

2015

GENERAL

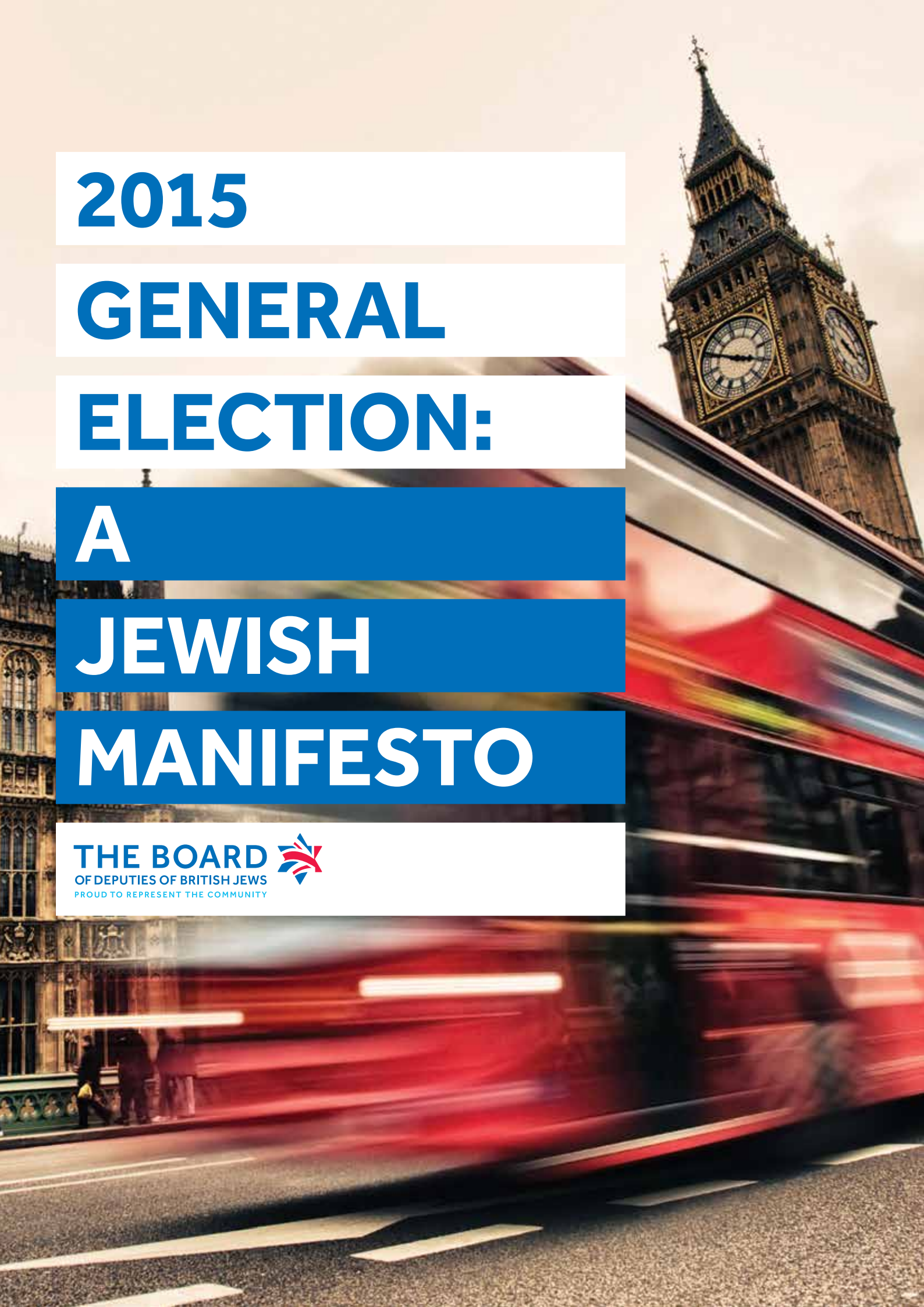
ELECTION:

A

JEWISH

MANIFESTO

THE BOARD
OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS
PROUD TO REPRESENT THE COMMUNITY



The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the voice of British Jewry – the only organisation based on cross-communal, democratic, grassroots representation. It is the first port of call for Government, media and others seeking to understand the Jewish community's interests and concerns.

Charitable activities with which the Board is identified are funded by The Board of Deputies Charitable Foundation (Registered Charity No. 1058107), a company limited by guarantee and registered in England (No. 3239086).

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Designed by Graphical: www.graphicalagency.com

Printed in the United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION WILL TAKE PLACE ON 7 MAY 2015. THIS MANIFESTO IS AIMED AT INFORMING BOTH EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE UK PARLIAMENT ABOUT JEWISH INTERESTS AND CONCERNS.

The Board of Deputies hopes that the Manifesto will empower our elected representatives to understand and champion these causes. In each section, the Manifesto outlines in bold the 'Policy Asks' on which the Board of Deputies would like support from MPs and their political parties. As a summary, we have also highlighted 'Ten Commitments' that capture the essence of the community's needs.

The 2011 Census put the UK Jewish population at 269,568. This is comprised by large clusters of Jews in some of the UK's major cities, as well as smaller communities right across the country. The UK Jewish community is very diverse in terms of religious and cultural affiliation, as well as in socio-economic terms.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews prides itself on its representative and democratic structures, which have in turn contributed to the formulation of this Manifesto. Whilst there is no single 'Jewish view', through this document, the Board of Deputies has sought to represent as much of a consensus as possible.

Through a community-wide consultation, which involved the participation of over 300 stakeholder organisations and individuals, the Board of Deputies has been able to capture the diverse range of issues which affect the UK Jewish community across its religious, cultural and socioeconomic diversity.

We hope that you find it useful and informative.

THE TEN COMMITMENTS

**TO SUMMARISE THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY'S ASPIRATIONS FOR OUR
POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES, WE HAVE
PRODUCED THE FOLLOWING GUIDE.**

**PLEASE SHARE YOUR SUPPORT
FOR THESE TEN COMMITMENTS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THE HASHTAG
#TENCOMMITMENTS
@BOARDOFDEPUTIES.**

**THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH
JEWS ACTS AS THE SECRETARIAT FOR
THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP ON BRITISH JEWS.**

**MPS SEEKING UPDATES OR INFORMATION
ON THE THEMES LISTED IN THE MANIFESTO
SHOULD JOIN THE APPG ON BRITISH JEWS,
THE APPG AGAINST ANTISEMITISM AND
THE ALL-PARTY BRITAIN-ISRAEL
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP.**

WE WOULD ASK OUR PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS TO:

1

Defend the right to a Jewish way of life, including kosher meat; religious clothing; circumcision; and flexible working to accommodate Shabbat and festival observance.

2

Oppose all forms of hate crime, including Antisemitism, Islamophobia and other types of racism, promoting and enhancing community safety.

3

Promote good relations, understanding and cooperation between all of the UK's communities.

4

Support efforts to remember and understand the Holocaust, and strive to prevent any future genocide.

5

Advocate for a permanent, comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulting in a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state.

6

Promote peace projects that unite communities, and resist boycotts that divide communities.

7

Affirm the importance of faith schools within the overall provision.

8

Support the provision of religiously and culturally sensitive youth and social care services.

9

Promote a more just and sustainable future in the UK and abroad; supporting efforts to tackle poverty, climate change and human rights abuses.

10

Celebrate and support Jewish heritage and cultural institutions.

GLOBAL

JEWISH

ISSUES

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Under both Article 18 of The Universal Declaration for the Protection of Human Rights and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) every person has the right “to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”

A key aspect of the manifestation of a person’s religious observance may include ceremonial acts, specific customs, the displays of symbols, and the observance of religious festivals and the Jewish Sabbath.

RELIGIOUS CLOTHING

The wearing of religious clothing and symbols, including in public, is an important expression of religious observance, commitment and identity. Examples in the Jewish community might include head-coverings (including the kippah (skull-cap), tzitzit (fringes on garments), or jewellery (such as necklaces) which manifest religio-cultural imagery like the Star of David.

Many other faith communities have similar dress requirements. Wherever there is not some compelling reason – such as the infringement of the rights of others, or some demonstrable safety hazard – it is important that people of different faiths be allowed to manifest their beliefs. The accommodation of – and respect for – difference is a key British value.

The right to freedom of religious expression was underscored by the January 2013 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the Eweida vs. the United Kingdom case. Ms Eweida was placed on unpaid leave by British Airways when she refused to remove or cover a crucifix-necklace marking her Christian faith. The Court ruled against the UK on the basis that its laws had not provided sufficient domestic law to protect the rights of Nadia Eweida.

POLICY ASK: To promote a culture of respect for diversity, including reasonable accommodation of individuals’ rights to wear religious symbols.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AROUND THE JEWISH SHABBAT AND FESTIVALS

As in other religions, a key element of the Jewish faith is the observance of religious festivals and the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat). Because the Jewish calendar runs according to the lunar cycle, Shabbat and festivals begin on the evening before the dates specified for them by most calendars. During Shabbat and the festivals, observant Jews will refrain from work, and will not use money, electricity or transport.

Traditionally-observant Jews will often seek to take a number of festival days as leave and may ask to leave work early on Fridays, particularly in the winter months when Shabbat can begin as early as 3.30pm on a Friday afternoon. Employers should seek to be as flexible as possible, making reasonable accommodation for these religious requirements. The same principles should apply to those who are legitimately claiming state benefits when their signing on arrangements may coincide with festivals. The relevant agencies should understand that traditionally-observant Jews are not generally available to work, or sign on for benefits, on Shabbat or festivals.

In many professions, observant Jewish employees will come to an arrangement with their employer to make up the time during the week that they wish to take off on a Friday afternoon, and will take the festivals off as part of their annual leave. However, this is sometimes harder in the education sector, where holiday dates are much more prescriptive for both teachers and students. Schools and higher education bodies should be alive to the needs of teachers and students who require time off for religious observance, and seek to be as flexible as possible. The Board of Deputies will sometimes intervene where it feels a school or university is not making reasonable accommodation of requests for leave.

In a similar vein, the Board of Deputies, together with the Jewish Chaplaincy Board and the Union of Jewish Students, seeks to help students in both schools and higher education to navigate issues around the times Shabbat and Jewish festivals coincide with exams. This is often mitigated by the sensitivity of examination boards, schools and universities, which create procedures to accommodate various religious and cultural needs.

POLICY ASK: To establish better understanding and accommodation for employees, benefits' claimants, teachers and students of different faiths and beliefs who wish to take time off or make alternative arrangements to observe religious holy days, including the Jewish Sabbath and festivals.

CIRCUMCISION

Brit Milah is the Hebrew term used to describe neonatal male circumcision in accordance with Jewish law. It is traditionally performed when a boy is eight days old, based upon the Biblical commandment (Gen. 17:10-14 and Lev. 12:3.). It is regarded as a physical sign of male Jewish identity and is probably the most widely observed of all Jewish practices. It is a minor procedure that has no negative impact on the child or on the rest of his life. It is against Jewish law to perform Brit Milah if the procedure could pose a danger to the child, so is always postponed if indicated on medical grounds.



**COMMITMENT 1:
DEFEND THE RIGHT
TO A JEWISH WAY
OF LIFE, INCLUDING
KOSHER MEAT;
RELIGIOUS CLOTHING;
CIRCUMCISION; AND
FLEXIBLE WORKING
TO ACCOMMODATE
SHABBAT AND FESTIVAL
OBSERVANCE.**



By contrast, the Jewish faith strongly opposes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), regarding it as humiliating and abusive to women, and an assault which is often performed under unsafe and unhygienic conditions, causing serious long-term damage. FGM and Brit Milah should not be conflated.

In the UK, Brit Milah is performed by a highly-trained 'Mohel' (plural: Mohalim) who has undertaken both religious and practical instruction. The regulatory bodies for UK Mohalim are the Initiation Society (Orthodox communities) and the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohalim (Progressive communities). These organisations are responsible for training, audit and appraisal, and for ensuring that Brit Milah is carried out under the safest possible conditions. Milah UK provides information about the Jewish practice of circumcision.

Brit Milah forms a central part of the identity of a Jewish male. Article 8 and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights are of particular relevance. Article 8 focuses on the protection of private and family life, and for a Jewish male, circumcision is a key aspect of being part of the Jewish community. Article 9 provides a right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion: the right to perform Brit Milah according to Jewish tradition is a key part of this religious freedom that must be safeguarded.

POLICY ASK: To defend the right of Jews to practise circumcision according to their tradition.

KOSHER MEAT

Shechita is the Jewish religious method of slaughtering animals for food. As traditionally-observant Jews can only eat meat slaughtered by the Shechita method, the practice is a key aspect to the daily life of Jews. Shechita is a process that is based on biblical commandments given to the Jewish people, which forbid cruelty to animals. For example, Jewish law prohibits the killing of animals for sport.

Jewish law does permit the slaughter of animals for food, but makes this subject to stringent religious regulations. The premise of the religious laws is to ensure that the animal has a swift death with as little pain as possible. Any individual slaughter that does not meet the high standards demanded will render the animal non-Kosher, and prohibited to Jews.

The Shechita method is conducted by a specifically trained professional known as a Shochet (plural: Shochetim) who is experienced and learned in laws of Shechita, pathology and animal anatomy. The trainee Shochet will serve an apprenticeship with an experienced Shochet before becoming fully qualified.

In the UK, a Shochet must hold two licences, one issued by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the other by the Rabbinical Commission for the Licensing of Shochetim. This Rabbinical Commission is a statutory body established by Parliament and governed by Schedule 12 to The Welfare of Animals [Slaughter or Killing] Regulations 1995. To satisfy the Rabbinical Commission, Shochetim must reapply and undertake examinations on an annual basis.

There are occasionally moves in some European countries to limit or ban religious slaughter. The Jewish community seeks to work with Government, MPs and other relevant authorities to foster understanding about this key facet of Jewish life in the UK and across Europe. Shechita UK leads the Jewish communal response on this issue, offering information on this central Jewish practice.

The Jewish community has long labelled its food products to inform consumers that food is Kosher. But there has been alarm at recent moves by some groups to introduce pejorative labelling on Kosher and Halal meat. Rather than genuinely informing consumers, this campaign tends to stigmatise religious forms of slaughter over common practices in the wider meat industry that are prohibited to Jews. Equally, whilst the moment of slaughter is important, labelling could helpfully inform consumers about other aspects of animal welfare, including how it was fed, housed and transported. The Jewish community would support comprehensive labelling that would allow consumers to know more about the lives of animals from which their meat had been sourced, and labelling which would inform consumers as to whether their meat had been killed via the Shechita method, or methods prohibited to Jews like captive-bolt, shooting, gassing, electrocution, drowning, trapping or clubbing.

POLICY ASK: To defend the right of Jews to practice Shechita (religious slaughter of animals for food).

POLICY ASK: To oppose the stigmatisation of religious minorities through pejorative labelling, and to support instead non-pejorative labelling that lists all methods of stunning and slaughter, offering real consumer choice.

EXTREMISM, ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM

EXTREMISM, ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM IN EUROPE

The Jewish community is very concerned about the rise of extremist movements and political parties in Europe, particularly in Hungary, Greece, France and Sweden. The recent European Elections exemplified the growing issue with numerous far-right and racist parties making political gains. The motivations behind these groups vary, and include concerns about immigration, diversity and international conflicts – including the Israel-Palestine conflict – but manifest themselves in various ways including hate speech, racist abuse, vandalism and even violence.

Jews are not the only targets of attacks and our concerns extend to some wider trends. Muslims have been the particular focus of some far-right groups in Western Europe and Scandinavia, whilst the Roma are a major target for the far-right in Eastern and Central Europe. Immigrants of all backgrounds are often singled out by such groups.



**COMMITMENT 2:
OPPOSE ALL
FORMS OF HATE
CRIME, INCLUDING
ANTISEMITISM,
ISLAMOPHOBIA AND
OTHER TYPES OF
RACISM, PROMOTING
AND ENHANCING
COMMUNITY SAFETY.**



In November 2013, the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) published the results of its survey of Jewish experiences and perceptions of Antisemitism in the EU.

The results were disturbing. Across Europe, 66% of Jews surveyed felt Antisemitism was a "very big" or "fairly big" problem in their respective countries. A total of 76% believed that the situation had worsened over the past five years; while 33% feared they may be physically assaulted over the next 12 months. The UK was lowest, at 48%, and France the highest, at 85%. The UK was also found to have the lowest levels of fear, with 28% in fear of verbal abuse and 17% in fear of physical attack.

Respondents identified four main sources of hostility. The two largest identifiable groups were people with a 'left-wing political view' and people with a 'Muslim extremist view.' In Belgium, France, Sweden and the UK, these groups were almost twice as common as the next largest group, people with a 'right-wing political view,' although this was the source of most hostility in Hungary and Latvia. People with a 'Christian extremist view' accounted for a large proportion of incidents in Italy, Hungary and France.

Similarly, Islamist extremism poses a threat to much of European society, with the threat of Al-Qaeda style terrorism of concern in many countries, especially in Western Europe. The fatal attacks on a Jewish day school in Toulouse in 2012 and on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in 2014, demonstrates that there are still individuals who are intent on and capable of murdering Jews. For this reason, synagogues and schools observe rigorous security, and require additional support and vigilance.

POLICY ASK: To be alert to and active around extremism, racism and Antisemitism in Europe.

POLICY ASK: To act on the concerning findings from the FRA report, including unreservedly condemning Antisemitism in all its forms.

EXTREMISM, ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Antisemitism remains a key challenge facing the British Jewish community. Antisemitic incidents shoot up at times of heightened tensions in the Middle East. Meanwhile, recent fatal attacks in continental Europe underscore the need for continued vigilance.

The Community Security Trust (CST) works closely with police to monitor Antisemitism and protect Jewish communities against it. The CST's most recent Antisemitic Incidents Report, covering the first six months of 2014, recorded 304 antisemitic incidents, a figure consistent with data from most years since 2010.

There is a noticeable spike in antisemitic incidents when tensions intensify in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, exemplified during outbreaks of

violence in 2009, 2012 and 2014. July 2014, for example, was the worst month for Antisemitism on record, with 302 antisemitic incidents in the context of fighting between Hamas and Israel – almost the same as the previous six months combined. A robust political and policing response is required when criticism of the policies of a government spills over in to hatred, intimidation or violence against a religious or ethnic group.

With the growth of social media, Antisemitism is finding new forms of expression which must be monitored and countered. We would therefore welcome additional political and material support to prevent and prosecute Antisemitism and other forms of racism in these new media.

POLICY ASK: To publicly support all efforts to combat Antisemitism.

POLICY ASK: To support the continuation of the important work of the Cross-Government Working Group on Antisemitism.

POLICY ASK: To be particularly aware of the risk of increased Antisemitism at times of heightened conflict in the Middle East.

POLICY ASK: To take action on hate as expressed on social media.

POLICY ASK: To ensure that assistance is provided to third-party reporting bodies and security agencies such as the CST that monitor and protect vulnerable groups, including the Jewish community.

SECURITY FOR JEWISH SCHOOLS

In 2010, it was announced that the Government would provide financial assistance for the payment of security guards at all Jewish, Voluntary Aided, faith schools in England. This helps guard against the threat of terrorism to Jewish schools. The announcement lifted a significant pre-existing financial burden from Jewish parents, and demonstrated a strong practical commitment by Government for the well-being of British Jews. School security funding has been pledged for the duration of the current Parliament, with services administered by the CST.

However, there have been no formal guarantees that security funding for schools will continue following the General Election. Senior politicians from different parties have stated verbally and publicly that they anticipate the funding to carry on if their Party is in Government – and it is imperative that it does – Jewish parents should not be financially disadvantaged due to threats of terror attacks on their children’s schools.

Children and schools are the Jewish community’s security priority. This was brought into terrible focus in March 2012 when a Jihadist gunman attacked a primary school in France, killing a rabbi and three young children. In the aftermath of the Toulouse attack, British Jews were comforted by the knowledge that UK Jewish schools had security guards as part of long term security planning and infrastructure. This attack confirmed the need for stringent security measures, reminding the community that such attacks can occur at any time.

POLICY ASK: To ensure the continuation of Government funding for security guards at Jewish voluntary-aided faith schools in England.

HATE SPEAKERS

The Jewish community is concerned about hate speakers being allowed into the UK to spread and incite various forms of hatred against Jews; other faiths and races; the LGBT community; and other minorities. Hate speakers should be blocked from importing their hatred into the UK, spreading animosity and division. The Jewish community recognises and appreciates the work of the Home Office in refusing entry to some known hate speakers in the past.

From time to time, UK citizens are implicated in preaching hatred on university campuses and at community venues. The Community Security Trust, the Board of Deputies and the Union of Jewish Students have worked with groups including university authorities to balance the need for free speech with a clear opposition to hate speech.

POLICY ASK: To support cohesion by banning speakers considered to be 'not conducive to the public good' from entering the UK.

POLICY ASK: To work with the Jewish community to prevent UK citizens preaching hate, including in universities and community centres.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Jewish Community is committed to positive and authentic engagement with people of all faiths and none. Promoting good relations between communities proactively prevents tensions, racism and violence.

Steps should be taken to educate people of different faith and belief backgrounds about each other, and proactive efforts and investment should be put into developing good inter faith relations in order to prevent tensions and promote cooperation.

Whilst much of this work is driven from faith groups themselves at a local and national level, only Government has the resources to facilitate the strategic growth and direction of this work. The Jewish community and the Board of Deputies, in particular, prides itself on working with Government to enhance the interfaith encounter, producing joint research, projects and events. Organisations and projects like the Inter Faith Network for the UK and its regional and local affiliates, as well as national bodies like the 3FF, Mitzvah Day, the Council of Christians and Jews, the Christian Muslim Forum, the Christian Hindu Forum and the Joseph Interfaith Foundation offer sustainable mechanisms and partners to deliver a more cohesive and integrated society.

“

**COMMITMENT 3:
PROMOTE GOOD
RELATIONS,
UNDERSTANDING
AND COOPERATION
BETWEEN ALL OF THE
UK'S COMMUNITIES.**

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The Near Neighbours fund has been a welcome addition to these initiatives, creating positive encounters between faith communities at a local and national level.

POLICY ASK: To support initiatives which promote dialogue and understanding between different groups in society; to prevent tensions and promote cooperation.

POLICY ASK: To outline a clear strategy to enhance community relations in the UK, supported by a clear, designated budget.

HOLOCAUST ISSUES

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION AND EDUCATION

Since 2005, the United Kingdom has officially marked Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January every year. The Day does not just commemorate the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews, but also the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Like other Holocaust-related activities, the aim is not just to remember the past, but to create a consciousness that will prevent any other genocides happening in the future.

With each passing year there are fewer Holocaust survivors able to tell their stories. Therefore, it is important for schools across Europe to teach students about the Holocaust. Bodies like the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Wiener Library, Yad Vashem, the Anne Frank Trust, Yom HaShoah UK, the Centre for Holocaust Education and the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre all merit support.

The Board of Deputies' response to the 2014 Holocaust Commission made recommendations, including the following:

- Strengthen and broaden existing Holocaust modules within the National Curriculum
- Educate children to become activists for human rights and social justice, and against prejudice
- Formally designate Holocaust Memorial Day as a recognised day in mainstream schools.
- Increase the number of Holocaust Educational Trust trips to concentration camps
- Support/fund a central Forum for Holocaust Education and Commemoration to offer a joined-up approach.
- Provide all school children in the UK with a copy of Anne Frank's Diary
- Build a 'Memorial to the Holocaust' in Central London – ensuring that it has the power to educate as well as to commemorate
- Promote initiatives to enable young people to shadow survivors of the Holocaust



COMMITMENT 4:
**SUPPORT EFFORTS
TO REMEMBER AND
UNDERSTAND THE
HOLOCAUST, AND
STRIVE TO PREVENT
ANY FUTURE GENOCIDE.**



POLICY ASK: To implement the Board of Deputies' recommendations to the 2014 Holocaust Commission.

POLICY ASK: To support Holocaust education, remembrance, commemoration, research and survivor testimony.

POLICY ASK: To show solidarity with all the victims of Nazi persecution, including Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people and political opponents of Nazism, as well as the victims of other genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

POLICY ASK: To include and expand holocaust education in schools to prevent ignorance which can in some cases lead to revisionism or denial.

RESTITUTION

During the Holocaust, the Nazis used state apparatus to confiscate Jewish property, including both private property, such as homes, businesses, art and jewellery; and communal infrastructure, like synagogue buildings, hospitals, schools and graveyards. To this day, much has not been returned and the property remains in the hands of modern states. Sadly, many Holocaust survivors now live in dire poverty, and the return of their property could give them a better quality of life in their final years, and provide a legacy for their descendants.

In 2009, 47 countries (including all 28 EU-member states) came together to support the Terezin Declaration, to accelerate the restitution of private and communal property to Holocaust survivors and their heirs. The following year, 43 countries endorsed a set of guidelines and best practices for the return of, or compensation for, confiscated property. It has become clear, however, that many countries are not on track, and in some cases the situation has even decelerated.

In Croatia and Latvia, the relevant legislation has been delayed. In Romania, the processing of claims and payments has been extremely slow. Recent legislation risks further delays and reductions in compensation payments. In Hungary, discussions continue about restitution for heirless and hitherto unclaimed property formerly owned by Jews. Poland has one of the worst records on restitution of private property. It back-tracked on some of the commitments it made at the 2009 Terezin Conference, and was the only one of the 47 countries not to send a delegate to the 2012 Prague Conference. The great injustice about the delays in restitution payments mean that some of the Holocaust's victims will pass away without ever seeing their property returned.

POLICY ASK: To call for a just and speedy conclusion to the issue of restitution across Europe.

HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM

Holocaust denial and revisionism is widely abhorred, but it continues – particularly in the context of opposition to Israel. The current Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, previously sought to question the veracity or extent of the Holocaust. Former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad even organised a two-day conference in 2006, attended by neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, to question the reality of the Holocaust. In Europe, convicted French racist Dieudonné M'bala M'bala uses his public comedy shows to suggest that Jews created the idea of the Holocaust in order to reap financial gain. He was banned from the UK in 2014.

In Europe, the 2008 Prague Declaration caused alarm among many Jewish communities by conflating crimes under Soviet Communism with Nazi crimes. The concern is that some countries have attempted to deflect attention from the complicity of their wartime governments in the Holocaust, cynically attempting to avoid liability for compensation to Jewish victims. The crimes that Communist governments committed against their people should be explored and the perpetrators prosecuted, but it is important that countries acknowledge their role in the Holocaust and do not attempt to gloss over a very troubled period in their history.

At times, a related trope is that many leading Communists were Jews and so – it is claimed – the Jews as a whole are complicit in the crimes of Communism. The rationale continues that, as such, Jews in general do not deserve sympathy or compensation for their suffering in the Holocaust. This argument is unacceptable. The actions of some Jewish Communists do not make all Jews complicit. The 'Jewish people' does not hold property confiscated by the Communists, but various states do hold Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis and must fulfil their obligation to return it.

POLICY ASK: To refute and confront individuals and political movements who seek to minimise or downplay the Holocaust.

UNMARKED GRAVES

One of the most urgent initiatives underway at the moment is the search for the unmarked graves of Holocaust victims. Across Europe, the Nazis and their accomplices murdered more than 2.5 million of their victims in mass executions, burying many of the victims in mass graves, many of them unmarked. Finding these graves to give the victims an appropriate memorial is a 'race against time' to get the testimony of local, older people, who might have information about the sites and the murders before the generation that knows first-hand what has happened passes away entirely. Organizations such as Yahad-In Unum do tremendous work in locating these grave-sites.

POLICY ASK: To support initiatives to find unmarked graves, including providing funding and working with other national governments to overcome some of the bureaucratic and political obstacles to this work.

ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The UK Jewish community is committed to peace, security, prosperity and equality for Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Middle East.

The UK Jewish community has a very strong attachment to the State of Israel. A 2010 survey by the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (JPR) showed that 95% of UK Jews have visited Israel and that 90% view Israel as the “ancestral homeland of the Jewish people”.

The Middle East is a region beset by conflict, characterised in recent years by uprisings against autocratic regimes, Islamist insurgencies, sectarian violence and the persecution of Muslim, Christian and other minorities. The ‘Arab Spring’ has not yet delivered its promise of a better future for the people of the region. In the short-term, it is incumbent on countries like the UK to seek to end the wanton slaughter of civilians, and deliver humanitarian relief for suffering populations. In the longer-term, the UK should be a leading player in helping to build a better future for all the countries in the Middle East.

POLICY ASK: To promote peace, security, prosperity and equality for Israel and its neighbours.

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**COMMITMENT 5:
ADVOCATE FOR
A PERMANENT,
COMPREHENSIVE
SOLUTION TO THE
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN
CONFLICT, RESULTING
IN A SECURE ISRAEL
ALONGSIDE A VIABLE
PALESTINIAN STATE.**

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PEACE

According to the aforementioned JPR survey, the UK Jewish community overwhelmingly supports a two-state solution, with 78% favouring this as the just solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The UK undoubtedly has a role in assisting the peace process. In addition to facilitating high level diplomatic meetings, the UK could offer a variety of incentives that encourage both sides to make strides towards peace, including financial investment packages in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories, and the promotion of trade between the two sides, building trust and links between them.

In addition, the UK should promote dialogue and reconciliation at the grassroots through both political and financial support. Through its conflict resolution pool, the UK invests in a number of positive projects that seek to bring together Israelis and Palestinians. This should be continued and enhanced.

Furthermore, the UK could support exchanges of students between the UK, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, to build bridges and to offer the UK as a 'safe space' where future leaders can develop constructive relationships. Such projects support a political climate that assists the peace talks and enable a sustainable agreement where cross-border partnerships can flourish.

In this spirit, we urge resistance of calls for boycotts of Israel. By their very nature, such measures attribute blame to only one side of the conflict, and through this stigmatisation they perpetuate a one-sided narrative. This in turn prompts intransigence from both sides. Moreover, the UK should be seen as a place to unite and not further divide.

Alongside the other issues that need to be resolved as part of a comprehensive agreement, one issue that does not get enough attention is that of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. In the decades following the establishment of the State of Israel – and as a direct result of the conflict – over 800,000 Jews were displaced or forced to flee from lands they had inhabited for thousands of years, many without their possessions. Recently, the Canadian Parliament followed the United States' House of Representatives in recognising their rights as refugees under international law.

POLICY ASK: To advocate for a permanent, comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulting in a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state.

POLICY ASK: To promote peace projects that unite communities, and resist boycotts that divide communities.

SECURITY

Israel is of great strategic importance to the UK. As an ally, Israel offers stability in a region characterised by growing political uncertainty. With mounting extremist insurgency and the emergence of ISIS and other Al-Qaeda-inspired groups, Israeli military and intelligence cooperation with western states and regional partners is of great mutual benefit.

POLICY ASK: To promote awareness of the acute threats to Israeli and regional security, and encourage further security cooperation between the UK and Israel.

IRAN: Iran's nuclear programme is edging ever closer to crossing the threshold necessary to make nuclear weapons: 20% enriched uranium is the critical point for any nuclear weapon. Once that is achieved it is relatively easy to reach the 90% level required for a nuclear weapon. The UK, EU and USA have led on promoting sanctions against Iran. We welcomed the progress in talks with Iran in late 2013; however, we have some ongoing concerns.

The world must watch very carefully to ensure that there is no backsliding towards an Iranian military nuclear capability. Years of disingenuity and obfuscation from the Iranian authorities should not be naively forgotten. It is also vital that Iran knows that there is a credible military option to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons if diplomacy should fail.

Secondly, it remains crucial that positive steps on the nuclear issue do not distract from other pressing topics. Iran continues to arm, fund and empower state and non-state actors, such as

Syria and Hezbollah, to commit acts of violence against civilians. The UK and other world powers should take decisive steps to prevent Iran's financing of global terrorism and the brutal repression of the Syrian people.

Finally, we note that there is evidence that the human rights situation in Iran itself has deteriorated significantly since Hassan Rouhani was elected President.

The human rights situation in Iran continues to be a matter of serious concern. It has one of the most prolific rates of execution in the World. According to Amnesty International, Iran officially executed 369 people in 2013, with another 355 alleged by reliable sources. In addition, Bahá'ís have been reporting increasing levels of persecution over recent years, whilst Christian, LGBT people and other minorities continue to suffer repression.

POLICY ASK: To prevent the weaponisation of Iran's nuclear programme; to counter Iran's financing of international terror; and urge drastic improvement to its human rights record.

HEZBULLAH: The UK led the proscription of Iranian-backed Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organisation by all EU countries in July 2013. This was an important step in restricting the fundraising scope of the organisation. Hezbollah has launched attacks against European and Jewish civilians worldwide and is an organisation that is of deep concern to the Jewish community.

In 1994, Hezbollah attacked a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires, killing 85 people. The organisation has launched multiple attacks against Israeli civilians and has expanded its activities to European soil, killing six civilians in a bus bombing in Bulgaria in 2012. There is a growing concern that Hezbollah is using European dual-nationals to plot attacks against Jews and Israelis in Europe. This was evident in 2013 where a dual Swedish-Lebanese national, Hossam Taleb Yaacoub, was convicted in a European Court for scoping Israelis and Jews to attack in Cyprus. During the court case he stated "I was only collecting information on the Jews. That's what the organisation [Hezbollah] does everywhere."

It is our hope that the next step is for the EU to adopt a full proscription of the organisation, including its political wing. Senior figures within Hezbollah, including its Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem, have openly admitted that there is no distinction between the military and political wing, stating "Hezbollah has a single leadership."

The political wing operates to assist the violent nature of Hezbollah, and further actions in disrupting this organisation's ability to carry out terrorist activities are needed. Currently, allies such as the USA and Canada have fully proscribed Hezbollah, and we believe the EU, led by the UK, should take the same, necessary steps.

POLICY ASK: To designate the entirety of Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, damaging its abilities to launch attacks in Europe, the Middle East and around the world.

HAMAS AND PALESTINIAN TERRORISM: The European Union classifies Hamas as a terrorist organisation. Hamas is responsible for suicide bombings against civilian targets and the indiscriminate shelling of Israeli civilian populations, often whilst using Palestinian civilians as human shields. Hamas should not be given the legitimacy of engagement with Government or parliamentarians until it accepts the Quartet's three conditions, namely recognising Israel; abiding by previous diplomatic agreements; and desisting from terrorist attacks.

POLICY ASK: To refuse to engage with Hamas politicians, officials or supporters until the movement agrees to recognise Israel, abide by previous diplomatic agreements, and desists from terrorist attacks.

PROSPERITY

Israel is a key trading partner for the UK. The total amount of bilateral trade between the UK and Israel was estimated at £5.1 billion in 2013, and it continues to grow. Israel has positioned itself as a leader in technological advancements, placing a particular emphasis on the hi-tech industry and medical research. The UK-Israel Tech Hub is a great example of cooperation helping to promote economic growth in both countries by partnering British companies with the best of Israeli innovation.

Israel also has a vibrant cultural and creative sector, with theatre groups, artists and musicians regularly coming to the UK and vice versa. As with all cultural exchanges, both societies gain from the interaction. Further cooperation in these fields and a greater trade network between the UK and Israel will be of great benefit to both societies.

POLICY ASK: To support, nurture and promote the growing trade and cultural links between Israel and the UK.

EQUALITY

Israel is a diverse and pluralistic society that seeks to guarantee equality to all its citizens. Exceptionally for the Middle East, Israel is a democratic state where there is freedom of religious practice and where women's rights, trades' union rights and LGBT rights are respected. However, like many advanced countries, there are challenges about integration between different sectors of the population that need to be addressed.

One particular example is Israel's Arab minority, which makes up around 20% of the country's population. According to a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in January 2010, 50% of the Arab population lives in poverty compared to 20% of Israelis overall, with widening socio-economic gaps. The complex issue of securing a successful resolution to the challenges facing the Bedouin requires particular and sensitive attention.

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**COMMITMENT 6:
PROMOTE PEACE
PROJECTS THAT UNITE
COMMUNITIES, AND
RESIST BOYCOTTS
THAT DIVIDE
COMMUNITIES.**

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The 2003 Or Commission report into inter-ethnic tensions emphasised the urgent need to take both immediate and long-term corrective measures to tackle socio-economic gaps and improve the situation of Arab citizens of Israel. It described these as the “most sensitive and important domestic issue facing Israel today.” The report led to the establishment of a special authority for the economic development of the minority sectors in the Prime Minister’s Office in 2007; and an investment of over NIS 3 billion by the Israeli Government in various initiatives to advance equal opportunities for Arab citizens of Israel to date.

The UK Jewish community is cognizant of these challenges, and in 2010 the Board of Deputies joined other leading Jewish organisations in founding the UK Task Force on Issues Facing Arab Citizens of Israel to inform the community about issues relating to Arab citizens of Israel and facilitate partnerships to advance the opportunities of Israel’s Arab minority. Over 30 organisations have since joined the coalition, which provides its members with valuable briefings, advice, support and contacts with Arab communities in Israel.

POLICY ASK: To be constructive partners in the pursuit of greater integration and equality in Israel, including offering financial and political support to initiatives aimed at Arab-Jewish coexistence, and supporting projects that empower and advance the position of Arab citizens within Israeli society.



JEWISH

LIFE

CYCLE

EDUCATION

FAITH SCHOOLS

The popularity of faith schools with parents reflects their academic results, their ethos, their behavioural standards, and the contribution that their pupils go on to make in wider society. Currently, one in every three schools in Britain is a faith school, and around sixty-five per cent of Jewish children in the UK attend Jewish schools. Whilst some faith schools operate in the private sector, there is a significant benefit to the relationship between public authorities and those faith schools that are part of the state sector. Many of them are models of best practice. As such, faith schools should remain an integral part of the state-sector offer.

POLICY ASK: To champion the success of faith schools within the state sector.

The success of faith schools is partly due to the sense of shared values and a shared purpose. Quotas or other interventions in schools' admissions criteria risk losing this benefit. Successful schools should be allowed to succeed as models for other schools.

POLICY ASK: To support the right of schools to continue to set their own admissions' criteria.

Successful faith schools teach to the national curriculum which includes a core focus on British Values and actively promoting community cohesion. Many Jewish schools create formal linking programmes with other faith and non-faith schools. This activity should be better supported and funded to ensure that good faith schools enhance good community relations, so that children continue to be familiar with others who have different backgrounds to their own.

POLICY ASK: To support formal linking programmes between schools of different faith and belief backgrounds.

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**COMMITMENT 7:
AFFIRM THE
IMPORTANCE OF FAITH
SCHOOLS WITHIN THE
OVERALL PROVISION.**

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CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Schools that make particular provision for children with Special Educational Needs should continue to enjoy sufficient Government funding, without an undue bureaucratic burden. Severe cuts in this field could leave the most vulnerable pupils in school without the support that they need to progress.

POLICY ASK: To provide adequate financial resources for pupils with Special Educational Needs, without an undue bureaucratic burden.

Where parents want to access a specialist Jewish school, but do not have one in their own local authority, their local authority should support the child in going to a school under a different authority which can provide adequately for their needs. Moving a child out of their local authority can cause significant issues for families as local authorities are sometimes reluctant to provide financial support, however in practice there is little difference from sending children to other specialist schools.

POLICY ASK: To support the needs of local children and families to attend specialist Jewish schools, should they so wish.

MODERN AND BIBLICAL HEBREW AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES

For the Jewish community, Modern Hebrew (Ivrit) and Biblical Hebrew are heritage languages. The community, particularly through the Partnership for Jewish Schools, has invested much time and money into creating resources for the high quality teaching of Hebrew. Hebrew has a wider value. Biblical Hebrew was one of the first languages taught at British universities as a gateway to the Hebrew Bible in its original language. Meanwhile, Modern Hebrew is the language of one of the UK's most important trading partners in the Middle East.

The Jewish community welcomed the Government's decision to allow continuation of the teaching of Ivrit as a MFL (Modern Foreign Language) in primary schools and would like reassurances that Ivrit and Biblical Hebrew will be safeguarded as an examination subject option for GCSE and A Level.

POLICY ASK: To support the continued teaching of Modern and Biblical Hebrew, both at primary school and as an option at GCSE and A-Level.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS

The Jewish community and its schools are grateful to the Examination Boards for trying to avoid scheduling exams on Jewish festivals. The Examination Boards have also provided a good framework for making alternative arrangements when exams are on festival days. The Department for Education support this through various policies and procedures.

This sensitivity to cultural and religious diversity is welcome, but must also extend to the content of examination questions. There have been incidents in which questions/specifications make default assumptions which have been problematic – for example a recent examination question assumed knowledge of the X Factor. This kind of question ignores the fact that not all children have televisions in their home, that not all children are allowed to watch all programmes and that orthodox Jewish children do not watch television on the Sabbath. We note that this is not an issue unique to Judaism but also applies to other cultural and religious groups.

POLICY ASK: To work with the Jewish community and Examination Boards to ensure that examinations are devised with appropriate religious and cultural sensitivity.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education (RE) develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principal religions, values and cultures. The Jewish community believes that the teaching of RE helps foster greater understanding and sensitivity between communities where there is considerable diversity and difference. RE can ultimately help to combat misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice, including Antisemitism and Islamophobia. By incorporating RE fully into school syllabi, schools will be better placed to satisfy Ofsted's requirement to educate students on the Social, Moral and Cultural, thus satisfying the inspection services' obligation to integrate and model 'British Values'.

The Jewish community is, therefore, very concerned by the erosion of the status of RE, not being listed as a core subject in the new English Baccalaureate, consequently resulting in a reduction of teacher training places, and placing the future recruitment of high quality teachers into doubt.

POLICY ASK: To pledge support for the continued teaching and existence of RE as a priority subject, including the allocation of appropriate resources, and the reinstatement of bursaries for RE teachers.

YOUTH

FAITH AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE YOUTH PROVISION

The Jewish community's provision for young people is highly developed and reaches at least 20,000 young people annually. This includes twelve youth groups, both denominational and cross-communal, which receive vital financial and strategic support from Jewish organisations such as the United Jewish Israel Appeal, along with a large network of youth groups operating within the strictly Orthodox community. These organisations are key to our community's investment in young people by helping them to develop skills, confidence and leadership for the future. Over 2,000 Jewish young people sign up for national volunteering awards each year – a number that continues to grow.

However, 65% of these young people say they struggle to find suitable volunteering placements, especially for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, owing to the lack of options permitting participants to observe Jewish dietary laws, the Sabbath or festivals. This highlights the need to review such schemes to ensure they can embrace the diverse cultures within today's society.

Charities like the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade have worked with award schemes to deliver faith-sensitive expedition training, assessment and accreditation. Similarly, the Interlink Foundation leads a consortium of eight youth organisations to deliver youth activities commissioned by public and voluntary sector institutions for young people in the strictly Orthodox community. These activities ensure that religiously observant young people have access to high quality opportunities for personal development.

The need for religious and culturally-sensitive services is especially acute for vulnerable young people including those facing domestic abuse, drug and gambling-addiction, debt and unplanned pregnancy. Whilst these problems are common across society, interventions in the Jewish context may require sensitivity to the religious and cultural context of the young people concerned. Charities like Norwood Drugline, the Boys Clubhouse and Noa have expertise in working with vulnerable young people whilst sensitive to their religious and cultural needs. Such religious and cultural sensitivity is particularly important for foster care. Foster agencies should seek to place Jewish children with families that can understand, respect and accommodate their individual levels of religious observance.

POLICY ASK: To advocate for good quality youth provision for all in society.

POLICY ASK: To support access to religious and culturally-sensitive services where appropriate, especially for vulnerable young people.

POLICY ASK: To offer financial assistance to faith charities whose interventions reach individuals which public bodies and secular charities cannot.

WOMEN

The Jewish community is focused on ensuring that the needs of women within our community and wider society are examined and supported. Organisations such as the League of Jewish Women, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance and United Synagogue Women, alongside the Board of Deputies' and the Jewish Leadership Council's Women in Jewish Leadership project, all support and further women's advancement and safety, both in the Jewish community and wider society. As in all sectors of society, some Jewish women suffer from domestic violence and abuse. Jewish Women's Aid is a charity that caters for the specific needs of Jewish women who have suffered, or are suffering, domestic abuse.

POLICY ASK: To work with UK civil society, including faith groups, to advance opportunities for women, voicing support for initiatives that take this forward.

POLICY ASK: To support efforts to tackle abuse and violence against women and girls.

WELFARE

LARGE FAMILIES

In some areas, particularly among the strictly Orthodox, the Jewish community is characterised by large families, which forms an integral part of their Jewish identity. When one or more principal earners in such a household becomes unemployed or incapacitated, the need and dependency on housing and welfare benefits can become acute.

Caps on benefits, including housing benefit, disproportionately affect families on low incomes. Where families with six plus children suddenly receive the same amount of certain benefit payments as families with three children, extreme hardship can rapidly follow.

The policy intention might be that welfare-dependent families living in areas of high housing costs might relocate to cheaper areas. This is not practical or realistic for Jewish families in London who have longstanding ties to their communities and families and whose way of life necessitates close proximity to community infrastructure like Orthodox synagogues, schools and kosher food.

Campaigning organisations like the Child Poverty Action Group have highlighted this issue, and the unfairness of penalising children because of their household-size and the impact of homelessness, overcrowding, food poverty and debt. This has affected many Jewish children and it is clear that welfare reforms need to take better account of larger families, whose religious or cultural needs make them less adaptable to certain kinds of change.

POLICY ASK: To recognise the needs of larger families whose religious and cultural needs make them less adaptable to welfare reforms. The benefits system needs the flexibility to better accommodate this part of the population, and the impacts of changes should be explored fully with communal representatives before implementation.

FOOD POVERTY

The Jewish community shares the wider public concern about the scale of poverty, including food poverty, in the UK. The Trussell Trust estimates that 13 million people live below the poverty line in the UK, and that more than 910,000 people (including more than 330,000 children) used a food bank last year.

The challenges facing Britain have inevitably affected the Jewish community in much the same way as it has the rest of the population. There are a number of Jewish food charities servicing both the Jewish and wider community. Charities, such as GIFT, deliver food parcels to families in need of assistance. In the meantime, the Jewish Social Action Forum takes a lead role in influencing national policy around food poverty.

POLICY ASK: To adopt policies which reverse the growing number of UK citizens living below the poverty line.

POLICY ASK: To seek to support institutions like food banks and other emergency food suppliers.

POLICY ASK: To ensure that there is provision for breakfast clubs in schools to ensure that vulnerable children are supported.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Like all other parts of UK society, the Jewish community has been affected by the economic downturn. Charities like TrainE TraidE and Resource: The Jewish Employment Advice Centre continue to offer a valuable service to people seeking work, whilst the Jewish Volunteering Network offers opportunities to people who want to offer their time whilst they seek work. Government efforts to reduce unemployment and support people in finding worthwhile long term jobs are vital.

POLICY ASK: To continue to tackle unemployment and support services that offer training, career advice and signpost job opportunities.

POLICY ASK: To support initiatives which tailor training to the needs of the individual.

HOUSING

In common with the wider UK population, there is a wide spectrum of housing need in Jewish communities. There are larger families seeking sufficient space for their families within walking distance of the community infrastructure upon which they depend, especially when other forms of travel are not permitted on the Sabbath or festivals. There are also young people looking to get on the property ladder, but struggling to find anything within their price range. For those who cannot yet hope to get on to the property ladder, there is the struggle and uncertainty of the unregulated rental market. Government intervention is necessary to help people with different housing needs to improve their circumstances.

POLICY ASK: To initiate an ambitious programme of house-building, including affordable and social housing. This should include provision for larger families within reach of Jewish communal infrastructure.

POLICY ASK: To impose greater regulation on the rental market to give protection to people in the private rented sector.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

SOCIAL CARE

Many Jews value the option of culturally-sensitive care when choosing a provider. For example, many Jews would prefer carers to offer meaningful experiences for Shabbat and other Jewish festivals, and the preparation of Kosher food requires both sensitivity and understanding.

The Jewish community has developed a market-leading care sector which embraces some of the best practices in social care. Examples are Jewish Care, Norwood, Agudas Yisroel, Nightingale Hammerson, Bikur Cholim, THEFED (Manchester), Langdon, Jewish Blind and Disabled, Birmingham Jewish Community Care, the Jewish Deaf Association, Merseyside Jewish Community Care, Kisharon, Jami and the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board.

The costs of these organisations can be higher than non-faith specific care organisations because of the increased costs of providing for Jewish observance including Kosher food. These organisations and their facilities are primarily funded by the Jewish community itself. However, local authorities often pay a significant share of the cost because these providers offer a service that no public body could supply.

POLICY ASK: To offer financial support to specialist care providers that cater for the religious and cultural needs of their clients.

Local authorities are sometimes reluctant to contribute to the care of a resident when the resident chooses to leave the local authority in order to obtain specialist, religious and culturally-sensitive care in a different local authority. Likewise the 'destination' local authority is frequently unwilling to assist funding a resident who has come from elsewhere.

This problem could potentially be resolved through the creation of a centrally-held funding source for citizens seeking to obtain specialist, religiously and culturally-sensitive care under the auspices of a different local authority.

POLICY ASK: To work with local authorities to ensure that people who need to obtain care from a specialist provider in a different local authority are able to do so, perhaps through the creation of a centrally-held funding source.



**COMMITMENT 8:
SUPPORT THE
PROVISION OF
RELIGIOUSLY AND
CULTURALLY SENSITIVE
YOUTH AND SOCIAL
CARE SERVICES.**



GENETIC SCREENING

Amongst the diseases known to be rare, and identified as genetic, there are several that are more common amongst Jews. The Jewish community welcomes the increased awareness of such diseases, and the emphasis given to the wide range of services needing to be taken into account when supporting the carriers of these diseases and their families.

Genetics and genetic testing is playing an increasingly prominent role in healthcare. From the Jewish perspective this has considerable impact – ranging from the increased incidence amongst them of infrequent lethal conditions, such as Tay Sachs disease, through to more common situations, such as in cancer screening, where Ashkenazi Jews are known to have a high frequency of mutations in the genes associated with breast and ovarian cancer.

The community believes that in addition to the support for long term care and treatment of those affected, preventive screening and research should be supported by the Government and the NHS.

POLICY ASK: To support the provision of appropriate care facilities for people with rare debilitating diseases and advocate for more extensive provision of appropriate genetic screening, and in particular for screening and support for populations at risk.

IMMUNISATION

Since the earliest days of vaccination in the UK, Jews have supported immunisation to prevent infectious diseases, particularly in children. There have, however, been some recent avoidable outbreaks in Jewish schools. These have been tackled swiftly and successfully as a result of collaborative initiatives between public health, local authority and Jewish community bodies. A key element was the social and cultural sensitivity with which this was handled. This sensitivity is crucial when working with Jews and other minorities.

POLICY ASK: To ensure that immunisation strategies are widely accessible, robust, and engaged with all religious and cultural groups.

AGEING

Judaism interprets the core Biblical commandment to 'honour and respect one's parents' (Exodus 20:12), and the instruction to "Stand up for an older person and show honour to the elderly" (Leviticus 19:32) as general standards for the treatment of older people.

This has particular bearing in 2015, when the Jewish community is noticeably older on average than the wider population. Only 12% of the total population of England and Wales is over 70 years old, compared with 15% of Jews, who also have a longer average lifespan.

However, there is a concern that society increasingly sees older people as a 'burden' rather than as an asset. Particularly with the challenges facing the National Health Service, there is concern that older people might be declined treatment or neglected, including their religious and cultural needs.

The Jewish community wants to see a concern for ensuring the inclusion of older people in terms of access to services, and also in terms of the social, cultural and spiritual life of our society, in partnership with the relevant agencies, organisations and community groups.

POLICY ASK: To ensure an affirmative attitude to older people.

POLICY ASK: To ensure that elderly people receive the treatment and care that they need in a religiously and culturally sensitive way.

POLICY ASK: To seek the inclusion of older people in terms of both access to services, and to the social, cultural and spiritual life of our society.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND END OF LIFE

Judaism upholds the principle of sanctity of life. When confronted with a seriously ill patient, the default Jewish option is a presumption in favour of saving life. At the same time, Judaism is also sensitive to the very real issues of suffering, and endorses palliative care, as defined by the World Health Organisation. Jewish teaching does not support futile treatment; but does regard a failure to provide for basic needs, including hydration, as unacceptably cruel.

This combination of values can directly influence patient care. They are of particular concern for people who do not have anyone to advocate for them; who have not signed advanced directives; or who do not have the capacity to give instructions. In these cases healthcare professionals may make decisions based on their subjective evaluation of "quality of life" without due consideration for patients' religious and cultural beliefs.

These questions are amongst the issues identified in the recent Department of Health report “More Care, Less Pathway: A review of the Liverpool Care Pathway”. The highly-regarded report of the Leadership Alliance for the Care of Dying People, which aims “to secure high quality, personalised care for everyone in the last few days and hours of life in England”, is to be commended for its approach.

POLICY ASK: To support the premise that religious, cultural and personal beliefs should be taken into account when making decisions in the final stages of life.

DEATH CERTIFICATION AND CORONERS' SERVICES

Jewish tradition requires that burial should take place as soon as possible after death, preferably within 24 hours. Funerals do not take place on the Sabbath or on Festivals, but take place as soon as possible afterwards.

Therefore, handling by the coroner – and death certification and registration by the local authority – should be concluded as expeditiously as possible. When there is any uncertainty about cause of death, and a death certificate cannot be issued, then in England and Wales the death is reported to the coroner who must decide whether or not to release the body for burial. Coroners may also order autopsies and initiate inquests.

This process can also be adversely impacted by no coroner being available ‘out of hours’; the absence of the appropriate doctor; or the lack of available facilities in local authorities for rapid registration. This can cause distress to bereaved families and can delay both the funeral and the traditional Jewish mourning process.

Standards across the country vary significantly, and the promised reform of the coroner system has not yet been fully implemented. A missing component is the appointment of medical examiners who will be able to expedite handling of registration and release of bodies for burial without undue delays.

POLICY ASK: To fully implement the Coroner Reform programme, and ensure that areas with high Jewish and Muslim populations have good ‘out of hours’ cover from all the necessary professionals.

ORGAN DONATION

In principle, Judaism encourages organ donation in order to save lives. Whilst, in Judaism, avoidance of interference with the dead body and rapid internment are prime concerns, each case is different. Where there is a possibility of organ donation it can be considered, particularly if these are the known wishes of the deceased.

Orthodox Judaism holds that organs may not be removed from a donor until death has definitely occurred, but there are varying views about what constitutes 'death'. Some traditionally-observant Jews accept the "brain stem death" criteria, and therefore the heart and lungs can be transplanted as well as other organs. Other Orthodox authorities will only agree to removal of organs from a "non-beating heart" donor, which reduces the range of usable organs.

In 2013, the Welsh Assembly passed a bill to introduce an 'opt-out' system of organ donation. The Jewish community expressed considerable concern about protecting the role of family consent throughout the development of this legislation.

In order to make it easier for Jews, and members of other faiths with similar beliefs, to donate their organs, a short statement has been drafted which commits to the principle of donation but clarifies that the potential donor and their family should be entitled to consult with their particular personal religious adviser before consenting.

The Board of Deputies prefers the continuation of an 'opt-in' process, with regular encouragement, to an 'opt-out' process. This is because the latter risks a person having their organs taken against their and their families' wishes, which could cause very grave distress to families of the deceased.

POLICY ASK: To support a process whereby the religious and cultural rights of Jews should be respected before organs are taken for transplantation.

AUTOPSY

Jewish tradition is that the body of the deceased should be buried without any undue interference. There is a strong preference for avoiding invasive autopsies, and consent is only given when there is clear evidence that the procedure will be of benefit. The exception being when the requirement for autopsy is legal, i.e. ordered by the coroner. This can occur where there is uncertainty as to cause, as well as when there is suspicion of an offence.

Recently there has been considerable public interest in the use of minimal invasive autopsy – where a computerised tomography (CT) scan is used – which has been validated in Government-funded studies. This technology is of value not only to Jews but also to the wider population, since the quality of this form of autopsy is as good – if not better than – conventional procedures.

However, minimal invasive autopsy is not available in many parts of the country. The costs are high and must be borne by the Jewish community, and in some jurisdictions, scans have not yet been accepted.

POLICY ASK: To support the drive to make minimal invasive autopsies more financially and physically accessible for investigations after death.

JEWISH CEMETERIES

Jewish Law prohibits interference with burial grounds or graves except in very limited circumstances. Accordingly, there is significant importance placed on the preservation, maintenance and protection of Jewish burial grounds. This is sometimes threatened by developers or geological issues, such as subsidence.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews, through designated-charity BOD Heritage, holds the titles of twelve disused UK Jewish cemeteries. In this role, it protects these cemeteries and ensures they are safeguarded from both desecration and physical dereliction.

The Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe, which campaigns for the protection of cemeteries in the UK and other European countries, continues to have serious concern regarding the desecration and destruction of Jewish cemeteries and mass graves, especially in jurisdictions which no longer have significant Jewish communities to advocate for communal cemeteries.

POLICY ASK: To advocate for the protection and preservation of Jewish cemeteries, both in the UK and in Europe, including through legislation and the safeguarding of funds

A photograph showing three men in white t-shirts and kippot (skullcaps) working together to pack food supplies into cardboard boxes. They are outdoors, with a corrugated metal wall on the left and a concrete floor. The boxes are filled with various food items, including cans, jars, and bags. The men are focused on their task, with one man in the foreground placing a package into a box. The overall scene conveys a sense of community service and support.

JEWISH VALUES AND CULTURE

SOCIAL ACTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Jewish community has a vibrant social action and social justice sector, committed to making the world a better place for everyone.

Whether through international development and relief charities like World Jewish Relief, Tzedek and World ORT; or through human rights charities like RenéCassin and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality; or through volunteering charities like the Jewish Volunteering Network and Mitzvah Day, the UK Jewish community strives to stand at the forefront of the global movement for change.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

The Jewish community supports the UK's commitment to 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) expenditure to go on international development work, as called for by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The UK Jewish community is proud of the generosity of our country and its leadership in this field, including its extensive support of international and local NGOs. In this complex field there is a need to continually review where taxpayer money is going, to ensure both value for money and that the funds are being targeted at genuinely beneficial causes.

POLICY ASK: To maintain an expenditure of 0.7% of GNP on overseas development.

POLICY ASK: To review development and aid expenditure, to ensure the best value for money and that funds are being targeted at genuinely beneficial causes.

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**COMMITMENT 9:
PROMOTE A MORE JUST
AND SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE IN THE UK AND
ABROAD; SUPPORTING
EFFORTS TO TACKLE
POVERTY, CLIMATE
CHANGE AND HUMAN
RIGHTS ABUSES.**

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THE ENVIRONMENT

A Jewish approach to the environment begins with Genesis 2:15, where it says, “The Lord G-d took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it”. In other words, humankind has been given custodianship of the planet by the Higher Power who is its true owner. Humankind should enjoy the World, but must take care of it.

Individuals must play their part, but only World governments can effectively tackle the threat posed by human-made climate change and other forms of environmental degradation and pollution; protecting water resources, reducing carbon emissions and encouraging the use of renewable energy.

POLICY ASK: To advocate and act for individual, nationwide and international efforts to tackle climate change; protect our environment and ensure the habitability of our planet for future generations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Numerous Jewish texts speak about the importance of caring for others and upholding their rights. Genesis 1:27 tells us that all people are created, “in the image of G-d”. If all humans are created in the ‘image of G-d,’ it follows that all human beings have an equal, innate dignity which must be respected.

Jewish thinkers, biblical ethics and the experiences of the Jewish people have been crucial to the development of human rights. Indeed, René Cassin, a principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, was profoundly influenced by the ethics of his Jewish background and the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. UK Jewish NGOs RenéCassin and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality continue to articulate Jewish human rights concerns.

The Jewish community applauds the UK for its actions to promote and protect human rights and making them part of its international agenda. As a community, we feel it is important for the UK to continue to advocate universal human rights both inside and outside its borders. Addressing issues of human rights abuses within the UK and the EU – such as modern slavery and human trafficking – is key to the continued advancement of mankind.

To give a few examples of human rights issues that particularly concern Jews:

- Jews and Roma were persecuted together during the Second World War, and continue to face abuse from extremists, especially in Hungary, but in other places too. Victimisation of the Roma needs to be tackled urgently.
- Every year, Jews across the World commemorate the experience of slavery through the festival of Passover. However, tragically, slavery is not consigned to the past. Modern slavery, including human trafficking, continues and must be stopped.
- Human rights abuses in conflict situations must be stopped.

POLICY ASK: To advance the cause of human rights in the UK and across the World.

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**COMMITMENT 10:
CELEBRATE AND
SUPPORT JEWISH
HERITAGE AND
CULTURAL
INSTITUTIONS.**

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IMMIGRATION

The Jewish community is, essentially, an immigrant community, arriving in the UK as either economic migrants or refugees fleeing persecution. As such, the Jewish community takes a particular interest in the plight of immigrants and asylum seekers, and shares a discomfort in loose, pejorative language that stigmatises new arrivals in this country.

The imperative to identify with the migrant is not new to Jews. In Leviticus 19:33-34 it is written, “If a stranger comes to live in your country, do not mistreat them...You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself, for you too were strangers in the Land of Egypt”.

The Jewish Council for Racial Equality, RenéCassin and the Jewish Museum London all have further resources and information about the Jewish migrant experience, and communal concerns about the language about, and treatment of, new migrant groups. The New North London Synagogue and the West London Synagogue run monthly drop-in centres for asylum seekers.

Even though some controls are necessary, our political leadership must be careful not to promote hatred or baseless suspicion towards migrants or asylum seekers, many of whom are vulnerable in a new and unfamiliar country.

POLICY ASK: To promote fair policies towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, takings pains not to encourage hatred or baseless suspicion towards these groups.

VOLUNTEERING

Charities like the Jewish Volunteering Network and Mitzvah Day are leading examples of how to manage and mobilise volunteers. Volunteers are a valuable asset to any charitable endeavour, but it is sometimes assumed that charities can fill budget gaps by using volunteers. However, those who successfully manage volunteers know that, whilst volunteers may save on costs, they are not ‘cost neutral’, because the training, managing and equipping of volunteers all require resources. Any public or private sector funding into the field of volunteering is extremely worthwhile, because it has a clear ‘multiplier effect’.

POLICY ASK: To support charities to improve and develop volunteering to enhance their capacity to achieve their desired results.

CULTURE

The flourishing UK Jewish cultural scene is testimony to a thriving and integrated community. Flagship cultural centres like the Jewish Museum London, the Manchester Jewish Museum, JW3, the London Jewish Cultural Centre, the Ben Uri Gallery and the Jewish Music Institute as well as festivals like Limmud, Jewish Book Week, the UK Jewish Film Festival, Gefiltefest, Klezmer in the Park and Chanukah in the Square, are a means of both celebrating the UK Jewish experience, and opening it to the wider community.

The Jewish Museum London, for example, plays a vital role in educating the wider, non-Jewish public and promoting good community relations through education about Judaism and the comparative experiences of the UK's migrant populations. The museum welcomes about 35,000 non-Jewish visitors each year, including 13,500 non-Jewish school children. However, in stark contrast to other museums in London and other Jewish museums in Europe, it receives no Government core-funding.

The Board of Deputies' Jewish Living Experience is an exhibition which travels the country giving schoolchildren and the wider public information about the Jewish way of life. The Board of Deputies always welcomes the opportunity to bring the exhibition to new places, and MPs should feel free to inquire about bringing it to their own constituencies.

POLICY ASK: To support Jewish cultural institutions, raising their profile through prominent visits.

POLICY ASK: To make funds available to faith-based cultural bodies and events which promote knowledge, understanding, good relations and integration between different religious and ethnic groups.

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