

The effect of Covid-19 on Sikh places of worship across the UK

Sikh Council UK have collated information obtained from member Gurdwara Sahibs across the UK. Responses in the form of both quantitative and qualitative research were received from every major city in the UK and particularly those with a high Sikh population. We looked in to the impact on Gurdwara Sahibs, how they have been coping and look to the future.

Decreases in funding

Gurdwara Sahibs reported an annual fall in income of between 50-75% in 2020 down to key religious events falling during the lockdown period. 85% of respondents were concerned that this would not normalise in 2021, with few concerned about staying open if restrictions do not ease.

Many have started broadcasting services online and most made use of online funding pages to reach out to the congregation for support. Much of the regular congregation are elderly and struggle with using technology which has made it difficult to reach out to everyone, but this has highlighted the need for Gurdwara Sahibs to embrace technology.

Increases in need

Since the beginning of the lockdown period, Gurdwara Sahibs have continued to act as key pillars of the community with many running Langar (free food) services for those in need. We have seen examples of delivering food to key workers, the elderly and the most vulnerable. As well as this, some have been lending money to members of the congregation who are struggling with essential bills due to the pandemic.

Due to this, members have seen reserves decrease with 60% saying they will not have enough for a further 6 months.

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Access to support

Larger Gurdwara Sahibs with a higher number of staff have utilised the furlough scheme to help keep overheads down.

50% were not aware of any government grants or support that they could access. Some smaller Gurdwara Sahibs are not registered charities and were unaware of any support available to them. Members felt that the information was not clear and should have been available in a bilingual format in such a crucial time.

A look to the future

In line with the Sikh ethos, there is a desire to keep serving the community and to be ready to provide any support necessary, but serious concerns are now being raised by our members about how they will cope through these times.

60%

of members have concerns about lack of reserves

50%

of members were unaware of available support

94%

reported a major decrease in annual income