Strategic Plan: Safeena 2025-2030
Faith-Centred Support for Muslims Impacted by Cancer

Executive Summary

Safeena is the UK's first Muslim Cancer Support Network (MCSN), dedicated to meeting the cultural, spiritual, and emotional needs of British Muslims affected by cancer. In the next five years (2025-2030), Safeena seeks to deepen its impact, expand its reach, and align with best practices from leading national cancer charities. This strategic plan outlines key areas for growth, improvement, and evidence-based methods to guide Safeena's evolution.

Market Position

- **First and Only National Muslim Cancer Support Network**
- **Growing Need Identified Through Research**
- **Clear Service Gaps in Mainstream Cancer Provision**
- **Strong Foundation for Expansion and Growth**

Evidence Base

Research findings highlight critical needs:

- 94.2% of respondents desire faith-specific support.
- 85% prefer same-faith supporters.
- 80% feel their needs are not understood by mainstream services.
- There are significant cultural and language barriers to accessing care.

Achievements to Date

Safeena has made notable strides in cancer support, including:

- Over 200 referrals, with 115 individuals supported directly.
- Regular faith-based webinars and community support circles.
- 80 trained befrienders and 25 trained bereavement support volunteers.
- A community awareness pilot in Bradford with plans for nationwide rollout.
- Development of faith-based resources, including:
    - A children's book to help parents explain a cancer diagnosis from a faith perspective.
    - Translations of signs and symptoms for the top 10 cancers into 10 languages.
    - In-depth research for Macmillan on Stigma and Cancer Support for British Muslims.

Key Challenges to Address

Based on research, the following challenges are identified:

1. **Lack of Awareness and Education**
    - Cancer stigma and myths create fear and avoidance of diagnosis and treatment.
    - Many Muslims lack awareness of cancer symptoms and the importance of early detection.
    - Cultural barriers prevent uptake of screening and routine health checks.
2. **Spiritual and Emotional Needs**
    - There is a gap in faith-sensitive care, with patients feeling their spiritual needs are overlooked.
    - Islamic guidance is needed for treatment decisions and end-of-life care.
    - A lack of culturally sensitive emotional support exacerbates distress.
3. **Systemic Barriers in Healthcare**
    - Language barriers prevent effective communication with healthcare providers.
    - Cultural insensitivity regarding modesty, gender, and halal practices hinders trust.
    - Navigating the healthcare system is challenging due to lack of advocacy and guidance.
4. **Support for Families and Caregivers**
    - There is a gap in resources to help families and caregivers support loved ones during treatment.
    - Bereavement support is often not culturally aligned with Islamic traditions.
5. **Community-Level Challenges**
    - Isolation and stigma are widespread, limiting social and emotional support for patients.
    - Mosques and community leaders are underutilized in spreading cancer awareness and reducing stigma.
6. **Desire for Faith-Sensitive Services**
    - A need for faith-based helplines, peer support networks, and faith-sensitive counselling.

Our Vision

To serve and provide a faith-based support service, bringing hope, care, and compassion into people's lives.

Our Mission

Helping those in the same boat: To offer practical support for those affected by cancer through education, befriending, signposting, and advocacy for culturally competent care.

Our Core Values

- **Sincere**: Providing trustworthy, compassionate, and independent support.
- **Accountable**: We take responsibility for our actions, delivering the highest standards of care.
- **Transparent**: Operating with openness in all dealings, ensuring clarity and integrity.
- **Servitude (Khidma)**: Committed to serving humanity and fulfilling our duty to assist those in need.
- **Benefit to Mankind**: Acting with care, love, and compassion to benefit those in our communities.

Three Strategic Pillars

The three-pillar model focuses on key areas of impact:

1. **Patient-Centered Support**
2. **Healthcare System Navigation**
3. **Community Transformation**

These pillars directly address the needs identified in the research:

- Faith-based support (94.2% want faith-specific services).
- Navigating the healthcare system (80% feel mainstream services don't understand their needs).
- Tackling stigma and promoting early cancer detection in communities.

Pillar 1: Patient-Centered Support

This pillar integrates Islamic principles into cancer care, ensuring culturally sensitive and spiritually aligned services. Core programs include:

- **Peer Support**: Trained befrienders providing companionship and spiritual guidance.
- **Islamic Guidance Framework**: Offering advice on treatment, coping strategies, and end-of-life care.
- **End-of-Life & Bereavement Support**: Providing culturally and religiously sensitive support during terminal illness and after loss.

Operational Needs:

- Trained befrienders, Islamic counselors, and spiritual care specialists.
- Resource management systems, training frameworks, and quality assurance tools.
- Partnerships with mosques, Islamic scholars, and Muslim organizations.

Core Programmes in Pillar 1

Faith-Based Peer Support	Islamic Guidance Framework	End-of-Life & Bereavement
Trained befrienders	Scholar advisory board	Islamic end-of-life care
Islamic counseling service	Religious guidance resources	Faith-based bereavement support
Spiritual care navigation	Islamic coping tools	Funeral guidance
Prayer support program	Spiritual wellbeing services	Family support services

Operational Requirements:

People	Systems	Partnerships
Scholar network	Befriender matching platform	Mosque networks
Trained befrienders	Resource management system	Islamic scholars
Islamic counselors	Training framework	Muslim counselors
Spiritual care specialists	Quality assurance	Faith organizations

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Challenge: How Pillar 1 Addresses It

Challenge	How Pillar 1 Addresses It
Spiritual and Emotional Support Gaps	- Faith-Based Peer Support Network provides companionship and culturally sensitive emotional care. - Spiritual Care Helpline offers 24/7 access to spiritual guidance, addressing urgent faith-related concerns.
Islamic Guidance for Treatment and End-of-Life Care	- Religious Scholar Advisory Program connects patients with scholars for decisions aligned with Islamic values. - Islamic End-of-Life Support ensures patients receive culturally respectful care during terminal illness.
Stigma Around Seeking Help for Emotional Needs	- Normalizes seeking mental health and emotional support through faith-based services.
Isolation and Loneliness	- Peer networks and helplines create a sense of community, reducing isolation for patients and caregivers.
Lack of Bereavement Support for Families	- Faith-Based Bereavement Services offer culturally aligned emotional and spiritual support after loss.
Disconnect Between Faith and Healthcare	- Provides a bridge by integrating Islamic principles into support services, fostering trust and relevance.

Challenge	How Pillar 1 Addresses It
Limited Resources for Faith-Based Coping Mechanisms	- Builds an Islamic Resource Library to offer materials on coping, healing, and navigating the cancer journey.

Pillar 2: Healthcare System Navigation

This pillar aims to bridge the gap between Muslim patients and healthcare providers, addressing systemic barriers and ensuring culturally competent care. Core programs include:

- **Cultural Advocacy Service**: Personalized support for navigating the healthcare system.
- **Healthcare Partnerships**: Building relationships with NHS trusts, hospitals, and GP networks to improve cultural competency.
- **Support Services**: Providing practical assistance, such as translation, appointment scheduling, and treatment coordination.

Operational Needs:

- Cultural navigators, language specialists, and healthcare liaisons.
- Translation tools, case management systems, and impact tracking.
- Partnerships with NHS Trusts, GP networks, and cancer centres.

Core Programmes in Pillar 2

Cultural Advocacy Service	Healthcare Partnerships	Support Services
System navigation support	NHS liaison program	Translation services
Cultural mediation	Hospital partnerships	Appointment support
Language assistance	GP engagement	Treatment navigation
Rights advocacy	Healthcare staff training	Care coordination

Operational Requirements:

People	Systems	Partnerships
Cultural navigators	Referral platform	NHS Trusts
Language specialists	Language support tools	GP networks
Healthcare liaisons	Case management	Cancer centers
Training staff	Impact tracking	Support services

Challenge: How Pillar 2 Addresses It

Challenge	How Pillar 2 Addresses It
Language Barriers	- Language Support Hub provides translation services, ensuring patients can communicate effectively with healthcare providers. - Multilingual Resources offer accessible educational materials in key languages (e.g., Urdu, Bengali, Somali).
Lack of Advocacy in Healthcare Settings	- Cultural Advocacy Service equips patients with support for navigating appointments and addressing cultural misunderstandings with providers. - Healthcare Navigation Toolkit empowers patients and families with knowledge of their rights and access pathways.
Mistrust of Healthcare Providers	- Healthcare Partnerships collaborate with NHS trusts to build culturally sensitive practices, fostering trust and confidence in healthcare systems. - Training for healthcare staff on cultural and faith-sensitive care ensures Muslim patients feel respected and understood.
Modesty and Gender Concerns in Care	- Advocacy for gender-sensitive care policies ensures same-gender practitioners are available where needed.
Navigating Complex Healthcare Pathways	- Tools like navigation toolkits and direct support from cultural navigators simplify access to screening, treatment, and follow-up services.
Limited Representation in Systemic Advocacy	- Advocacy training programs empower community members to champion systemic changes in culturally sensitive healthcare.
Lack of Practical Support for Non-English-Speaking Patients	- Live interpretation services during medical appointments help bridge communication gaps and reduce misunderstandings.

Pillar 3: Community Transformation

This pillar focuses on transforming the cultural narrative around cancer in Muslim communities, reducing stigma, and fostering early detection behaviors. Core programs include:

- **Education & Awareness**: Raising awareness about cancer symptoms, early detection, and screenings.
- **Community Champions**: Training local advocates to spread awareness and reduce stigma.
- **Mosque Partnerships**: Engaging imams and mosque leaders to disseminate cancer-related information.

Operational Needs:

- Community organizers, education specialists, and local champions.
- Impact measurement systems, event platforms, and resource libraries.
- Partnerships with mosques, community centers, and Muslim organizations.

Core Programmes in Pillar 3

Education & Awareness	Community Champions	Mosque Partnerships
Cancer awareness program	Champion recruitment	Partnership program
Early detection campaign	Training program	Resource development
Community education	Local initiatives	Imam training
Youth engagement	Impact measurement	Community events

Operational Requirements:

People	Systems	Partnerships
Community organizers	Champion management	Mosques
Education specialists	Event platform	Community centers
Program managers	Resource library	Muslim organizations
Local champions	Impact measurement	Local groups

Challenge: How Pillar 3 Addresses It

Challenge	How Pillar 3 Addresses It
Cancer Stigma and Myths	- Community Champions Program educates local communities to dispel myths and normalize conversations about cancer. - Survivor Storytelling Platform shares real-life survivor experiences to humanize the disease and inspire others to seek help early.
Limited Awareness About Symptoms and Early Detection	- Community Education Program raises awareness about the importance of screenings and early detection through mosque talks and community events. - Mosque Partnership Network engages trusted faith leaders to disseminate culturally relevant health information.

Challenge	How Pillar 3 Addresses It
Lack of Engagement Among Youth	- Youth Engagement Initiative targets younger generations with tailored messaging to build intergenerational awareness and reduce stigma.
Lack of Grassroots Advocacy	- Community Champions act as grassroots advocates, driving health-focused initiatives and supporting local change efforts.
Isolation of Cancer Patients in the Community	- Mosque Partnership Network creates opportunities for social and spiritual connection through mosque-hosted health initiatives.
Need for Sustainable Cultural Change	- Champions and community networks foster long-term behavioral change, ensuring health education becomes a community priority.

Tactical Prioritization by Pillar

Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3
Spiritual & Emotional Support	Culturally competent care in healthcare	Address Cancer Stigma
Isolation & Loneliness	Integration of Mosques and Community Leaders	Improve Cancer Awareness and Early Detection
Islamic Guidance	Other Partnerships	Language Barriers
Support for Families and Caregivers	Funding	Community Leaders
	IT Systems	Lack of Role Models and Survivor Stories
		Youth Engagement in Healthcare

Phased Rollout Plan

Phase 1: Foundation Building (2025-2026)

- Roll out Cancer Community Campaign
- Expand volunteer portal, enhance training for champions.
- Collaborate with mosques and NHS trusts for awareness.

Phase 2: Growth and Expansion (2027-2028)

- Scale Community Champions Program.

- Launch the Spiritual Care Helpline and expand translation services.
- Strengthen healthcare partnerships for cultural competency training.

Phase 3: National Impact (2029-2030)

- Roll out national awareness campaigns.
- Advocate for systemic change in healthcare policies.
- Introduce the Safeena App for centralizing support services.

This strategic plan sets a clear roadmap for Safeena to grow its impact and address the unique needs of British Muslims affected by cancer over the next five years.