

Marriage Measure 2008 - Qualifying Connections

The Marriage Measure 2008 came into effect on 1 October 2008. It has made a substantial difference to the pre-existing arrangements. The concept of 'residence' has been supplemented by a new range of qualifying connections (it does not *replace* the residence test, it merely expands the range of qualifying connections with the parish or church in question).

Qualifying Connections

So in addition to residence in the parish or inclusion on the church electoral roll, any person may now be married in any parish church provided that:

That person:

- was baptised in the parish; or
- has been confirmed and the confirmation has been entered in a church register book belonging to the parish (this would have been done on the basis that the person concerned was prepared for confirmation in the parish); or
- has at any time had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for not less than 6 months; or
- has at any time habitually attended public worship in the parish for not less than 6 months;

or

That person's parent has at any time *during the person's lifetime*:

- had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for not less than 6 months; or
- habitually attended public worship in the parish for not less than 6 months;

or

That person's parent or grandparent was married in the parish.

(In this list references to being baptised, confirmed or married, or attending public worship, all refer to Church of England services.)

Couples may be married by Banns or by Common licence once they have a qualifying connection with the parish or church where they wish to marry.

Evidence to prove a qualifying connection

Please see the table below which indicates acceptable forms of evidence for particular qualifying connections. The incumbent or minister must be satisfied a qualifying connection exists before formally confirming a booking and starting to read banns of marriage or arranging for the couple to apply for a Common Licence or Superintendent Registrar’s Marriage Schedule. (Please see the next section in relation to establishing a qualifying connection.)

Baptised in the parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism Certificate; or • check the Register Book of Baptisms to find the entry; or • if the register has been archived, ask the couple to obtain a certified copy of the entry from the County Archivist
Confirmation registered in the parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation Certificate; or • check the Register Book of Confirmations to find the entry; or • if the register has been archived, ask the couple to obtain a certified copy of the entry from the County Archivist
Residence in the parish for not less than six months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax bills covering two years; or • Bank statements covering seven months; or • Official Government or NHS documentation covering seven months; or • Official paperwork covering seven months
Habitually attended public worship in the parish for not less than six months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister’s own knowledge, perhaps supported by attendance record • If historic, check Electoral Roll for period in question in case they are listed or check with churchwardens or PCC members to see if they recollect the person attending
Parent’s residence in the parish for not less than six months, <i>during the lifetime of the person getting married</i> (check date of birth and dates of residence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax bills covering two years; or • Bank statements covering seven months; or • Official Government or NHS documentation covering seven months; or • Official paperwork covering seven months
Parent habitually attended public worship in the parish for not less than six months, <i>during the lifetime of the person getting married</i> (check date of birth and dates of attendance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister’s own knowledge, perhaps supported by attendance record • If historic, check Electoral Roll for period in question in case they are listed or check with churchwardens or PCC members to see if they recollect the person attending <i>but</i> be mindful of dates of attendance and the date of birth of the person getting married

<p>Parents or Grandparents were married in the parish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage certificate provided when married; or • Marriage certificate obtained from the General Register Office <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full birth certificate of person getting married to show link to parents; or • Full birth certificate of person getting married and full birth certificate of relevant parent to show link to grandparents
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Establishing a Worshipping Qualifying Connection

It is possible for couples to establish a worshipping qualifying connection to enable them to be married in a particular church, provided the minister is in agreement.

To establish a worshipping qualifying connection, one member of the couple (although couples usually attend together) needs to attend public worship in the parish at least once a month for not less than six months (not just on six occasions). For instance, if a person attends a service on 5 January, they would have to attend every month up to and including 5 July to establish a worshipping qualifying connection. Only then can their marriage booking be confirmed and their banns of marriage read (or a Common Licence or Marriage Schedule applied for) during the three months before their wedding.

Couples’ attendance needs to be recorded to ensure that at least one of them does attend for the requisite number of times within the required time frame. This could be recorded in an attendance card or sheet (perhaps on church headed notepaper) which contains (a) the names of the couple, (b) the proposed date of their wedding, (c) the name of the church in which they are due to be married and (d) space for dates of services and signatures to be entered. The couple should take the card or sheet to each service they attend so that it can be signed and dated by the minister or a churchwarden of the church.

At the end of the qualifying period, this record should be given to the minister so that they can confirm a worshipping qualifying connection has been established.

Timing

Timing is crucial for couples establishing a worshipping qualifying connection because there needs to be sufficient time to establish one and read their banns of marriage (or apply for a Common Licence or Marriage Schedule) after one has been established. This should be considered when couples first make contact with a minister to ensure both can be achieved within the timeframe.

Further Information

For further details, please see the House of Bishops’ Guidance at this [link](#), or contact the Diocesan Registry.

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