



PROJECT NAME:	Sikhism – Past, Present & Future
FUNDERS:	National Lottery & Medway Council
REPORT PREPARED BY:	Paula Chakkar & Gurjit Chaggar

INTRODUCTION

Background

According to the 2021 Census, 3,172 people identified as Sikhs in Medway which comprises of Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham, Rainham and Strood. Sikhs have been a part of Medway for many years contributing to the economy and community, through working locally in paper mills and manufacturing companies, running businesses and supporting local charities. Many Sikhs worked in the Dockyard before its closure in the 80's.

MTGS provides this growing community with a place of worship, a Punjabi School for anyone who wishes to learn or refresh their skills in this language and more recently a community centre for fitness, wellness, health care and socialising open to anyone regardless of faith, culture or status. Whilst Sikh Gurdwara's are places of worship, they are also predominately recognised world-wide as the place which provides free food (Langar) to anyone who wants it. MTGS is proud to be able to provide this service to the community of Medway and surrounding areas. We also provide food for Street Angels, the local charity. We have congregation and visitors from outside of Medway, from Surrey, Sussex, London and even from the North and Northwest of England. The Sikh community actively participates in supporting charities such as Race for Life, MacMillan, Helping Hands and the Sahara Foundation.

As a result of Medway Council being one of the 9 places to benefit from The Nation Lottery Heritage Fund as part of their Heritage Places initiative, the Medway Towns Gurdwara Sabha (MTGS) was successful in their bid for funding to run their project Sikhism – Past, Present & Future.

Aims and Objectives

To raise awareness of the Sikh community's presence in Medway over the years. Whilst we are an established place of worship, we aim to continue to build on service offerings and engage more proactively with the local community in a holistic way by raising awareness of Sikh contribution past and present with the objective to continue and increase this in the future.

Project Plan

We organised and hosted a range of workshops designed around Sikhism values and beliefs, to remember God constantly, to earn an honest livelihood, and to share earnings with everyone through charity.

The workshops took place in January and February 2025 and were focused on:

- Gatka (Sikh Martial Arts) – self-defence, improves coordination skills and fitness
- Kirtan (Sikh Hymns) – improves social skills and confidence building
- Simran (Meditation) – improves mental health and wellbeing
- Cooking – provides confidence, safety awareness and improves basic life skills

The project plan was to run the following sessions:

PROJECT: SIKHI - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE			
ACTIVITY	1:00PM TO 3:00PM		YOUTH SIKHI DAY
GATKA (Sikh Martial Arts)	11-Jan-25	25-Jan-25	15-Feb-25
KIRTAN (Sikh Hymns)	18-Jan-25	01-Feb-25	15-Feb-25
SIMRAN (Meditation)			15-Feb-25
COOKING			15-Feb-25

The events were publicised verbally, advertised on the premises on all screens, notice boards and announced after all programmes held on the premises. In addition, the flyers were posted on our website and on social media (Facebook and Instagram). Medway Council were provided with the flyer to advertise externally.

Outcomes

The footfall increased over the course of the 6–8-week period. Youngsters and elderly attendance and participation in workshops was noted with youngsters being particularly interested in Gatka workshops. Gatka is an ancient form of Sikh martial art which promotes physical fitness and develops the humane qualities of self-respect, endurance, calmness, self-control and discipline. Gatka teaches self defence whilst improving muscle tone and strength and increases cardio fitness.

Simran is a form of meditation which gives a sense of calm, peace and balance and can improve emotional wellbeing and overall health.

Langar (cooking) is a fundamental aspect of Sikhism. Langar is the free food which is prepared in the community kitchen of the Gurdwara and served to all regardless of religion, caste, gender etc.

Music workshops focused on Sikh instruments and prayers.

All workshops gained increasing participation with many volunteers' keen to be involved to assist with running these workshops every week. Appendix A includes photographs of some of the sessions.

Feedback was received both verbally and written form, all of which was very positive with demands for more sessions. As a result, we are planning the continuation of these sessions for the forthcoming period. Furthermore, interest was also expressed for additional workshops which are now also planned for March and April. These include Dastar Tying (Turban tying) and Santhya Classes (Prayer Reading).

APPENDIX A

SIKH HERITAGE LEARNING



Basics of Sikhi

everythings B PRESENTS

Sikhi

HERITAGE DAY

SATURDAY 8TH FEBRUARY
12:00PM - 4:00PM

TALKS BY
BHAI HUKAM SINGH

AGE 5-10 AT 12:00PM - 1:30PM
AGE 11+ AT 2:00PM

MEDWAY TOWNS GURDWARA SABHA
1-5 Lankaster Parker Road, Rochester, Kent. ME1 3QU

JOIN BOS AT MEDWAY TOWNS GURDWARA SABHA
ON 8 FEB FROM 12:00 DOING PARCHAR & ENGAGE WITH THE SANGAT
WITH A STALL OF SIKHI LITERATURE.



LANGAR (COOKING)



GATKA (MARTIAL ARTS)



KIRTAN (MUSIC)



SIMRAN (MEDITATION)

