

Places of Worship scheme provides record levels of funding

Forty nine places of worship in England and Wales will benefit from £1.6 million of Home Office funding for security to protect against hate crime attacks – with British mosques being the biggest beneficiaries.

Also announced today (Sunday 15 March), the one-year anniversary of the Christchurch terror attack, is the launch of a new consultation for faith groups to feedback on what more can be done to protect faith groups from attacks.

Minister for Countering Extremism Baroness Williams said:

No one should be fearful about practicing their faith. Whether it is a church, a mosque, gurdwara or temple, any place of worship should be a space of reflection and safety.

The Places of Worship scheme provides that physical security. However, we can always do more, which is why we want to hear from worshippers about how we can better protect them from these terrible attacks.

The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding scheme provides funding for measures such as CCTV, fencing, gates, alarms and lighting, to places of worship and associated faith community centres that are vulnerable to hate crime.

Twenty-seven mosques, thirteen churches, five gurdwaras and four Hindu temples have received funding this year, the largest amount of funding in a single year since the scheme was set up in 2016.

Next year's scheme will double again, with £3.2 million earmarked for 2020/21.

In a new simplified system for applicants, a central contractor will install better physical security, such as locks, lighting and CCTV. All applications were assessed, and funding was provided to those who were most vulnerable to hate crime attacks.

In 2018/19 police in England and Wales recorded 103,379 hate crime offences, an increase of 10% on the previous year. This is largely due to improvements in the police recording and more victims feeling able to come forward and report these crimes.

The consultation being launched by the Home Office this month will ask faith groups what else should be done to help them feel safe and confident while practicing their religion. The consultation, which will last for eight weeks,

will enable all faith groups to share their experiences of hate crime, and provide valuable insight for the Government in keeping pace with the evolving threat.

The consultation recognises that different religious groups have different needs, and that some members of congregations, such as women or the elderly may feel more vulnerable than other groups. The results of the consultation will then be analysed and considered as part of future steps on how the government can protect religious groups.

The Jewish Community receive a separate fund – the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant – which is administered by CST.