens

WA109JX

**Tel:** 01744 676789

➔ [www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactus)

Please contact us to request translation of Council information into Braille, audio tape or a foreign language.