

Oxford Diocesan Registry



Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 received Royal Assent in April 2022. The Government has announced that it is planned to come into effect on **Monday 27 February 2023**.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/implementation-of-the-marriage-and-civil-partnership-minimum-age-act-2022>

At present, a person aged 16 or 17 may be married with parental consent. The new Act, once in force, amends the Marriage Act 1949 and other relevant legislation to increase the legal minimum age to 18, and makes it a criminal offence for a person to carry out “any conduct for the purpose of causing a child to enter into marriage before the child’s eighteenth birthday”. It will, therefore, no longer be legal for a clergyperson to conduct the marriage of any person under the age of 18 from 27 February 2023, even if preliminaries for that marriage (such as the calling of banns) have been started or completed before the Act comes into force.

From the [Commons Library](#):

In 2018, the most recent year for which data is available, 147 16-17-year-olds entered into a legally binding marriage with a member of the opposite sex. This figure represents 0.06% of all marriages that took place in England and Wales in 2018. ... UNICEF considers that child marriage is a violation of human rights. United Nations [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#), agreed to by world leaders, is, “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”.

The Government’s [Explanatory Notes](#) (PDF) to the Bill set out the full reasoning for the change in the law.

We will send a further reminder about the change at the start of 2023 **but please do check the ages of those who have booked to be married in your church after 27 February 2023** to ensure they are or will be over 18 at the time of their marriage.

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