

Gurdwara Sahib Woolwich Greenwich Sikh Association

Registered Charity No. 280961



Code of Conduct and Grievance Policy

Gurdwara Sahib Woolwich (Registered Charity No. 280291)
1 Calderwood Street
London SE18 6QW

Approved by: President and Vice President
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1. Purpose

This policy sets out the standards of behaviour expected from all who serve, visit, or engage with the Gurdwara and provides a clear, fair process for raising and resolving grievances.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Trustees and management committee members
- Employees and sewadars (volunteers)
- All life members
- All members of the sangat (congregation) attending the Gurdwara
- Visitors and contractors

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It covers:

- Expected standards of behaviour and conduct
 - Processes for raising and resolving grievances or disputes
 - Actions and consequences if behaviour falls below the expected standard
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3. Guiding Principles

1. **Equality and Respect:** All individuals are to be treated equally, regardless of gender, caste, background, or belief.
 2. **Integrity and Accountability:** Everyone is responsible for their actions and must uphold Sikh and legal principles.
 3. **Compassion and Understanding:** Conflicts should be approached with patience, empathy, and the aim of reconciliation.
 4. **Confidentiality:** All personal and sensitive matters must be handled with discretion and in line with UK GDPR.
 5. **Safety:** Everyone has a duty to maintain a safe, peaceful, and welcoming environment in the Gurdwara.
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4. Code of Conduct

4.1 Expected Behaviour

All individuals are expected to:

- Speak courteously and treat others with dignity and respect
- Refrain from shouting, aggression, gossip, or confrontational behaviour.
- Follow Gurdwara rules (including head covering, shoe removal, and abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, or drugs).
- Respect the sanctity of the Darbar Sahib and Langar Hall at all times.
- Work cooperatively and take direction from the Management Committee where required.
- Protect the confidentiality of Gurdwara matters.
- Report concerns respectfully using the grievance procedure.

4.2 Unacceptable Behaviour

The following are not tolerated:

- Discrimination, harassment, bullying, or intimidation.

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- Use of insulting, threatening, or abusive language.
- Spreading of rumours, false allegations, or defamation.
- Physical or verbal assault.
- Misuse of Gurdwara property or finances.
- Disruption of services, meetings, or sewa activities.
- Breach of confidentiality or data protection rules.

4.3 Addressing Behavioural Concerns

- **Informal Resolution:** Minor issues may be resolved through direct conversation or mediation facilitated by a senior sewadar or committee member.
- **Formal Action:** Serious or repeated misconduct may lead to formal warnings, suspension or cancellation of membership, removal from committee roles, barring from gurdwara premises or — where applicable — reporting to the police.

All actions will be documented and handled confidentially.

5. Safeguarding

Any concerns relating to children or vulnerable adults must be reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or the relevant statutory authority. This includes behaviour that may put others at risk, even if it appears minor.

6. Grievance Handling Process

6.1 Purpose

To provide a fair, confidential, and timely way for individuals to raise concerns about unfair treatment, conflict, or dissatisfaction with decisions made by the Gurdwara or its representatives.

6.2 Principles

- Grievances may be raised by letter or email – addressed to the President of the Committee. Grievances may also be raised in person with the President or the Secretary of the Committee.
- Grievances will be treated seriously, respectfully, and impartially.
- Complainants will not suffer retaliation for raising genuine concerns.
- Issues should, wherever possible, be resolved informally first.
- Confidentiality will be maintained at every stage.

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6.3 Stages of the Process

1. Once an issue or complaint is raised or an incident occurs – this process will be followed.
 - a. Reviewed by President/VP/General secretary
 - i) If imminent threat or safeguarding issue the President/VP/General secretary may/must take action to prevent physical or mental harm or further offense/abuse.
 - Immediate actions may include barring from gurdwara events or premises or notification to the police or authorities
 - b. If it does not fall under section a above: -

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- The committee shall first attempt to discuss the issue directly with the parties concerned.
- Many matters can be resolved quickly through open communication or mediation.

Stage 2 – Formal Grievance

If the matter remains unresolved:

1. The complainant must submit a **written grievance** to the **Gurdwara Secretary or Chairperson**, clearly stating:
 - The issue and relevant facts (with dates)
 - Steps already taken to resolve it
 - The desired outcome
2. Acknowledgement of the grievance will be provided within **7 working days**.

Stage 3 – Investigation

- A small impartial review panel will be appointed (usually two or three members of the Management Committee) to meet with the complainant and offender and investigate the issue/incident. Every effort will be made to reconcile differences and avoid repeat offenses.
- The review panel may interview relevant individuals and review evidence.
- The review panel conclusion will be referred to the president/VP for resolution/action or if deemed serious to the full executive committee.
- A record of the investigation will be maintained securely.

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Stage 4 – Appeal

- If the complainant does not accept the outcome, they may appeal in writing to the Executive Committee within **14 working days** of receiving the decision.
 - A new panel of one independent/non-committee person and two committee members will review the decision and if necessary, investigate the issue/incident further and make recommendations to the executive committee
 - Trustees not previously involved will review the case.
 - The panel will make their recommendation to the Executive Committee. The executive committee will review the recommendations and agree on course of action.
 - Their decision will be **final**.
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7. Record Keeping

- All grievance documents and correspondence will be kept confidentially for a **minimum of three years**.
 - Records will be accessible only to authorised personnel and stored in accordance with **UK GDPR**.
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8. Implementation and Review

- The Management Committee is responsible for implementing this policy.
 - It will be reviewed **annually** or sooner if required by law or significant change in Gurdwara governance.
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