

Sikh Council UK Policy on Same Sex Marriages

Background

Since 2005, same-sex couples are allowed to enter into civil partnerships, a separate union which provides the legal consequences of marriage. However they cannot be performed in a place of worship.

In February 2011, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government expressed its intention to begin a consultation to allow both religious same-sex ceremonies and civil marriage for same-sex couples. In September 2011, the Government announced its intention to introduce same-sex civil marriage by the next general election. On 7th December, 2012, the BBC announced that the Coalition government was going to extend the right to have a same-sex marriage conducted in a place of worship provided the religious body approved. Thus making it optional for a place of worship to carry out same sex marriages if they wanted to do so.

Sikh Council UK Viewpoint

We have no objection to same sex couples wanting to make commitments/vows to each other, as they currently do so when they enter civil partnerships. Nor do we object to same sex couples having all legal and other rights, similar to a married couple within a civic union. However, we object to the word marriage being used to replace civil union. The word marriage and its concept is sometimes also used to describe or used as a translation of the 'Anand Karaj' ceremony. The 'Anand Karaj' is specifically a Sikh ceremony, when union between a man and a woman is solemnised in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikh Reht Maryada (Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions)", clearly states that the 'Anand Karaj' ceremony can only take place in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib in a Gurdwara between a male and female.

In January 2005, the Jathedar (custodian) of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab, India, the highest seat of Sikh temporal-religious (miri-piri) authority for interpreting Sikh teachings, issued an edict denouncing same-sex marriages, and urging the worldwide Sikh community not to allow such marriages to take place at any Gurdwara." This was in response to clarification sought from Sikhs in Canada as similar legislation was being discussed and consulted on in Canada.

We support all the other faiths who are opposed to replacing civic unions with 'same sex marriage'.