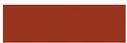




# Submission to the Home Office Protecting Places of Worship Consultation



***A Home Office consultation on what steps should be taken to provide greater protection from hate crime for places of worship in England and Wales.***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

- 1. Q13) Thinking about other places of worship that you are familiar with but do not usually attend, are you aware of any hate crimes that have targeted them in the past five years? This might include places of worship in your local area, ones you have visited in the past, or that friends or family attend. Please tell us more about these incidents, including why you consider them to be hate crimes, what happened, where, when, and any other details you think are relevant. (maximum 300 words)**

Like all places of worship, mosques should be viewed by worshippers and neighbours alike as safe spaces where open and safe access is an intrinsic part of daily life. However, recent data shows that rates of Islamophobic attacks targeting a) the mosque building or b) Muslim travelling to/from the building, are increasing.

Home Office figures show hate crime offences targeting Muslims increased from 2,965 (2017/18) to 3,530 (2018/19), with the figures disproportionately representing approximately half of all 'religious' hate crime incidents.

Hate crime incidents are too numerous to list, but a snapshot of recent examples include:

1. Two mosques vandalised with racist 'KKK' graffiti in Durham
2. Swastika symbol and other racist graffiti on a mosque in Elgin, Scotland
3. Three arson attacks in three years at a mosque in Manchester
4. Hazardous Material Police units being called out to mosques on multiple occasions to carry out testing on suspicious white powder
5. Stabbing and murder of Mohammed Saleem walking back home from a mosque in Birmingham
6. Eight people posed for photographs dressed in Ku Klux Klan outfits outside an Islamic prayer centre near Belfast
7. Death of Makram Ali and nine others injured when a van was driven into a crowd of people exiting a north London mosque
8. Raw meat, dog waste and pork drippings thrown into mosque car park in Nottingham
9. Hit-and-run driver shouting anti-Islamic taunts injures worshippers outside mosque in Wembley, North London
10. Two young men with knives arrested by armed police after allegedly forcing their way into a mosque in Cardiff
11. Proposed development of a Muslim prayer hall in Lincolnshire suffered arson attack whilst project still in planning application stage
12. Thugs kicked the door and hurled bricks before setting fire to rubbish at a mosque in Essex in suspected arson attack

- 2. Q14) In your opinion, have patterns of hate crime in and around places of worship changed at all over the past five years? This could include changes in the frequency or type of hate crime experienced, or changes to the levels of concern about hate crime.**
- a. **Please describe how you think patterns of hate crime have changed and any evidence you have seen of this. Examples of evidence could include personal experiences,**

**experiences of people you know, information in the media, or research. (maximum 300 words)**

Nationally, patterns of hate crime targeting Muslims have changed significantly. This includes:

1. Increased use of social media to maximise impact of the hate crime incidents and eliciting mass support. For example, the Punish a Muslim incident in 2018, demonstrating how perpetrators are more organised and focusing on garnering momentum and support through online platforms with high quantities of ‘shares’ and ‘likes’
2. “Video-bombing” a mosque building by unwelcome visitors from a far-right organisation with the intention of disturbing worshippers and recording video material to upload to online platforms and social media feeds later to garner high quantities of ‘shares’ and ‘likes’
3. Use of social media to make factually incorrect accusations against mosques and Muslim communities, such as during the COVID-19 lockdown when untrue claims of certain mosques not following lockdown rules and remaining open being circulated on far right social media channels.
4. Use of vehicle to ram into large groups of worshippers was not common before, however such incidents involving vehicles targeting crowds of worshippers have now emerged
5. The frequency of graffiti, vandalism and break-ins is increasing, with perpetrators often leaving graffiti with wider references to racist ideologies (Nazi swastika symbol, KKK etc.) as well as specifically Islamophobic comments.

**3. Q15) In your opinion, are there any faith institutions other than places of worship (for example, community centres, old age homes, schools), where people may feel unsafe?**

**a. Please outline these faith institutions and why people might feel unsafe there. (maximum 300 words)**

1. *Schools*: Children and parents travelling to/from faith based Muslim schools – whether day-time or supplementary schools - are often visible targets. Many Muslim faith schools have little to no physical security measures and are unaware of the steps they can and should be taking to protect themselves. Some schools have already seen far-right individuals verbally attacking their students such as in this horrific video at the gates of a Muslim girl’s school in London as children are leaving to go home. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjY47-80mPs> )
2. *Community Centres and or Muslim-owned shops* (e.g. that are branded ‘halal’), have also seen a rise in attacks. For example a Norwich Halal butcher (<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/crime/hate-crime-probe-as-brick-thrown-at-norwich-butchers-1-5124116> ) saw their glass door damaged after a brick was thrown at his shop. Charity shops run by charities with visibly Muslim-sounding names, as well as Islamic book shop owners and other retail units or offices with visibly Muslim-sounding names often frequently report receiving both online hate-filled emails and physical hate mail.

3. *Temporary large events/festivals* e.g. Eid in the park. Security and feelings of safety has become compromised during large scale, one-off events such as Eid prayers. Eid prayers are large events, seeing families praying together in open spaces where they could be easily targeted. For example during an Eid prayer in Leicester, the festival banners were vandalised with racist graffiti (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-36661661> ). And an Eid celebration in Southampton were cancelled over security concerns following a planned demonstration by anti-immigration activists (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/southampton-eid-event-for-muslims-cancelled-over-security-fears-as-far-right-group-announce-anti-a7113436.html> ). The increase of such incidents is denying communities to exercise their right to practise their religion freely because of fear of attack.
4. **Q16) Thinking about any concerns about safety and/or hate crime incidents you may have already discussed, can you describe what impact they have had, if any? Impacts could include, for example, emotional, financial, or changes in behaviour, and could include impacts on yourself, the place of worship/faith institution, or the wider community. (maximum 300 words)**
  1. Emotional: Overall mental wellbeing at an individual, family and community level
    - Fear and anxiety due to attacks or perceived threat of attacks
    - Fear of leaving home to attend place of worship
    - Reluctance to outwardly express one's faith to others in public
  2. Emotional: Impact on youth and their relationship with wider society
    - Disillusionment/disassociation with wider society
    - Feeling of "being the other" and not welcomed in local community
  3. Financial: Impact on the physical security of the mosque
    - Initial financial impact of procuring and installing additional security measures, training, volunteer manning levels, additional equipment purchased
    - Ongoing financial impact and time required dealing with equipment maintenance and training of staff and volunteer costs
  4. Change in behaviour: Impact on daily activity within the mosque
    - Additional checks on worshippers/visitors at the entrance
    - Additional vigilance when travelling to/from the mosque
    - Avoiding lone travel and ensuring travelling in pairs or groups, in particular for women, young people and elderly
  5. Emotional/Change in Behaviour: Vulnerability of Muslim women and elderly
    - More likely to be visible targets e.g. due to clothing
    - Many elderly worshippers who would spend more time in the mosque are likely to be unable to protect themselves should an unprovoked incident or attack happen
5. **Q21) Thinking about the last five years, are you aware of any steps taken or activities organised with the aim of protecting your place of worship, or a place of worship you are**

**familiar with, and the people who use it? This may include specific training, advice, or installation of physical safety and security measures.**

**a. Please outline what these steps or activities were, and any details on why they were delivered, how, and by whom. (maximum 300 words)**

Steps taken by many mosques nationwide include, but are not limited to:

1. Educating community members to avoid travelling to/from the mosque alone - in particular for a late-night event – and to always travel as a pair or group. In particular for young people, women and the elderly.
2. Limiting opening hours to only certain durations before and after main prayer services, whereas before many mosques would remain largely open during the day.
3. Having visible security guard volunteers in high-vis jackets/vests at entrances to reassure community members, however most volunteers undergo minimal awareness training only.
4. Educating community members on how to report hate crime, providing phone numbers/local police contacts on noticeboards and circulating relevant information via social media channels, though many still remain reluctant to do so.
5. Installing additional physical security measures, from CCTV cameras, burglar alarms and anti-shatter windows, to remote-control access gates, additional external lighting and controlled door access.
6. Making announcements at Friday Jumu'ah prayers/other large gatherings of what to do if worshippers see suspicious activity. The announcement is often performed by the Imam or a mosque trustee, but some mosques also invite a local Police representative to address the congregation for a few minutes too.
7. In particular whilst COVID19 physical distancing in place, ensuring queues at mosque entrances and exits are kept to a minimum or are managed within internal mosque car park rather than main road, to minimise risk of vehicle attacks.
8. Establishing a local committee of lay people/mosque committee members to liaise with local Police about security issues - both proactively and reactively – via quarterly or 6-monthly meetings
9. Inviting local MP and Councillors to meet with community members to discuss issues of importance to them including security, which increases their confidence that their concerns are being addressed.

**6. Q22) What else would you like to see in the future for places of worship to address security concerns and protect the people who use them? For example, this may include organisations providing advice or training, knowledge sharing between institutions, installation of physical security measures, and incident reporting processes. We are interested in any ideas you may have. Please include as much detail as possible on what, who and how this would be delivered. (maximum 500 words)**

1. *Closer integration of support with local Police:* Provision from this training fund to support local Police services deliver adequate and tailored training to local places of worship (for example via a dedicated Outreach and Engagement Officer for each police force who understands the dynamics of local places of worship). Local Police should not be expected to do this on top of their current high workload and stretched resources.
2. *Professional security guards:* It is unreasonable to expect volunteers to perform security duties that professional security guards or Police are better placed at doing, and serious

consideration should be given to support professional security guards or Police officers for the most high-risk places of worship and events. Moreover, any training budget used largely on volunteers is less effective due to the high turnover of volunteers in most voluntary-led organisations.

3. *Holistic training*: Most community members who run places of worship do so in a voluntary capacity and have many pressures on their time already. Any awareness training should be integrated into wider capacity building programmes as part of a joined-up approach from Government. Not only will this be more cost-effective in delivering the desired impact, but it will also minimise perceptions of over-securitization of places of worship.
  4. *Application rejections feedback*: A high number of applications for the Physical Security Scheme funding from places of worship are still being rejected each year. Better guidelines on who is and is not eligible should be provided. In addition, to save volunteers and stretched staff members wasting precious time completing funding application forms, a staged application process should be considered so that if anybody is not eligible, they can be told so at Stage 1 to avoid them wasting further time on their application.
  5. *Innovative use of technology*: ‘Panic button’ mobile apps have been deployed in other sectors or for personal applications, and it may be an innovative technology solution for trained staff and volunteers at entrances of places of worship to raise the alarm in the event of emergency or incident. Any new technology should be subject to a feasibility study and piloted initially with a represented sample of users before being implemented more widely.
  6. *Example crisis/emergency/incident management procedures*: As part of their general building risk assessment, few places of worship have the resource or expertise to develop a bespoke procedure for what to do in the event of a crisis, emergency or incident, therefore many would find guidance and training on this, customised to places of worship and with support from their local Police forces, very valuable.
  7. *Sharing best practice*: Utilising existing regional and national interfaith networks - for example the National Interfaith Network or local Interfaith Forums - to regularly disseminate case studies and act as forums for sharing best practice for security provision.
  8. *Better marketing*: The current Physical Security Scheme’s marketing strategy appears to be unchanged for a number of years and would benefit from enhancement.
- 7. Q23) Thinking about current initiatives and options for future provision, are there any types of support or activities that you think are not needed or would be unhelpful in addressing security concerns and protecting places of worship and the people who use them? Please explain what and why. (maximum 500 words)**

What is not needed and/or is not helpful includes:

1. *Non-local training*: Training that is not bespoke to the local area/region the place of worship is located in - there is already sufficient national guidance material available and more is not needed, but what is lacking is places of worship having better awareness about how to connect locally to services and support available in their local area
2. *Non-integrated training and support*: In the UK many places of worship have good relationships with their local Police, with others who do not, whilst being highly recommended to do so. Therefore, training and service delivery via new or unknown

private contractors is unhelpful, when we should be focusing on strengthening relationships between places of worship and their local Police forces.

3. *“Over-securitization”*: Work collaboratively with communities to design initiatives that avoid the “over-securitization” of places of worship, so that faith communities are not viewed and engaged with through the lens of security only.
4. *High expectations of volunteer security guards*:- Volunteers at places of worship who are most at risk should not be expected to act as professional security guards or pseudo-police, rather they should be supported by professional security guards or local Police as appropriate.
5. *Limited application window*: It is not helpful that funding rounds for the Physical Security Scheme are only open for two months of the year only. The scheme should be open all year round and accept applications on a rolling basis.
6. *No flexibility in grants*: Physical Security Scheme – upfront payment of 20% as a deposit, especially in post COVID-19, will stretch the financial resources of many places of worship. Reduced up front deposit with direct payment of the 80% to the supplier rather than reimbursing the place of worship will remove barriers to accessing the scheme
7. *Poor installation contractor service*: Physical Security Scheme - several mosques who were successful in their grant applications ended up rejecting the grant. This is primarily because of a lack of transparency in pricing offered by the contractor Esotec Limited, where the prices offered appeared extremely high compared to quotes received from a range of local contractors. In addition, concerns of being tied into expensive maintenance agreements (very little information given on these), being forced into signing agreements within a tight deadline without negotiation and overall customer support provided by Esotec Limited being very poor has been reported. These issues need to be resolved by better evaluation & monitoring by the Home Office of their chosen contractor(s).
8. *Limited choice*: Physical Security Scheme – centralised service provider providing uncompetitive quotations with no choice is not helpful. The scheme should provide a pool of suppliers rather than forcing places of worship to use one supplier with uncompetitive pricing.
9. *“Waste of time” sentiments*: Due to the above deficiencies in the existing scheme, many mosques in 2020 have reported viewing the scheme as not worth the time to apply for anymore.
10. Further improvement recommendations from MCB made here:  
<https://www.mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/briefing-paper-places-of-worship-security-scheme/>

**8. Q25) In your opinion, what do you think the roles of the following organisations should be? Please consider what you think these institutions currently do well and what they could do differently.**

- a. **Places of worship and other faith institutions or networks**
  - b. **Central Government, including the Home Office and/or the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**
  - c. **Charities, police, local government, councils and other local organisations**
1. Place of worship
    - a. Implement a minimum level of security at their premises based on latest guidance
    - b. Ensure Health & Safety, building regulations and relevant guidelines are being followed where practical at all times

- c. Maintain a regular line of communication with their local Police
  - d. Communicate key messages regarding safety and security to worshippers and local community members e.g. notice boards, social media announcements, Friday prayer sermons etc.
  - e. Assess if they are in need of additional expertise or financial support and engage with external funding and training providers appropriately
2. Regional and national representative networks of places of worship and/or faith institutions
- a. Share/disseminate relevant information to their members
  - b. Where they agree there is value from programmes run by central or local government, police or training providers, act as recommending bodies for these programmes to their members, to increase buy-in from their members at the grassroots (as this buy-in is more likely to increase participation rates than advertising by central government alone)
  - c. Offer basic security awareness training sessions to members, in particular via online/remote sessions at a minimum, and signpost to further/more specialist training and resources.
3. Central government:
- a. Perform regular, genuine and fair consultation with both places of worship, as well as networks of places of worship/faith institutions, in order to set policy direction.
  - b. Work collaboratively with regional and national representative networks of places of worship and/or faith institutions, to seek their views and get their buy-in as recommending bodies for central government-run support programmes
  - c. Study best practice in other countries in the world running similar programmes, and incorporate into UK programme design
  - d. Establishing and administering (whether directly or indirectly) an appropriately sized fund to deliver funding support for places of worship. For any new untested initiatives, this should include a pilot programme with a small number of places of worship first.
  - e. Establish independent monitoring & evaluation for support programme being delivered to places of worship, and publish the results of the evaluation of the programme each year
  - f. Ensure joined up approach between central government departments, as well as liaison with relevant devolved bodies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In particular:
    - g. Sufficient Home Office funding, guidance and resources for local Police forces to outreach, liaise and provide bespoke and locally-focused training and support to places of worship in their regions who are most at risk
    - h. Faith Leaders/other training funded by MHCLG should not run in isolation from any other training programmes covering security
    - i. Work collaboratively with faith communities to avoid the “over-securitization” of places of worship, so that faith communities are not viewed and engaged with through the lens of security only.
4. Police, local government/councils:

- a. Engage positively with local places of worship and regional networks of places of worship and/or faith institutions to start or strengthen sustainable and long-lasting relationships
- b. Be “first port of call” for advice, support and training for local places of worship and regional networks of places of worship and/or faith institutions.
- c. Provide bespoke and locally-focused training and support to places of worship in their area supported by sufficient Home Office funding, guidance and resources

**9. Q26) Please provide any additional ideas or comments on how to further protect places of worship and faith institutions and any specific needs communities may have. (maximum 500 words)**

1. *Faith schools:* Many Muslim children and parents attending Muslim faith schools are as vulnerable if not more to those attending mosques. It is vital that faith schools are included in the remit of this scheme for communities to feel safe.
2. *Amount of funding:* It is commendable that British Jewish communities receive £14m of funding for security each year. Many other faith communities note that in contrast, all other faith communities are collectively allocated less than 12% of this (£1.6m per year). To ensure fairness for all other faith communities at risk of hate crime, the size of funding available to them should be increased proportionately.
3. *Missing regions:* The scheme should be extended or replicated to cover places of worship in Scotland and Northern Ireland to address the vulnerability of places of worship there.
4. *Security guards:* Provisions within this scheme should be made for funding security guards or additional Police presence to those places of worship who are most at risk of hate crime, who have suffered attacks in the past or have received multiple threats. This also includes major events which have received threats.
5. *Local Police relationships:* Local police forces are often better places to offer support, training and guidance to local places of worship compared to private contractors. Funding should be made available to the local Police force to increase their ability to support places of worship in their region, for example via Outreach or Engagement Officers, and to strengthen building and developing long-term relationships that will deliver impact for years to come.
6. *Online Security:* Intimidation via “zoom-bombing”, trolling on social media and other online threats will affect many places of worship with online service delivery focus, especially post-COVID19 lockdown. Guidance and support on protecting oneself from and reporting incidents of online hate crime should be a focal point in any new awareness training and guidance for places of worship.
7. *Application rejections:* Recent news articles have mentioned that in the last three years, despite 108 mosques applying, only 48 have been successful. Most places of worship are largely voluntary run and this represents a significant waste of time for these volunteers who already have stretched resources and limited time available. For transparency and lessons learned for faith communities, it is important that the reasons why the rejection rate is so high should be shared publicly and in anonymised form.
8. *Further Recommendations:* Further recommendations for improvements were made in June 2019 by MCB here: <https://www.mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/briefing-paper-places-of-worship-security-scheme/>