



Submission to the Strengthening Partnerships Consultation by the Cabinet Office

(Voluntary, Community and Faith-Based
Sector (VCFS) and Emergency Responders)



1. INTRODUCTION

- i. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), founded in 1997, is an inclusive umbrella body of mosques, charities, professional networks and more, representing a large cross-section of Muslims in the UK today. We are pledged to work for the common good of society as a whole, encouraging individual Muslims and Muslim-led organisations to play a full and participatory role in public life. Our longstanding vision is to empower Muslim communities to achieve a just, cohesive and successful British society.
- ii. With our new initiative, MCB's Vision 2050, we are taking that commitment even further. Vision 2050 aims to unite British Muslims for effective action, empower our communities with the tools to excel, and serve both Muslims and our country. By 2050, we envision British Muslims leading positive change across every sphere of life—from healthcare and technology to education and civic engagement.
- iii. This is not just an aspiration; it's a pledge to meaningful transformation. We have three clear goals: Unite, Inspire and Serve.
 - **Unite:** We are dedicated to forging a shared sense of purpose among British Muslims, encouraging collaboration and community building while respecting our diverse perspectives.
 - **Inspire:** We aim to empower our communities by fostering innovation, developing skills, and creating opportunities in every sector—from healthcare and technology to education and civic engagement.
 - **Serve:** We commit to uplifting not only Muslim communities but also the wider British society, working together to build a just, cohesive, and successful future for all.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. This written submission is a response to a series of questions posed by the Cabinet Office in July to September 2025 in its Strengthening Partnerships Consultation.
- ii. The tragedy at Grenfell Tower and other emergencies have emphasised the vital role of voluntary, community and faith-based (VCF) organisations in providing support, coordination, and care for those affected. There are good examples of VCF representatives working closely with national and local emergency responders to help their communities in relation to all aspects of resilience.
- iii. A full outline and details of the consultation can be found online at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-partnerships-consultation>

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING?

- i. We believe it is vital for statutory and voluntary sector organisations to work closely together on emergency responses. Since the formation of VCSEP and LCEP, our affiliates have reported significant benefits from partnership working, including:
 - Improved understanding of how different organisations operate, fostering familiarity and trust.
 - Stronger emergency response capacity through joint training, simulations, and webinars.
 - A robust and well-connected network through increased membership and digital communication groups.
 - Better prepared and more resilient voluntary sector organisations.
 - Strong relationships within and between community and faith groups, enabling a compassionate and culturally sensitive response.
 - Enhanced capability and resources for managing humanitarian centres.
 - Reduced community tensions due to strengthened relationships between faith-based and voluntary sectors.
 - Sharing of local and cultural knowledge to inform decision-making.

4. HAVE THERE BEEN TIMES WHEN PARTNERSHIP WORKING HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE?

- i. Yes. Before the COVID-19 pandemic and the establishment of VCSEP and LCEP, it was often difficult to engage with local authorities and first responders.
- ii. The lack of established partnerships and networks hindered collaboration and slowed down responses to emergencies. Since these structures were introduced, engagement and cooperation have significantly improved.

5. WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN EMERGENCIES?

- i. We have not encountered significant barriers; however, we see areas for improvement. For example, it is essential for key members from Category 1 responders to attend yearly simulation exercises and engage proactively with local authorities.
- ii. Building relationships ahead of emergencies ensures mutual benefit during crises. We also recommend appointing and funding dedicated officers such as faith or community liaison officers to attend regular network meetings and strengthen collaboration.

6. WHAT IS YOUR CAPACITY FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING?

- i. Like many voluntary sector organisations, our capacity is limited. Only a few large Muslim organisations have dedicated staff for this work.
- ii. However, during emergencies near faith institutions, the Muslim community consistently rallies to provide support, including offering space, food, and emergency grants. This demonstrates strong grassroots capacity, even though formal organisational resources are stretched.

7. WHAT CHANGES MIGHT ENABLE MORE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING?

- i. Improved communication between first responders and voluntary sector organisations.
- ii. The appointment of dedicated, funded officers in every area to maintain networks and coordinate rapid responses.
- iii. Increased joint training opportunities to strengthen relationships and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- iv. Joint funding for VCSEP, LCEP, and first responders to support training, data sharing, and regular reviews.
- v. Funding opportunities for voluntary sector specially from the faith group to further develop and strengthen in this area.

8. IF CATEGORY 1 RESPONDERS HAD AN INCREASED LEGAL OBLIGATION FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING, WHAT MIGHT THE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS BE FOR YOU?

- i. In practical terms, partnerships should be coordinated through VCSEP or LCEP rather than with individual organisations. This would provide a clear point of contact and reduce administrative burdens.
- ii. Many Muslim faith organisations are volunteer-led, and staff are already overstretched, so adding additional responsibilities without proper resourcing would be challenging. Strengthening centralised partnership structures would make collaboration more sustainable.

ENDS.