

Dear All

Corona-virus: Recommendations to Management Committees of Gurdwaras' across UK towards saving lives of the most vulnerable and minimising infections.

Firstly, we bring to your attention a statement below by Matt Hancock (Health & Social Care Secretary) delivered on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in the Parliament as a response to an MP's question.

*"It is true that we include religious groups in our advice about social contact. We have seen from elsewhere in the world how sometimes it is through religious gatherings that the virus can spread so, with the deepest regret and the heaviest of heart, we include faith groups and gatherings of faith within the advice."*

It is clear that the Covid-19 can survive on soft and hard surfaces, has an incubation period and is highly infectious.

The faith communities recognise the risks to their congregation as well to the users of wide range of support being provided by places of worship. The Church of England, Muslim Council of Britain and the Jewish Chief Rabbi have already issued guidance to their places of worship and other faiths are expected to follow.

The following guidance is being respectfully provided to Management Committees of Gurdwaras across UK following considerable discussion with representatives of Gurdwara Committees, Sikh organisations and professionals.

**Gurdwara Congregation:**

1. Gurdwaras' to remain open for people to visit for private prayer and Parsad. However; to reduce risk of infection transmission gatherings in groups are strongly discouraged.
2. Gurdwara Committees consider honouring bookings for weddings, Akhand Paat Sahibs, Sukhmani Sahib Paats etc. However to reduce risk of infection transmission families are strongly encouraged to postpone the event in the first instance. If this not possible or practical then attendance needs to be minimised. Similarly the amount of time spent within the Gurdwara Complex needs to be kept to a minimum. This is also to protect the sevadars, religious workers and committee members.
3. It is advised that the funeral services continue as normal but where possible with reduced numbers of attendees. These can be followed up with memorial services when the risk of infections is under control. (Separately: It is envisaged that there will be some guidelines issued by authorities if there is rise in death rates within UK).
4. Committees are strongly advised to consider suspending all Classes organised by the Gurdwaras to protect the users, sevadars, staff and the wider community.
5. The Committees are encouraged to identify the most vulnerable and those in real need so that they be supported with shopping, rations or food packages.
6. The Committee are encouraged to put in place a strict and monitored regime of wiping of surfaces with disinfectants several times a day. Fabrics such as carpets and rugs may require spraying with disinfectants.
7. Remove the availability of Rumaals/Chunni's to prevent exchanges

## Langar:

It is recommended that for the foreseeable period there should be no Langar-however it is recognised that the Granthi's will need to prepare their own food and that for some pre-booked events that cannot be cancelled there may be some refreshments and drinks - therefore the advice is as below:

7. It is recommended that those preparing/handling Parsad or any drinks/food items wear masks and gloves at all times.
8. Any food items should be served rather than people helping themselves.
9. All surfaces should be wiped with disinfectants on daily and periodic basis.
10. Where possible the use of disposable dishes.

## Seva re: Maharaj Sahib Ji:

In order to safeguard and reduce risk to Granthi Sikhs and Sevadars please restrict access to most or where possible all of areas of seva below to Gurdwara designated Sevadars.

- Restrict number of persons carrying out Chaur Sahib seva to allocated Gurdwara sevadars to minimise risks due to the passing around of the Chaur Sahib from person to person.
- Tabhia Seva by designated sevadars only and where possible Granthi Sikh only
- Degh Seva restricted to designated sevadars only.
- Where possible use of dry parsad (almonds etc)
- Restricted access by individuals taking of Hukamnama/having direct contact with Maharaj Sahib Saroop Ji and their beshownia, where possible to Granthi Sikhs only.
- Where possible Hazoorias' to be washed daily and avoid passing around from person to person but instead individuals to have their own hazooria.
- Please remove all towels as a hand-drying means due to high risk of infection transmission.

**Exploitation by traders:** There are widespread reports of traders irresponsibly exploiting the situation by inflating the prices of essential items particularly the basic foods of the Panjabi diet. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been alerted and aims to ensure that traders do not exploit the current situation to take advantage of people. It will consider any evidence that companies may have broken competition or consumer protection law, for example by charging excessive prices or making misleading claims about the efficacy of protective equipment. In order to contact them please follow link/details below

<https://ssl.datamotion.com/form.aspx?co=3438&frm=general&to=flare.fromforms>

Alternatively: Telephone: 020 3738 6000, Email: [general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk) or via post to: Complaints Manager, Contacts Team, Competition and Markets Authority, The Cabot, 25 Cabot Square, London, E14 4QZ

It is our understanding a number of traders have already been reported to CMA.

**For information:** An emergency meeting of London Gurdwaras has been called on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 6.00pm at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara Sahib, Havelock Road, Southall to discuss the above advice, exploitation by traders and support for the genuinely vulnerable during this difficult period. Gurdwara Committee Members outside of London are welcomed to attend and indeed some have already contributed to this guidance.

For any further details or assistance please contact any of the organisations listed below.

Kind Regards

**Council of Gurdwaras South East London**