



# **Inspiring Women Leaders:** Advancing Gender Equality in Jewish Communal Life

The Report of the Jewish Leadership Council's  
Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership

**Cover photo:** Members of the Commission and representatives of other UK Jewish organisations supporting the 'Women on the Bridge' Campaign on International Women's Day, Thursday 8th March 2012

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Designed by Chris Laver: 020 7729 8833

Printed by Drakeford Press: 01707 275 275

Printed on recycled paper.

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# Foreword



The work of the Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership (CWJL) has taken over 18 months. Its recommendations have been approved by the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) Trustees and the next step is implementation. Its very existence has already taken the community forward in recognising the need for and the benefits of gender equality. The Women's Movement will not be radically altered by our work but we firmly believe that the efforts of the CWJL have brought the issue into sharp focus in the British Jewish community and that the new momentum will propel us ahead.

The report and outcome of the Commission has depended on a large group of people and organisations. The staff of the JLC especially Claudia Mendoza, Helen Myer, Kate Shorts, Jenna Warner and Arieh Kovler have been pivotal. Sarah Abramson at the Board of Deputies (BoD) conducted the initial research and guided the early days. The dozens of people involved in our Working Parties, research and open meetings all played an important role.

My fellow members of the Commission: Hester Abrams, Simi Ben-Hur, Norma Brier, Lucille Cohen, Dalia Cramer, Debra Fox, Nicky Goldman, Sarah Kaiser, Leonie Lewis, Steven Lewis, Claudia Mendoza, Abigail Morris, Jeremy Newmark and Michele Vogel have all contributed their time and expertise and I am hugely grateful to all of them for their knowledge, patience, good humour and determination.

I would also like to thank the staff and trustees of Mitzvah Day who have carried the load whilst I have worked on the Commission, and my family, Dan, Louis, Sally and Raphi who have tolerated a huge extra burden for over a year. I hope that my three teenagers personally reap the benefits of a more inclusive, equal Jewish society.

Finally, I want to thank Michelle Terret and Judith Mizrahi for conducting our research, and Miriam Rich for ensuring visible media coverage. Above all my gratitude goes to Leah Warren, our energetic, efficient, demanding and always so kind project manager.

The input from the community and our organisations has been enormous and generously given and there is an expectation of change. We hope and believe that the recommendations strike a balance, that they are sufficiently focused to drive a transformation yet able to accommodate the very varied demands and outlooks of our community.

**Laura Marks**

Chair, Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership  
Senior Vice President, Board of Deputies of British Jews  
July 2012

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# Executive Summary

It seems clear that the UK Jewish community makes it hard for the kind of high achieving and well educated women who thrive in secular life to take on leadership responsibilities within it. In contrast to the wider ‘third sector’<sup>1</sup>, Jewish charitable organisations have very few women in leadership roles despite exceptionally high levels of achievement and education<sup>2</sup>.

Four-fifths of a large sample of both men and women in the British Jewish community surveyed in February and March 2012 demanded change in the gender balance of our organisations<sup>3</sup>, statistically signifying clear support for a pro-active and long-lasting agenda for change now proposed in this report by the Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership (CWJL). Evidently this state of affairs resonates strongly with our community. The Commission takes this and other research data from both organisations and individuals as a broad mandate of support from across the community, and it now looks to leaders and to our organisations for implementation.

The CWJL was set up by the JLC in early 2011 to recommend ways of advancing more women to senior paid and voluntary roles in the community. It now calls on the community publicly to acknowledge that the current state of affairs is unsustainable, to pledge to make changes that will create equal opportunities for women and men and to act to promote more women to leadership positions.

The CWJL accepts the reality that our community, being relatively conservative, prefers evolution to revolution, and that it would prefer to move slowly. The recommendations seek to work within this reality, while noting that the gender imbalances in our leadership are a pressing matter of equality and social justice. There is also a compelling need to address the issues raised by this inquiry before another generation, particularly of young women, becomes alienated, and their talents are lost to the community.

The Commission limited the scope of its attention to voluntary (‘lay’) and professional leadership roles in Jewish communal organisations. The terms of reference were tightly defined in order to be realistic about opportunities for change. Some other, related issues which were relevant only to certain sections of the community were frequently raised by members of the public and acknowledged in the Commission’s deliberations (such as helping women back into work, men and leadership, women and reading from the Torah) but have purposely not been followed through with specific recommendations in this report as they fall outside the remit of the CWJL. The issues of women leading synagogue boards and educating children about gender equality form a recommendation for future work as they are key to meeting our remit long term but are beyond our specific brief or expertise. Other areas of diversity and equality, such as age or disability, were not part of our remit.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, R. *Close to Parity: Challenging the Voluntary Sector to Smash the Glass Ceiling* (2012)

<sup>2</sup> Marks, L, Kovler, A & Abramson, S. *Gender Imbalance: The Status Quo* (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership (CWJL) Online SurveyMonkey Survey (2012)

The CWJL's recommendations cover Governance, Personal Development, Networking, Communications and Other (comprising ideas which do not fall into any of the other four categories).

At the heart of the recommendations is a recognition that change needs to come from women themselves, both individually and collectively; from the Jewish community's organisations and institutions and also, from schools and youth organisations. Before change can take place in organisations, they need to recognise where and when there is indeed a problem.

To drive the specific recommendations under the five headings introduced above, the Commission recommends the establishment of a group of lay leaders, to be known as the Equality Support Group (ESG), housed in an existing organisation, which will monitor progress and ensure that we move forward on this vital issue. The focus is on '*tachlis*' (action/substance) not talk.

## SECTION ONE

# Recommendations Summary

- The CWJL recommends the establishment of an Award which acknowledges agreed change rather than absolutes and which recognises through varying levels of achievement those organisations that move towards gender equality. The establishment of an Award system for communal organisations will evidence the importance of this issue within the Jewish community. An Equality Support Group (ESG) will monitor the Award (and long term change) and will be based within an existing organisation.
- The CWJL recommends that a module on gender equality be developed and integrated into existing communal training courses as this will maximise coverage with minimal cost. This will be developed and funded by LEAD: Jewish Leadership Excellence and Development (a project of the JLC) and implemented by interested organisations.
- The CWJL recommends a training day for people/organisations involved in communal leadership programmes to address this issue. Part of this programme will introduce the Women in Leadership module. This will be developed by LEAD and funded by participating organisations.
- The CWJL proposes a mentoring pilot in late Summer 2012 for ten mentees (half lay, half professional aspiring leaders), whilst a full programme is developed. This will be set up initially using expertise in LEAD and in Jewish Care.
- The CWJL proposes a course to run in Spring 2013 for senior professional women, consisting of six seminars to address the issue of gender. Participants will be nominated and funded by their own organisations.
- The CWJL proposes the establishment of several women's networks and others may evolve over time. These will be led and funded by organisations including TrainE-TraidE (an organisation helping people towards financial independence), the New Leadership Network (NLN - an informal network, supported by the JLC, of senior professional and lay leaders in British Jewish organisations), the Jewish Volunteering Network (JVN), the Board of Deputies of British Jews and others.
- The CWJL recommends further work to better understand issues relating to students and schools. This will be initiated by the CWJL team alongside existing bodies operating in these areas.
- The CWJL will continue to support and encourage other organisations with their ongoing campaigns for gender equality and to promote women to leadership positions.
- The CWJL recommends that change is monitored and encouraged over time to ensure that the issue remains live.

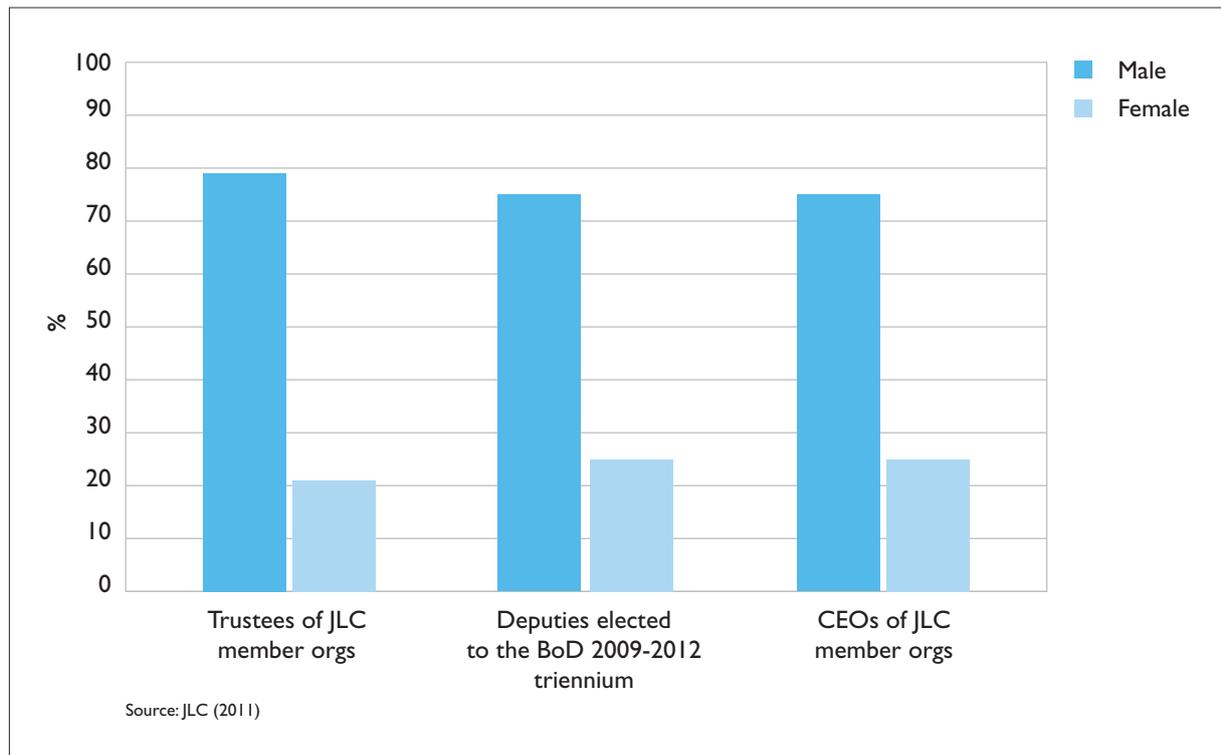
SECTION TWO

# Is there a problem?

The Jewish community currently benefits from the volunteered time, skills and energy of some seven in every 10 of its women<sup>4</sup>. The CWJL figure that shows 72% of British Jewish women currently define themselves as volunteers for Jewish organisations, is a gratifying one.

The Jewish community has highly educated and high achieving women<sup>5</sup>, yet figures released in June 2011, shortly after the Commission's inception, identified that women accounted for less than a quarter of the paid senior managers of our largest community organisations. These figures also demonstrated that women took far fewer senior voluntary roles than men.

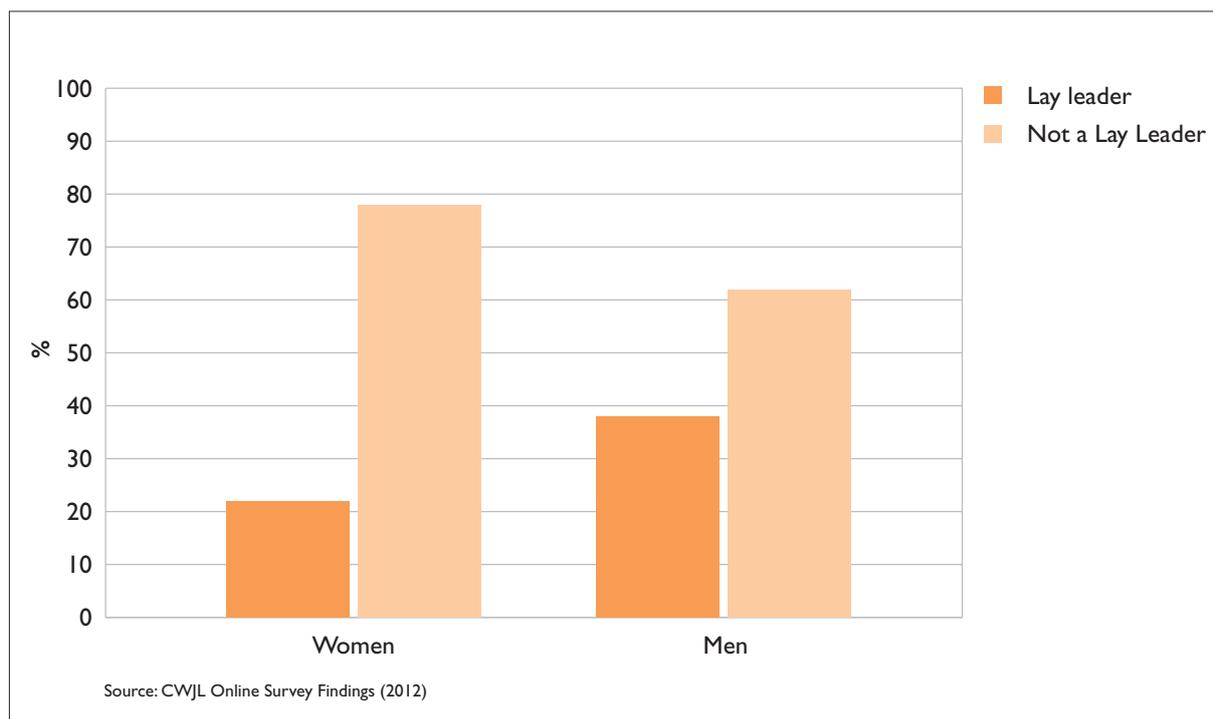
## Women in leadership roles - lay and professional positions



<sup>4</sup> CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012). Available to view at [www.thejlc.org/portfolio/commission-for-women-in-jewish-leadership/](http://www.thejlc.org/portfolio/commission-for-women-in-jewish-leadership/)

<sup>5</sup> Marks, Kovler, Abramson. *Gender Imbalance*

## Lay leaders by Gender



About one in three men who responded to the Commission's survey qualified as a communal 'lay leader' compared to approximately one in five women. If we are to take our survey respondents as a representative community sample, this would suggest that there are almost twice as many men in lay leadership roles as women.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to consider levels of leadership; many more women chair committees than men, yet do not sit on governing bodies, such as executive boards or boards of trustees. This imbalance is particularly evident in synagogue volunteering roles, where women lead smaller communal initiatives but men occupy more board positions. Men are far more likely to hold positions of power, influence and traditional status, such as founders, presidents, vice-presidents, trustees, or governors of Jewish organisations.<sup>7</sup>

Our community's poor record of equality can be contrasted with the statistics from the 2011 report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Sex and Power*, which revealed that 48% of professional leaders of registered charities in the wider community are women.<sup>8</sup>

This issue is not limited to older people. The Union of Jewish Students (UJS) has elected just three women presidents in 30 years<sup>9</sup>, suggesting that patterns of gender inequality not only start early in life, but have become entrenched over generations.

<sup>6</sup> CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Sex and Power* (2011)

<sup>9</sup> Union of Jewish Students (UJS) records, based on conversation with UJS Communications Director

## SECTION THREE

# Does it matter?

Britain's Jewish community has challenged the status quo and demands change. The Spring 2012 online survey conducted for the Commission found over 80% of respondents, male and female, either strongly agreed or agreed that 'women should hold more communal leadership positions in the Jewish community'.

## 'We need more women in communal leadership'

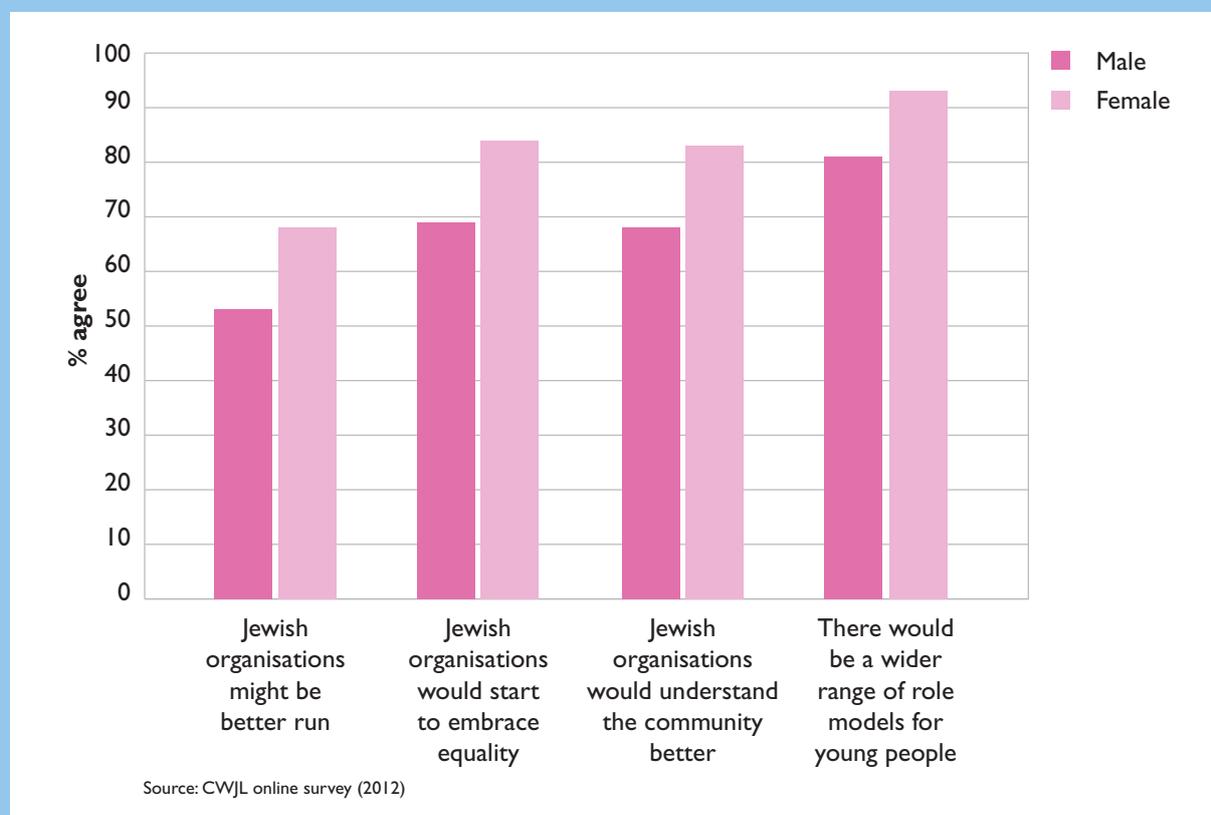
<b>TOTAL (agree)</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>87%</b>

'This is about bringing a broader skill set into communal leadership.'<sup>\*</sup>

*'[We must] ensure that the significant skills and abilities of women are captured through their participation in senior roles in the community (lay and paid).'*<sup>2</sup>

**'It would be great to see more young women given a chance to get involved and help in the community.'**

## Possible benefits of more female leadership



<sup>\*</sup> All quotes taken from CWJL Online Survey (2012)

The number of people participating in the mainstream UK Jewish community is at best, static. By not actively supporting and not recognising the value of our women, we are potentially sitting as silent bystanders as up to half the community 'opts out'. The 2009 Report, 'Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak Out' formed the context for this Commission and stated that '...we cannot hope to educate and motivate the next generation of children if we do not educate and inspire their parents'.<sup>10</sup>

When seeking funding, help and support, our organisations need leadership that is effective in appreciating the issues facing us and in creating solutions. Such leadership requires the engagement of a wide range of people, including women. Indeed in 2011, 'Women on Boards', also known as the 'Davies Report'<sup>11</sup>, concluded that boards are more effective when led by a diverse group of leaders, and which include women in greater numbers.

Beyond all these practical benefits there is the philosophical and moral imperative for equality and social justice.

Finally, and crucially, without female role models it is hard to see how the community can attract the next generation of leaders, either male or female. Our women play a key part in bringing up our children, and they teach them life-long values. While what women say carries weight, what they do and are seen to do, carries more.

With balanced leadership, we will be a stronger, more effective and forward looking community.

**'Jewish women have spoken out .... The voices you heard .... illustrate the perceived gulf between women's achievement and aspirations in secular life and their Jewish communal and spiritual experience. Women highlight the fact that we may have become complacent about what it means to be truly inclusive.'**<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Aleksander, T. *Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak Out*. Board of Deputies of British Jews (2009)

<sup>11</sup> Davies et al, *Women on Boards* (2011) <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Aleksander: *Connection, Continuity and Community*

## SECTION FOUR

# What is holding women back?

Despite a high level of communal engagement, our women are simply not filling our senior leadership roles. Through its research, the Commission has identified several factors which are contributing to this gender imbalance:

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### OUR WOMEN DON'T FEEL VALUED

Regrettably, many of our women feel unwelcome, superfluous and generally undervalued in leadership circles<sup>13</sup>. This inhibits their desire to be part of them. Their own experiences, and stories they have heard, of working inside the male-dominated senior echelons of our community are off-putting. An established, albeit sometimes unspoken, sexist attitude continues to pervade this arena. Women in all organisations experience barriers caused by sexist attitudes and practices<sup>14</sup> - the Jewish community is no exception.

***'Once I was in and it was filled with the same typical men, I was just a token.'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

*'They appreciate you only if you agree with them.'*

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

***'I did it once - volunteered - and that was the last time. There was no recognition and no appreciation. I'm sure a man would have been treated differently.'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

***'The community organisations expect everything and don't appreciate the really important things.'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

***'It's a different type of people in the community, predominantly men. They have been doing it for years, so what could I add?'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

***'I am a professional and bring incredible skills I believe but it is all about bureaucracy and getting things for free. I just don't need that.'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

***'So I speak out but if I am the only woman I may be acknowledged but not really heard.'***

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

*'I was once giving a presentation and was the only woman on the panel and someone in the audience asked, "why are there no women involved in this issue?" Clearly I was invisible.'*

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

<sup>13</sup> CWJL Qualitative Research Report (2012)

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, R. *Close to Parity*

## 2

**WOMEN ARE OUT OF THE LOOP**

In the Jewish community there is a large population of skilled and motivated women who are simply not aware that opportunities exist for voluntary leadership within the community. It is unclear to them how they can contribute their professional or specific skills and experience for the community's benefit. This is despite the fact that many occupy senior professional and voluntary roles outside the Jewish community, across a range of sectors.

The availability of leading roles as trustees or honorary officers of important communal bodies is often not communicated to women, so they do not put themselves forward.

This results in a struggle to find suitable women to fill leadership roles, particularly in unpaid positions, with fewer female applicants for senior placements. Both women and men find themselves volunteering if they are asked to, but as many women are juggling work and family responsibilities, they prefer to offer their skills to answer a specific need and not to take up more general roles that may in fact entail more responsibility.

Similarly women, and many men, will not compete for a position<sup>15</sup> - especially a lay role - which further limits their ability to take top roles.

Crucially, this is not about lack of skill. Only 3% of women surveyed saw women as lacking the skills needed and a similarly low figure actively reject volunteering in Jewish organisations<sup>16</sup>. They are simply not asked to complete the right tasks in the right way.

**'For every five men, there is only one woman interested.  
So if we're looking for one trustee...it can be difficult.'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

**'We really do actively look for women,  
but many are just not interested.'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

**'Interested? Sure, but no-one has  
ever approached me.'**

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

**'We have approached women to add to our Board and have so far not succeeded.'**

MAN, PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL LEADER

<sup>15</sup> CWJL Qualitative Research Report (2012)

<sup>16</sup> CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012)

# 3

## FAMILY COMES FIRST

Family underpins modern Jewish life, and it is women who often compromise most in order to manage this successfully. Our community's focus on family is clearly our strength, but it does limit women in leadership. Of those in our survey who do not volunteer in the community, 25% attributed their not participating to family responsibilities. Women will need support and encouragement if they are to play a full part in the Jewish world outside the home.

The timing, locations and sheer length of volunteer meetings often conflict with family duties. The majority of our organisations offer some flexible hours for their professionals<sup>17</sup>, but the same practices typically do not exist for lay leaders. More consideration given when structuring business to the time pressures faced by volunteers with family responsibilities would encourage greater participation in leadership.

**'I just "love" the fact that they have meetings on Sunday - very convenient for women with kids to taxi around and football to attend!'**

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

**'I have been unable to take on so many roles in my synagogue because of childcare - so many committees are dominated by retired people who just don't think about it.'**

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL AND LAY LEADER

**'If qualified women do not, for a whole range of reasons, have the time to dedicate to voluntary charitable work, there does not seem to be much our organisation can do in terms of recruiting them. Change has to come from within the family...'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

**'Most women have more than just a job to juggle, there just isn't time for everything.'**

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

**'The length of meetings is ridiculous with very few action steps taken.'**

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

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<sup>17</sup> CWJL Organisational Survey Report (2012)

## 4

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MONEY AND POWER**

With the exception of care organisations, the Jewish community largely funds itself; the need to raise funds for our organisations is irrefutable. Many of the individuals who lead our community are themselves its major individual donors. In the majority of cases, they are men.

This raises the question of the role of donations as such a major criterion for being appointed to leadership. Few people interviewed believe that leadership is defined by 'being the biggest funder'<sup>18</sup>; they would prefer our organisations to recruit leaders with a wider range of skills in order to satisfy the needs of the operation. But there is a perception that in the leadership cadre of our community, senior management experience and talent gained in other fields of work, or particular skills in advocacy, communications or negotiation or the ability to inspire others, count for less than the ability to donate personal wealth and to raise money from others. This is felt to be of particular relevance to the Jewish voluntary sector.

'Money and leadership need to be separated, fundraising is a part of the organisation, not its entirety.'

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

***'It takes very different skills to lead than to make money.'***

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

**'Trustees of Jewish charities tend to be large donors; I am involved in several. In the past there has been very little recruitment of trustees based on skills in my experience. It is worrying that charities involved in development work do not attempt to attract trustees who are skilled professionals with development experience, be they men or women.'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

**'Yes, I am a successful woman at my work and I have a strong network but in the community, I don't have the connections, I'm not that involved and it's all about connections.'**

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

**'It is just easiest to go to people you know and like to ask for money, so men go to men.'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

<sup>18</sup> CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012)

# 5

## PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP

Women who are in senior communal roles are less likely than men to refer to themselves as leaders. The term 'leadership' is not engaging for many women, and men, too, feel that it does not inspire their female colleagues. To many it implies a long-term passivity and inertia, involving little action and too much talk about trivial details<sup>19</sup>. Women often do not, therefore, actively target 'leadership' roles, preferring just to get on with the voluntary tasks that need doing.

**'Leadership is off-putting; it is associated with an old way of doing things. Lots of talk and no action.'**

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

***'The word "leadership" is not necessarily motivating either...It makes me think of a few gentlemen at the top making decisions and then informing everyone else...Making decisions but not leading people.'***

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

***'There is a lack of women role-models for up-and coming/potential women leaders. I strongly believe that more women in leadership roles would lead to more women in leadership roles - "she has managed it, so can I".'***

WOMAN, SURVEY RESPONDENT

# 6

## WOMEN LACK CONFIDENCE IN THE JEWISH SETTING

There is no evidence that Jewish women lack the skills to lead - far from it. However, in the current environment they lack the crucial combination of confidence both in themselves, and in the community, to make the transition to leadership roles. Nearly 40% of our sample cited this as a barrier for women - one of the biggest barriers we encountered. If our community is to benefit from the involvement of women, we must create a climate in which they feel supported and encouraged to contribute.

More women in communal leadership would provide a wider range of role models for young people. Our current shortage of senior women is a very clear barrier to younger women progressing in communal roles.

***'I think there is a confidence issue and the fact that often women are not expected to take a leadership role. Because there are relatively few women in a leadership role, often meetings may be attended by many men and some women feel uncomfortable being in a minority, often of one. They also feel intimidated in such a situation from expressing their views.'***

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

**'Women don't have the confidence because men dominate the discussion.'**

WOMAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

***'Funny - I don't know, it just feels like I would not be able to do it in the community. In my neighbourhood organisation it is different, a more diverse group so we all add something.'***

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

<sup>19</sup> CWJL Qualitative Research Report (2012)

## 7

**ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT TO WOMEN**

There is a widespread belief that our organisations are not committed to promoting women. Nearly 60% of women surveyed saw this as the greatest barrier to women taking leadership roles. This is reinforced by the large majority of organisations investigated during a separate stage of background research for the Commission, which identified gender imbalance as an issue particularly affecting lay roles.<sup>20</sup>

The community has a large number of women working as executive directors or chief executives in smaller organisations but, like in the USA, men dominate the higher paid jobs in the community.<sup>21</sup>

*'I think that there is an unspoken presumption that women cannot rise to the very top - a "soft floor, hard ceiling" atmosphere. Women are encouraged to get involved, but then get stuck in (professionally) middle-management and (lay) sub-committees. Women who do well are admired but their success rarely replicated. How many women in leadership, on leaving that position, are replaced by another woman?'*

WOMAN, SURVEY RESPONDENT

## 8

**ROLE DEFINITION AND RECRUITMENT**

In voluntary or lay positions, role definitions and development paths are often much less clearly defined than in professional positions.

The perception is that few organisations look at the skills lacking among the individuals on their boards that are needed to meet 'business' objectives and then recruit for candidates possessing those skills.

When considering who might be appropriate for lay leadership roles, formal recruitment procedures are rare and monitoring is minimal. Those who recruit in their own image rather than rigorously defining skills and recruiting to fill them perpetuate gender inequality in our organisations.

As a result, the leadership of our community does not benefit fully from the greatest diversity of background, skills and experience of candidates, and fails, typically, to recruit women of calibre.

*'I guess I do have the skills but that is only recognised in the professional world. At work I am asked to be on certain committees. In the community, well, I guess I'm just a mum that works.'*

WOMAN, NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY

*'No one has ever even discussed leading something... it's more about me attending and making up a table.'*

WOMAN, LAY VOLUNTEER,  
NOT CURRENTLY HOLDING A LEADERSHIP ROLE

<sup>20</sup> CWJL Organisational Survey Report (2012)

<sup>21</sup> *Creating Gender Equity and Organizational Effectiveness in the Jewish Federation System: a Research-and-Action Project*, Advancing Women Professionals (2004)

# 9

## VARYING INTERPRETATIONS OF HALACHA

As a faith community, many of our religious and cultural traditions treat men and women differently. Some Jewish women lack the religious education of men and many feel disempowered by traditional practice, despite the best efforts of educators.<sup>22</sup>

In the more orthodox part of the community there is a view that halacha is being used by some inappropriately to keep women from leadership roles. Without an in-depth knowledge of Jewish legal practice, which can be both empowering and effective, women are unable to question its impact on the way some of our organisations are structured and operate. The CWJL research found that nine in ten people believe women should be able to chair the boards of synagogues<sup>23</sup>. A halachic reason for their exclusion has not been credibly communicated.

**‘My Rabbi may listen but at the end of the day - he doesn’t want to challenge the community customs.’**

WOMAN, LAY VOLUNTEER, NOT CURRENTLY HOLDING A LEADERSHIP ROLE

**‘Tradition dictates, not law. We need to know that to break the habits of tradition.’**

MAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

**‘Why do women ask the Rabbi and men discuss with the Rabbi? A different stance completely.’**

MAN, PROFESSIONAL LEADER

**‘When did minhag (tradition) become halacha (law)?’**

WOMAN, LAY LEADER

# 10

## ADDRESSING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOLS

It is imperative that our children are educated on the issue of gender equality and women’s roles within the context of the Jewish religion. If girls are to grow up to take responsibility and ownership of the community and its leadership roles, we need to carefully consider role modelling as well as formal teaching in our schools to challenge stratified perceptions of what men and women can do and to stop these from being entrenched from an early age. 90% of those surveyed who currently volunteer in schools, thought that we need to educate children about gender issues to bring about change.

**‘We must target our children in Jewish schools. We need to engage girls, mothers and daughters at a young age, inspiring them with positive role models and building meaningful connections with them.’**

WOMAN, OPEN MEETING PARTICIPANT

<sup>22</sup> Aleksander: *Connection, Continuity and Community*

<sup>23</sup> CWJL Quantitative Research Findings (2012)

## SECTION FIVE

# The demand for change

In a superbly developed, close-knit faith community, it is easy, as organisations and individuals, to rest on our laurels and celebrate how well the status quo has served us over the years.

Many of our communal leaders are unwilling to challenge established practice for the purpose of promoting equality. Some dismiss the matter as simply not a problem. They choose not to acknowledge or engage with it, barely hearing, let alone heeding, the arguments which demonstrate that more women in leadership positions will benefit everyone. The failure of community leaders to make a high priority of redressing the gender balance in our organisations has ensured that change cannot be made. To assert that 'we recruit the best person' is inadequate unless placed alongside a real understanding of why women rarely succeed in being 'the best person'.

More worryingly, the CWJL survey found that this attitude, common though it may be in the higher echelons of community organisations, is quite out of keeping with public sentiment. The survey found that not only do 80% of people want change, but that 35% believe the only way to achieve it is by setting quotas to ensure women take up leadership roles - a radical approach by any measure. A substantial 56% believed that targets are essential<sup>24</sup>.

Women bring different and complementary skills to community matters and the best person needs to be measured against a wide set of criteria.

Those organisations more actively seeking women in order to achieve balance and diversity often fail to find well qualified women for many of the reasons already cited.

**'We really are interested but the pool of women coming forward is significantly smaller than the men, thus there are fewer to choose from.'**

MAN, LAY LEADER

<sup>24</sup> CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012)

## SECTION SIX

# The way forward - key principles

1

### WOMEN MUST HELP THEMSELVES

*'The most effective way to do it, is to do it.'*

AMELIA EARHART

We acknowledge that change cannot be effected without the actions of women themselves. We must motivate and empower ourselves, and recognise that if we care about our community, we must prioritise it. We must ensure that women who wish to, have the skills, confidence, contacts, opportunities and information to take on leadership roles effectively.

85%\* of people surveyed felt that leadership programmes for women could drive change.

2

### WOMEN MUST HELP EACH OTHER

*'There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women.'*

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

We acknowledge the role of the community of women in effecting change. We must create an environment in which our women are supported and nurtured by their peers, within structures and systems which recognise their particular needs and strengths. We must create spaces for our women to interact, network, share good practice and celebrate success.

83%\* of people surveyed supported mentoring programmes and a similar number, networks for peer support.

3

### A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE ORGANISATION

*'It is clear that boards make better decisions where a range of voices, drawing on different life experiences, can be heard. That mix of voices must include women.'*

LORD DAVIES OF ABERSOCH, WOMEN ON BOARDS, 2011

We acknowledge the success of our communal organisations. Yet, if our organisations are to work most effectively for the benefit of their community, they must be modern, representative and inclusive. They will need to maximise the input from every potential leader, including women. Finding the best person for the job is a prerequisite, but for long-term sustainability, we must also put gender on the organisational agenda.

85%\* of those surveyed rising to 89% of women believe that organisations should be actively recruiting women for senior roles.

## 4

**EDUCATION IS THE WAY AHEAD**

*'Women regard education and effective educators as the means by which to ensure the future vitality of the community.'*

'CONNECTION, CONTINUITY AND COMMUNITY: BRITISH JEWISH WOMEN SPEAK OUT', 2009

We recognise that stereotyping, understanding social justice and equality and long term perspectives are set early and that role models and education play a vital role. Jewish education and its role in the creation of positive gender frameworks is vital. Similarly, recognising the potential role of our schools and youth movements in fostering or challenging gender stereotypes is essential.

85%\* of those surveyed thought the way ahead is through education about gender equality - a figure which rises to nearly 90% in those volunteering in schools.

## 5

**NOT ALL WOMEN WANT LEADERSHIP ROLES**

**There are some groups deserving special focus:**

1. Young people leaving education and working in the secular world.
2. Women with highly honed skills moving out of full time work.
3. Women working long term in the Jewish community professionally, especially those who have never worked outside.
4. Women in high-powered jobs who want to use their skills and give something back.

\*All figures taken from CWJL Online Survey Findings (2012)

## SECTION SEVEN

# Recommendations in detail

The CWJL has divided its recommendations into five broad categories: Governance, Personal Leadership Development, Networking, Communications and Other. All recommendations include points on both strategy and implementation. Although our suggestions for implementation are focused on the London community, all recommendations are designed to also work regionally.

Implementation mechanisms will be refined in Autumn 2012.

## I. PERSONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### a. Women in Leadership module

- Many training programmes already exist in the Jewish community.
- Leadership programmes are required to build specific skills and, more importantly, confidence, encouraging and enabling women to apply for and succeed in both lay and professional leadership roles.

**THE CWJL RECOMMENDS** that a module on gender equality be developed and integrated into many of these existing courses, as this will maximise coverage with minimal cost.

- The module will be flexible and can be modified to maximise its relevance.
- The module should include fundraising as a key element in communal leadership.
- This recommendation will be achieved as follows:
  - Jewish leadership programmes will be mapped and contacted.
  - The Leadership Development Working Party (LDWP) of the CWJL will be reconvened by LEAD who will oversee the development and distribution of the module (September - November 2012).
- Costs associated with this include fees to trainers to run modules through LEAD.

### b. Training for trainers

- Gender equality is not high on the communal leadership skills agenda.
- The trainers within the community are a key resource for implementation and development of skills, and for driving awareness.

**THE CWJL RECOMMENDS** a training day for people/organisations involved in communal leadership programmes to address this issue. Part of this programme will introduce the Women in Leadership module.

- The seminar will be organised and facilitated by LEAD and supported by CWJL, and the aim is to hold it in Autumn 2012.
- All costs will be passed on to the delegates attending and kept to a minimum.

**c. Mentoring**

- Mentoring is a tried and tested way to encourage women to take and succeed in leadership roles both lay and professional.
- This works particularly well when the mentoring includes 'sponsorship', ie. active encouragement and support.
- There are many different groups who could benefit from mentoring, at different levels and in different areas.

**THE CWJL PROPOSES** a mentoring pilot in late Summer 2012 for ten mentees (half lay, half professional aspiring leaders), whilst a full programme is developed.

- This will be run by LEAD in partnership with communal organisations, particularly Jewish Care.
- The CWJL will have a fully developed mentoring programme in place by early 2013.

**d. Skills training for communal professionals**

- There is a need for skills training for women working in professional roles in communal organisations if they are to realise their full potential.
- Certain key skills for development have been identified, including negotiation skills, fundraising, confidence building and advocacy.

**THE CWJL PROPOSES** a course to run in Spring 2013, consisting of around six seminars to address this issue. Participants will be nominated and funded by their own organisations.

- This will be run by LEAD in partnership with communal organisations.

**II. NETWORKING**

- Networking has become more professional and acknowledged as the traditional 'old boys' network declines. Nonetheless, women network less effectively than men, especially in the context of 'business'.
- Networks work where the members perceive a clear benefit to themselves. Whilst the communal agenda is increased involvement, donation or advocacy, women themselves may have little time or interest and may need to be asked to do something more tangible to bring them to the table.

**THE CWJL PROPOSES** the establishment of several women's networks leading to the development of more over time.

**a. Young female communal professionals**

- This network will be initiated by a group of young women professionals and supported by LEAD and JVN.
- The young women will be those who aspire to leadership roles and will be selected by their peers.
- The perceived benefit will be in making contacts, in finding new jobs and being introduced to people beyond their business network.
- A Facebook group will be established as a start point and the first meeting will be diarised by September 2012.
- Costs will be managed. Venues and speakers will be donated.

**b. Senior female communal leaders (both lay and professional)**

- This network will provide women in the most senior roles with personal support in a very male dominant environment.
- Sessions may involve speakers on topics relevant to this group.
- The needs of the lay and professional women may be slightly different and the network may, on occasion, need to split.
- The network will be encouraged to support emerging female leaders, to consider strategies to do this and to act as role models and mentors.
- There must be awareness of and allowances made for the many renowned senior communal leaders who operate outside London. They must not be excluded.
- The New Leadership Network (NLN) will hold an initial meeting in July 2012 to discuss this network.
- Costs will include hosting an event and project management, absorbed initially by the NLN.

**c. Young women in business**

- Women working in the commercial world have little reason to engage with issues of communal leadership but are crucial in the long term.
- This network, facilitated by TrainE-TraidE, will provide young Jewish women with an opportunity to network with like-minded young women and to benefit from exposure to business opportunities and contacts otherwise unavailable to them.
- It will be largely peer led, and high profile, dynamic women will engage with these leaders of the future.
- There must also be recognition of the large contribution by young women who have grown up in locations outside London and have moved to the capital; they must not be excluded.
- The first session will take place in Autumn 2012 and the CWJL will support TrainE-TraidE with contacts and speakers, and will monitor its progress.
- Costs will be absorbed by TrainE-TraidE.

**III. GOVERNANCE - THE AWARD FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

- Jewish organisations are at very different start points with regard to implementing 'gender equality' policies.
- Communal targets or quotas would be inappropriate as each organisation will need to work to its own agreed targets and timetable. This does not preclude further debate on communal targets.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS** the establishment of an Award which acknowledges agreed change rather than absolutes and which recognises through varying levels of achievement, organisations that move towards gender equality. The establishment of an Award system for communal organisations will evidence the importance of this issue within the Jewish community. Quality Awards are common within organisations and the currency will be understood.

- The initial Award will be achieved by organisations who support a statement of commitment to advance gender equality, and who agree to benchmark themselves and set goals along criteria including:
  - Recruitment policies and systems for professional roles which are transparent, compliant with legislation and include a gender equality statement.
  - Recruitment policies and systems for lay leadership, which evidence a commitment to gender equality by being inclusive of women.
  - Policies that aim to accommodate the challenges faced by women in the workplace.
  - A board member (or equivalent) charged to take responsibility for progress on gender equality.
  - Engagement with the Commission's recommendations on leadership development specifically for women.

- It is recommended that:
  - An Equality Support Group (ESG) be established, consisting, minimally, of an independent Chair; a JLC trustee, a CEO, a CWJL member; a CWJL member and a senior member of the Board of Deputies, supported by a part-time project manager. A transparent recruitment process for this should take place within an agreed time frame and it is anticipated that the ESG Chair will be appointed by Autumn 2012.
  - The ESG will finalise the criteria and the system for organisations to be granted the Award, and will invite them to start the sign up process. Discussions would take place individually with each organisation.
  - Therefore, each organisation will have its own benchmark, against which progress will be measured. This will be agreed individually with the ESG.
  - Organisations will be monitored annually by the ESG to ensure that they are working towards the criteria and to renew the Award.
  - There should be regular coverage in the community and the press to ensure that the campaign is integrated into communal organisational policy.
- The objective is that all major organisations, including JLC member organisations, will be members of the Award scheme by 2014, or as otherwise agreed, and will maintain their membership annually.
- Costs associated with this include some staff time required to work with the ESG to meet the demands of organisational membership. The ESG will ensure this is kept to a minimum. A part-time project manager for the ESG will be the only additional cost.
- The ESG could be monitored by the Board of Deputies assuming that sufficient funding can be found.

#### IV. COMMUNICATIONS

- The issue of gender equality has now been put on the communal agenda and needs to be kept there if change is to be effected. This requires a considered programme of communications.
- The successful implementation of the recommendations depends on effective communications: it is critical that examples of good practice and progress are highlighted, not only to engage and motivate individuals but also to keep the community informed about relevant changes and opportunities.

**THE CWJL RECOMMENDS** an ongoing programme of communications which is required to maintain momentum and to drive the campaign.

- The achievements of women are often less celebrated than those of men, and in order to develop strong role modelling, this needs to be addressed. A defined communications programme would remedy this and maintain the momentum towards positive change.
- Women are less vocal and far less inclined to offer their opinions publicly, and the programme of communications needs to encourage women to write, speak and to be seen.
- In order for this to be professionally managed, a part-time PR professional should be employed to work alongside the existing CWJL Communications Working Party.

## V. OTHER

### a. Schools

- The CWJL has identified a recurring theme - the role of schools - in perpetuating or breaking down gender stereotyping. This is in the context that many of our schools have powerful female professional and lay leaders.
- For change to take place in bringing more women into leadership roles, a long term strategy may be required.
- The CWJL will convene an initial group, and will meet with the new Partnerships for Jewish Education Division of the JLC (PajeS) to discuss taking this forward.

### b. Students

- The CWJL has identified a specific issue amongst students, and particularly student leadership, with only three women taking the role of UJS President in 30 years.
- The CWJL proposes a working party be set up immediately with students, UJS and associated organisations, to consider strategies for change and for empowering our young women.

### c. Minchag and Halacha

- The CWJL is aware that within the community, there are many different issues relating to gender, leadership and interpretations of Jewish law. This has been raised at all levels during the consultation.
- Whilst this is beyond the remit of the CWJL, it is recommended that we remain connected to all sections of the community and the issues faced by women within them.

### d. Supporting other organisations

- The CWJL will continue to support and encourage other organisations with their ongoing campaigns for gender equality and to promote women to leadership positions.

### e. Regional roll-out

- The CWJL recommendations will be circulated to all regional Representative Councils including Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, and to other organisations who would be interested in becoming involved.
- A practical example of how this could work is the creation of a Manchester women's professional network developed by the Representative council and the UJIA, and involving the current UJIA leadership trainees as a start point.
- By December 2012 the CWJL will publish a regional implementation strategy in key areas.

### f. Project management

- The CWJL recommends that part-time project management be established to co-ordinate the ongoing work associated with these recommendations, including:
  - Taking overall control of all administration and co-ordination relevant to the ESG and its implementation and monitoring of the Award.
  - Working with a PR professional to develop a communications strategy and work on its implementation.
  - Maintaining a central database of all relevant communal statistics and communications.
  - Convening meetings of the CWJL to monitor ongoing progress and provide input and support.
  - Working directly with the Chairs of both the ESG and CWJL to ensure that all projects are progressing.

### g. Monitoring

- The CWJL recommends that the effects of the recommendations are monitored over time.

## APPENDIX A

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## APPENDIX B

## Commission members

Laura Marks	Chair, Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership. Senior Vice President, Board of Deputies of British Jews. Founder, Mitzvah Day.
Hester Abrams	Director, Jewish Book Week. Deputy for Brondesbury Park synagogue. Invited Executive Committee Member, Board of Deputies, 2009-2012.
Simi Ben Hur	Public Affairs Manager, CST. Co-Chair, Adam Science Alumni (ASA).
Norma Brier	Interim Executive Director of Services, Scope, formerly Chief Executive, Norwood.
Lucille Cohen	Immediate past President, Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester and Region and Hon. Research Fellow, Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Manchester.
Dalia Cramer	Co-Chair, US Women. Member, US Trustee Board.
Debbie Fox	Vice-Chair, Jewish Care. Founding member, New Leadership Network.
Nicky Goldman	Director, LEAD: Jewish Leadership Excellence and Development (a project of the JLC).
Sarah Kaiser	Diversity Projects Manager, The Tate. Formerly Director, René Cassin.
Leonie Lewis	Director, JVN.
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Jeremy Newmark	Chief Executive, JLC.
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**Commission Staff**

Helen Myer	Head of Operations, JLC.
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## APPENDIX C

# Process and methodology

The Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership (CWJL) was established in June 2011 by the Jewish Leadership Council to try to address the gender imbalance in communal leadership, calling on the community to publicly acknowledge the status quo, and to work to encourage more women into leadership positions.

Autumn 2011 saw the Commission produce a summary of both the research on this topic and an analysis of the current situation. This document was entitled *Gender Imbalance: The Status Quo*<sup>25</sup> and was circulated to the JLC member organisations, its trustees and throughout the wider Jewish community. This initial review revealed the unequivocal fact that our women are underrepresented at leadership level, and laid the foundations for the consultation that followed. The consultation phase of the project was launched in early February 2012 and ran for approximately eight weeks, until the end of March. During this time the Commission convened four Working Parties to focus on recommendations, and conducted several elements of qualitative and quantitative research.

## WORKING PARTIES

To consider recommendations, the Commission sought the input of professional and lay leaders across the community, establishing four Working Parties to focus on different issues: Governance, Leadership Development, Building Networks and Communications. The members of the Commission suggested potential participants for each Working Party and all four met between 1-3 times, initially to propose recommendations (based on the preliminary research) and subsequently to revise these, based on direct feedback from the research process.

## RESEARCH PROCESS

### Online Survey

The CWJL survey was launched online using SurveyMonkey, and distributed to over 50 Jewish communal organisations to send out to the public.<sup>26</sup> The survey was also marketed through social media channels, and was live for two months, from the beginning of February to the end of March 2012, and had over 1,600 responses. Approximately 75% of respondents were women, and 25% were men<sup>27</sup>. Technically, these findings are not statistically significant, as the Jewish UK population is approximately 50% men, 50% women; nor do we have exact numbers of those involved in Jewish organisations to claim that our numbers were representative of those involved, though they seemed high.

Respondents ranged in age from 15-85. About 17% were under 30; another 38% were aged 30-50, and 45% were aged 51+. Respondents lived across the UK with 67% living in the Greater London area and a few abroad. Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents were married, in a civil partnership, or in a relationship. About 41% had a child or children living at home; 30% had no children, and 29% had a child or children no longer living at home. 62% defined themselves as 'broadly' Orthodox and 38% were 'broadly' Progressive (as defined by this research) in line with the UK Jewish population.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Marks, Kovler; Abramson. *Gender Imbalance*

<sup>26</sup> 66 Jewish organisations received an online link to the survey

<sup>27</sup> 1,166 respondents were women and 396 were men. The remaining 74 respondents chose not to divulge their gender

<sup>28</sup> Graham, D. and Vulkan, D. *Synagogue membership in the United Kingdom in 2010*. Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (2010)

The resounding feedback from the survey provided sustainable evidence to support the Commission's goals, and helped to move the process forward as it fell broadly in line with existing data and our qualitative research.

For more demographic statistics, please review the quantitative research report produced by the Commission.

### **Organisational Survey**

Over 70 communal organisations nationwide were asked to complete an organisational survey on gender inequality and best practices in the community. Over half of these organisations returned completed documents. For more information please review the organisational research report produced by the Commission.

### **Focus Groups**

There were two focus groups with senior female communal professionals (one in London, and one in Manchester) and there was an additional group with senior female lay leaders (in Manchester only). All three focus groups took place at the beginning of March 2012.

At the beginning of each group, following introductions, respondents read through a one page summary of the Gender Imbalance document, which highlighted statistics regarding the inequality context today. Subsequent to this, respondents were asked to consider what they felt were the barriers holding women back from reaching the senior roles. Finally, all were asked to comment on the first draft versions of the CWJL's recommendations.

### **One-to-one Interviews**

The CWJL also conducted 14 individual interviews. The selected interviewees fell into the following four categories: senior male lay leaders, senior male professional leaders, young female professional leaders, and senior Jewish women who hold high-powered roles (both lay and professional) outside the community, but who choose not to participate in any communal leadership capacity.

The format for these interviews was similar to that of the focus groups, but also included open discussion of personal experience and perspective on women in leadership.

### **Open Meetings**

A session at Limmud 2011 offered participants the opportunity to hear about the work of CWJL and to comment on associated issues. Three months later, the consultation phase ended with two open meetings, one in London and one in Manchester, across which 150 people attended and contributed. Both were publicised widely, via the survey, emails, press and social media. Each event started with a panel of Jewish women who have transcended the communal glass ceiling in order to reach senior roles. This was followed by an opportunity for any attendee to have their say and input into the work of the Commission.

### **Consultative Groups**

During the consultation phase, our early thoughts and draft recommendations were shown to a number of consultative groups, including the Zionist Youth Council, The Chief Executives Forum, The JLC Chief Executives Consultative Group, and United Synagogue women.

This report brings together both the research and the recommendations. Over 2,000 people have contributed their time, energy and consideration to this project and all of our recommendations have been carefully constructed in response to this.

The recommendations were presented to, and approved by, the JLC Trustees group on Friday 25th May 2012.

All supporting research reports can be sourced on the JLC website at [www.thejlc.org](http://www.thejlc.org)

## APPENDIX D

# Working Parties and Acknowledgements

## WORKING PARTIES

### Governance

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Karen Mattison MBE  
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Tamra Wright

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Jessica Levy  
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Nicola Mendelsohn  
Ben Rich  
Miriam Rich  
Hilary Rosen

**We would also like to thank the following people and publications who dedicated time and gave support to the Commission:**

Gloria Abramoff  
Paul Anticoni  
Sharon Bannister  
Bill Benjamin  
Jon Benjamin  
Richard Benson  
Rabbi Shoshana Boyd-Gelfand  
Linda Boxer  
Dina Brawer  
Rabbi Dr Naftali Brawer  
Shifra Broznick  
Gita Conn  
Tracy Cooper  
Dalia Davis  
Mick Davis  
Ilana Fenster  
Doreen Fine  
Tracey Fine  
Helen Fitton  
Jenni Frazer  
Susan Freeman  
Jennifer Gerber  
Daniel Grabiner  
Michael Grabiner CBE  
Rabbi Deborah Kahn-Harris  
Jeremy Jacobs  
Juliette Johnson  
Flo Kaufmann JP  
Hazel Kaye  
Maureen Kandler  
Elaine Kerr  
Debbie Klein  
Jo Krasner  
Doug Krikler  
David Janner-Klauser  
Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner  
Naomi Landy  
Nigel Layton  
Irene Leeman  
James Libson  
Daniel Marcus  
Oliver Marcus  
Jo Masters  
Helena Miller  
Simon Morris

Bernie Myers  
Deborah Nathan  
Rabbi Julia Neuberger  
Leo Noé  
Stephen Pack  
Karen Phillips  
Jenny Pizer  
Karen Pollock  
Ros Preston OBE  
Rabbi Danny Rich  
Gerald M. Ronson CBE  
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Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks  
Marlena Schmool  
Sylvia Sheff  
Debbie Sheldon  
Raymond Simonson  
Karen Solomon  
Lorraine Warren  
Carole Weinberg  
Stephanie Wilkes  
Vivan Wineman  
Joy Wolfe MBE  
Anna Wolman  
Suzi Woolfson  
Rabbi Alexandra Wright  
Shraga Zaltzman  
Dr Raphael Zarum

Members of the Chief Executives Forum  
JLC Chief Executives Consultative Group  
Mazkirim of the Zionist Youth Council  
The Trustees, Members and Vice-Presidents of the JLC

The Jewish Chronicle  
The Jewish News  
The Jewish Telegraph

**We would also like to thank**

- The JLC Trustees and over 100 individuals who donated funds to the Commission.
- The focus group participants and interviewees who wish to remain anonymous.
- Everyone who filled in the survey or participated in one of our open meetings.
- Everyone who wrote to us directly, providing suggestions and offering support.

Thank you to the following organisations for their support:



The Jewish Leadership Council exists to strengthen the major institutions of British Jewry, to promote cooperation between them and to help the leadership of our community articulate a confident and compelling narrative of mainstream Jewish life in the United Kingdom.

**Council of Members:**

Assembly of Masorti Synagogues - Bill Benjamin  
The Board of Deputies of British Jews - Vivian Wineman  
BICOM - Poju Zabłudowicz  
Cross Communal Group - Brian Kerner  
Community Security Trust - Gerald M. Ronson CBE  
Jewish Care - Steven Lewis  
The Jewish Community Centre - Deborah Klein  
LEAD - Nigel Layton  
Leeds Jewish Representative Council - Hilton Lorie  
Liberal Judaism - Lucian J. Hudson  
Manchester Jewish Representative Council - Frank Baigel  
Movement for Reform Judaism - Jenny Pizer  
New Leadership Network - James Libson; Steven Lewis  
Nightingale Hammerson - Harvey Rosenblatt  
Norwood - Bernie Myers  
Partnerships for Jewish Schools - Jonathan Goldstein  
Spanish & Portuguese Jews Congregation - David Dangoor  
United Jewish Israel Appeal - Mick Davis  
Union of Jewish Students - Alex Green  
United Synagogue - Stephen Pack  
World Jewish Relief - James Libson  
WIZO UK - Michele Vogel  
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**Chair of the Council of Members:** Vivian Wineman

**Chief Executive:** Jeremy Newmark MCIPR



London Open Meeting, 22 March 2012

Panelists (left to right) Jenni Frazer, Maureen Kendler, Tracey Fine, Lisa Ronson, Steven Lewis and Laura Marks

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**JEWISH LEADERSHIP**  
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ISBN 978-0-9567664-4-1



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