

COVID-19: UK Government Road Map Easing Lockdown Restrictions

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

Sikh Assembly has produced a breakdown of the latest Government guidance and directions announced on Sunday 10th and Monday 11th May 2020. We are conscious of the anxious feeling prevalent within the Sikh community and have been approached by several member organisations to address this uncertainty. Sikh Assembly has prepared this summary to prevent misunderstanding arising from the Government's 3-phased approach to relaxing the restrictions on individual and group activities, gatherings and our ability to commence working.

Going forward we encourage everyone to send us their feedback, concerns and questions which we will then raise through the proposed Government task force to consult with religious organisations on how best to manage the reopening of places of worship.

The Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick is considering allowing private prayer at Gurdwaras and other places of worship, in limited numbers (2m apart), but after 4th July 2020. Sikh Assembly are trying to get clear guidelines from the Government on the safest way to proceed.

Sikh Assembly has condensed the essential information into a bullet-point guide for all to use and understand the main differences between the restrictions before and after Wednesday 13th May 2020. This guide is only for **Phase One** of this process.

Please Note: If you are showing Coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household is self-isolating, you should stay at home - this is critical to Staying Alert, Staying Safe and Saving Lives.

1. Gurdwara, Funeral and Seva Guidance

- There is **no change** to the guidance on attending the Gurdwara at present - Gurdwaras and other places of worship still have restricted access to the public.
- There is **no change** to the guidance on attending funerals at present. Numbers attending funerals are dependent on local authorities as criteria differ per location. Please speak to your Funeral Director for detailed advice.
- There is **no change** to the guidance for those providing Langar for vulnerable persons or any other similar Seva at present.
- Gurdwaras, along with all other faith institutions, will be advised on potential timeframes and phasing conditions to prepare for hosting congregations.
- Gurdwara Management Committees are encouraged to stay focused on up to date Government advice and remain vigilant to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.
- It is imperative that the Sikh Gurdwaras of the UK be the beacon of social responsibility and together be the base for a stable community, proud of the Seva being carried out during these unprecedented times.

- Gurdwaras are also encouraged to begin planning how best to address the new challenges they will face to ensure Gurdwaras are safe for their congregation to attend once the Government has confirmed a date from which the public may attend. Some of those considerations may include: regular sanitisation schedule of areas of high usage, maintaining social distancing, managing the size and flow of Sangat into the Gurdwara and in various parts of the Gurdwara, seating arrangements in Diwan and Langar hall, the requirement for masks, provision of clean rumals and chunnis for those not bringing their own, parshad preparation and distribution, etc.

2. Public Spaces, Outdoor Activities, Exercise

There will be a limited number of things you CAN do from Wednesday 13th May 2020 that you could not do earlier:

- spend time outdoors – for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air, having a walk or a picnic.
- meet one other person from a different household outdoors while maintaining 2-metre social distancing
- exercise outdoors as often as you wish without a time limit while following social distancing guidelines
- play some sports (golf and tennis), but only with members of your own household
- shop at a garden centre while following social distancing guidelines
- view a home or flat that you may be thinking of purchasing

You should also note that fines for breaches of the rules will now be larger and are more likely to be enforced than previously.

2.1 For clarification, the following activities are still NOT permitted:

- visiting friends and family in their homes
- exercising in an indoor sports court, gym or leisure centre, or go swimming in a public pool
- using an outdoor gym or playground
- visiting a private or ticketed attraction
- gathering in a group of more than two (excluding members of your own household), except for a few specific exceptions set out in law (for work, funerals, house moves, supporting the vulnerable, in emergencies and fulfil legal obligations)

2.2 Previous guidance that is still applicable:

You should stay at home as much as possible. The reasons you may leave home include:

- for work, where you cannot work from home
- going to shops that are permitted to be open - to get essential items like food and medicine

- to exercise or spend time outdoors
- any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid injury or illness, escape the risk of harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- the advice for those aged 70 and over continues to be that they should take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household
- the advice for individuals with specific medical conditions is to shield until the end of June 2020 and to do everything they can to stay at home, as they are likely to be at the highest risk of serious complications from Coronavirus.

3. Who Is Allowed To Go To Work?

In the first instance, employers are expected to continue making every effort to support working from home, including by providing suitable IT and equipment.

The Government will be publishing more detailed COVID-19 secure guidelines for each sector, developed in consultation with businesses and trades unions.

Not all forms of work will return to normal at once. People will have to prepare for a new type of 'normal'. Any new changes will be carefully monitored to ensure we are not doing anything to increase the risk of infection.

3.1 These 'back to work' guidelines apply to those in essential sectors like:

- supermarkets
- those in construction and manufacturing
- those working in labs and research facilities
- those administering takeaways and deliveries at restaurants and cafes
- tradesmen, cleaners and others who work in people's homes
- those who are facilitating trade or transport goods

The public is advised to avoid crowded public transport and consider alternative transportation such as a car, bicycle or walking.

3.2 Do people need to wear face coverings at work?

Face coverings are not compulsory at present. However, if you can, people are advised to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible or where you are more likely to come into contact with people you do not normally meet. For example, on public transport or in some shops.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers.

3.3 My employer is asking me to come to work, but I'm scared.

Employers and staff should discuss and agree on working arrangements.

Employers should make all efforts to help people to work from home where they can. But where work cannot be done at home, employers should take clear, practical steps to help protect workers and create safe places to work, such as shift working or staggering processes.

To identify the precautions needed to manage risk, your employer should discuss the workplace risk assessment with you to identify the practical ways of managing those risks.

If you remain concerned that your employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing, then you can report this to your Local Authority or the Health and Safety Executive. They can take a range of actions, including where appropriate requiring your employer to take additional steps.

The Government will be publishing further specific "COVID-19 Secure" guidelines on how to make workplaces safe, which have been developed in consultation with over 200 business leaders and trade union organisations.

3.4 What if they try to fire me because I will not go to work but cannot work at home?

Employers are expected to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their working arrangements.

3.5 My employer is insisting that I come to work - I cannot get any childcare, what should I do?

Employers are urged to be sympathetic with employees who cannot find any suitable arrangements for childcare. You should discuss your concern with your employer and try to reach an arrangement that is suitable for both. There are arrangements in place already for school places for children of key workers.

Community Resource Team
Sikh Assembly