



Guidance on preparing for resuming Gurdwara Sahib services in a safe and lawful manner for when the Government allows



It is clearly understood from the Road Map published by the Government on 11th May 2020 that resuming of the services at Gurdwara Sahib's will be a slow and staged process which will be informed by scientific advice, pilots, work of task force and lessons from other countries. The tentative date given in the road map is 4th July. The government has indicated that places may have to demonstrate that they are Covid-19 secure - therefore the Gurdwara Committees need to take positive steps towards this alongside any deep cleans and decorations during this quiet period.

Private Prayer:

There is some indication that the Gurdwaras may be allowed to reopen for private prayers before the 4th July 2020. This would mean sangat members coming in to listen to Paath. Hence, it is important for committees to start progressing with the below safety measures as a matter of urgency.

What is proposed below to make **Gurdwaras Covid-19 secure** is based upon the core principle of minimising risk of transmission and duty of care towards paid staff and regular sewadars. It also takes account of the variation in size of regular sangat as well as the layout of the Gurdwara Sahib facilities. In producing this initial guidance, we have also taken account of the guidance issued to workplaces by the government and emerging examples from business's, office's and industry.

Risk assessments and procedures towards being Covid-19 Secure Gurdwara Sahib:

It is recommended that records of risk assessments are kept and procedures to be followed are produced on easy to follow posters in both English and Panjabi. In the early period the sewadars will need to verbally guide the sangat,

Hygiene Measures:

Covid-19 can live for several hours to a no of days on most surfaces including metal, wood, plastics, clothes and fabrics. It enters the body through eyes, nose and throat in the main and hence the recommended advice includes wearing of masks, regular hand washing and sanitisation, wearing of gloves, wearing of facial visors and to not habitually touch the facial area. Therefore, the strict practice of wiping all surfaces with disinfectants and spraying surfaces that are difficult to wipe is strongly recommended to be continued. Regularly washing of clothes and cloths is highly recommended.



Protection of staff and regular sewadars:

The staff and sewadars who have high exposure to sangat and are spending a great deal of time on the premises should wear masks and have access to disposable gloves, disposable aprons, hand gels and face visors.

Protection of Sangat:

There should be a sewadars at the door to check temperatures of the people entering the Gurdwara Sahib's. These devices are readily available and quality ones cost around 50 pounds. They are easy to use and are part of the safety measures. The sewadar would need to wear gloves, a mask and a visor for their safety. We can assist Gurdwaras to acquire these at low prices.

Circulation:

The sangat should enter the Gurdwara Sahib through one entrance and leave through another so that there are no cross overs. It may mean for some Gurdwaras to have to use the fire exits and to have stairs restricted to a single directional travel. The floors should be clearly marked to maintain social distancing both in entering the Gurdwara Sahib, queuing for matha tek/namashkar and sitting down in the Darbar Hall. Circulation will also need to be created on the floor and maybe with screens as to safe ways of getting to a marked spot and then leaving it to exit.

Same household:

People from the same household can remain together in relation to social distancing. This advice may be subject to further relaxing subject to what happens in the country in terms of controlling infection rates.

Chaur Sahib:

Measures need to be in place to periodically wipe clean the handle of the Chaur Sahib particularly as it may get handled by different people.

Matha tek:

Under the circumstances given the risk of infection transmission it is advised that a standing namaskar is done. The alternative is to have a surface such as a Perspex sheet which is continuously wiped clean or sprayed with disinfectants by a sewadar.

Parsad / Deg:

The sewadar giving the Parsad must wear a mask and a visor for their own safety as well as that of the sangat.

Langar:

Most Gurdwaras use metal utensils, spoons, glasses and trays. The whole process of making and serving langar carries considerable risks. If it is to be provided then screens need to be installed at the serving counter and perhaps even in the consuming areas which also need to be marked for queuing and sitting down. The sewadars will need disposable gloves and apron. Those serving will also need face visors. The alternative would be to create wraps (sabji in rotis) that are packed in kitchen wipes for consuming and could also be taken away.

Other measures:

will need a system for observing social distance in toilets, near shoe deposit areas and by sinks. Clearly different Gurdwaras will have different challenges due to layout of these spaces but the principle remains the same. In some cases, in addition to floor markings screens, queuing markers and circulation paths would be needed in these areas. All towels need to be removed and replaced with disposable paper towels. The air dryers are not recommended due to them spraying the water in the air and not completely drying resulting in people wiping semi wet hands on their clothes. The soap should only be liquid form and ideally antibacterial. The toilets may need signs and controls to limit number of users at any one time and screen - they may even require circulation paths.

The Gurdwaras Sahib also need to consider how to improve ventilation and staggering of services (divans) to manage the numbers attending safely. It may be that times are set aside just for the vulnerable and elderly.

Hand sanitisers:

Some members of the sangat will carry their own but it is advised that Gurdwaras should have these available for the sangat to use after removing their shoes and washing their hands as an added precaution. The sanitising gels should be readily available at several points for ease of access upon entering and leaving the Gurdwara Sahib.

Face masks and sangat:

All members of sangat should be required to cover their faces. Some face masks have been designed for Sikhs with beards to provide a better fit. These are homemade and details are available upon request.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for Gurdwaras:

If any Gurdwara Sahib requires assistance please contact us.

Caution:

Gurdwaras are probably getting individuals and companies offering PPE and cleaning using fogging machines. It is important to check what chemicals are being used, the residue they leave and long-term effects. Ask to see COSH (Control of Substances Hazards) details and clearly understand the full cost implications and any possible impact on those suffering from allergies or respiratory conditions. With hand gels and masks once again, care needs to be taken in relation to quality as well as costs.

Financial Issues:

Some Gurdwaras have already taken steps to minimise expenditure and to seek relief or deferred payments for bills, bank loans etc. In addition, they are also availing Gift Aid and initiating fund raising. There are many examples of good practice and further advice is available if required.

On behalf of the all the Gurdwaras Consulted**Sewadars:**

S.Surinder Singh Jandu MBE
President:
Council of Gurdwaras South East, London

S.Baldev Singh Bains
Convener:
Sikh Study Forum, London

Sikh Help Line
07999 004 363 or 0845 644 0704