



# Board of Deputies of British Jews

Response to the  
Commission for Integration and Cohesion Consultation

*'Your Chance to Tell Us What You Think'*

January 2007

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## **1. The Board of Deputies of British Jews**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews was founded in 1760. It is the main representative body of British Jewry and is constituted of 300 Deputies democratically elected by synagogue congregations and communal organisations.

This includes members from the majority of Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Liberal synagogues, as well as representatives from the major welfare, education and cultural associations.

## **2. Context: A Picture of the British Jewish Community in 2007**

Today there are approximately 300 000 Jewish people in the UK, two thirds of whom live in London and the surrounding regions.<sup>1</sup> In the 2001 Census, for the first time, a question was included about religion, enabling the Board of Deputies' Community Policy Research Unit (CPRU) to establish a number of comparisons with other groups, for example the age profile of the Jewish community is older than that of the general population and Jews are more likely to live alone. However, the census also highlighted diversity within the Jewish community, showing that Jews in Britain are demographically, economically and educationally heterogeneous.

Another trend is also apparent. Jews identify in many different ways. Some Jews no longer see their identity as religious but rather prefer to identify as part of an ethnic group<sup>2</sup> whilst others prefer to identify solely as a religious group. Having said this, most Jews appear to be comfortable describing their identity as both religious and ethnic. This is a reflection of society's general move towards multi-dimensional identity structures.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics [ONS]: Census (2001)

<sup>2</sup> Jews are defined as an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act following the ruling in Seide v Gillette Industries Ltd [1980] IRLR 427, EAT

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Jewish Policy Research [JPR]: Census 2001 Data Analysis, Graham, Waterman & Schmool, (provisional title, due to be published April 2007)

*The Board of Deputies welcomes this consultation process: we hope that our response will be useful to the Commission and those responsible for deciding future strategy.*

### **3. Introduction**

In 1996, the philosopher Avishai Margalit published *The Decent Society* in which he defined a society as ‘decent’ if ‘its institutions do not act in ways that give the people under their authority sound reasons to consider themselves humiliated’. He also described two categories of decent society: one is a tolerant society that ‘acquiesces in competing ways of life’ but ‘does not see the value in such diversity’; the other is a pluralistic society that ‘not only tolerates competing ways of life, but considers their very existence an important value’.<sup>4</sup>

Jews were readmitted to Britain 350 years ago and ever since the British Jewish community has been driven by the values of active citizenship, social responsibility, tolerance and respect.

The Board of Deputies welcomes a public debate about cohesion and integration and the need to sustain shared values, promote good community relations and equality. However, we would not want this to be at the expense of the principle that Britain is and should be a ‘pluralistic society’. Britain’s very diversity is one of its major strengths.

‘Integration’ and ‘cohesion’ are terms that must be used carefully in promoting diversity within a framework of common shared values.

The contributions minorities make to British society need to be recognised and welcomed. Those promoting cohesion and integration must have a clear awareness and understanding of cultural sensitivities and respect the dignity of difference so that their work does not have the opposite effect to that intended. In this response we will promote the notion of engagement between the different communities and groups that make up British Society, while arguing for a ‘national identity that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions long found in the United Kingdom’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Crick, *Crossing Borders: Political Essays* (London: Continuum, 2001) commenting on his notion of citizenship as described in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (The Crick Report) (London: QCA, 1998).

## **4. Key Points**

### **General:**

- Faith communities tend to be heterogeneous rather than homogenous and the diversity of all faith communities must be recognised.
- Public policymakers need to be cultural sensitivities in developing policies that promote cohesion and integration. This can only be achieved through promoting shared values whilst acknowledging the positive contribution that the diverse minority make to Britain.
- Government must be sensitive, astute and acknowledge that integration takes time. The Home Office has acknowledged in the past, one size does not fit all and a tailor-made approach to cohesion is needed. Inequality and poverty need to be tackled to achieve social cohesion.
- The Government has provided welcomed support for voluntary sector initiatives and worked in partnership with them in building cohesion through a variety of programmes. However, the public sector needs to encourage the sustainable of these projects and good practice by focussing on both a long term strategic framework and longer term funding cycles for these projects.
- There is a need to understand the complexity of religious belief and faith communities and their different needs. In addition, there needs to be an acknowledgement by policymakers that communities have a wide range of views on many issues.
- There are many instances where ethnic and faith minority communities work together on issues where we are all affected. However, while sometimes communities and individuals within them agree on issues, sometimes they disagree. The essential thing is to build a framework for open and respectful dialogue where good relationships are maintained through better communication.
- It is evident that British citizens increasingly have multi-dimensional identities. In particular more work needs to be done to explore the relationship between faith and ethnicity.

### **Specific:**

- The Jewish community is diverse.
- The Jewish community sees itself as simultaneously a people, faith and ethnic group. It is not useful to compartmentalise these identities.
- British Jewry has developed over several centuries a notion of 'integration without assimilation'.
- Jewish experience of immigration shows that integration can happen but takes time, in particular in terms of institutional development.
- The Jewish community promotes inter and intra communal initiatives on a number of levels in the areas of social cohesion, education, community development, interfaith relations, social action and welfare. Strategic national, regional and grassroots projects exist that are supported by the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Rising numbers of antisemitic attacks is a concern that needs to be tackled.
- The Jewish community is keen to promote good community relations.
- Jewish schools can be agents of social cohesion and promoters of active citizenship.

## **5. What does ‘Cohesion and Integration’ mean to the Jewish Community?**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews accepts that there are many different definitions of the terms ‘cohesion’ and ‘integration’.

In essence, cohesion is a process of binding society together through a set of shared values and principles whilst reducing inequality. Integration is seen as a way to that process which creates a framework for cohesion that both endorses a shared sense of belonging and respect for the diversity that exist within that society.

We agree with a Home Office paper that states that necessary to “develop more sophisticated, tailored approaches to meeting the specific needs of different minority communities, and to focus on those groups who still suffer particular disadvantage rather than treating all minority groups as disadvantaged or having the same needs. This is the time to move on from one-size-fits-all approaches<sup>6</sup>”

British Jewry has developed over several centuries a notion of ‘integration without assimilation’. It has a strong British identity with a long history of full participation and interaction within British Society. It shares universal values such as the rule of law, participation in the democratic process and the need to contribute to society at large. At the same time, it has wished to preserve its own sense of tradition and religion but in doing so has added a British flavour to its communal and religious institutions<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society 2005

<sup>7</sup> The Prayer for the Royal Family that has been said each week in British synagogues for centuries, the United Synagogue’s Authorised Daily Prayer Book and the establishment of the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth can be seen as examples of this.

## **6. Promoting Inclusive Notions of Citizenship, Identity and Belonging**

The Board of Deputies welcomes inclusive notions of citizenship, identity and belonging. The United Kingdom is made up of diverse communities with different religious, ethnic, national, socio-economic and ideological backgrounds. Those communities can only co-exist through a mutual respect for each other and shared values such as an adherence to the rule of law and a democratic system of Government.

Integration can only be achieved through equality and interaction. This means that all people have to have the equality of opportunity in terms of education and access to the labour market. Interaction can only occur through respect for the diversity of cultures that make up the United Kingdom and the promotion of good community relations. Government and communities need to work in partnership to promote a greater understanding for the traditions and cultures of communities residing in the United Kingdom.

The experience of the Jewish community is that it is possible for British values and a British identity to co-exist alongside the practice of Judaism and a Jewish identity.

Members of the Jewish community feel integrated into British society. There is a general feeling within the community that British Jews have access to the institutions of society on the same basis as other members of society. Nevertheless, we recall that historically the community had to fight for the right to enter many of these institutions, including Parliament, local government and the Universities, which Jews were barred from entering until the abolition of the statutory restrictions during the nineteenth century.

The Jewish community believes that it has made a valuable contribution to Britain in such fields as business, the arts, academia, politics and philanthropy. In terms of giving back to society, members of the community have set up a multitude of philanthropic foundations which support the arts, social welfare, educational and medical institutions. In times of war British Jewry has heeded the call to arms to defend this country. In all, the community takes pride in its contribution to Britain.

The community has well-established and well-developed communal institutions that are distinctively British and Jewish in character (welfare institutions, philanthropic bodies, representative and religious bodies, education establishments etc.). But it must be borne in mind that Jews returned to Britain in 1656, and that these institutions have evolved over many decades (in the case of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Chief Rabbinate of the British Commonwealth, over centuries). It has taken our community a long time to develop a distinctively British Jewish ethos, one which has absorbed many of the characteristics of the wider British society, whilst still retaining historic Jewish traditions and values. This experience shows that it is possible to have a strong British identity whilst retaining our Jewish traditions.

It is essential to recognise that newer communities need time to develop their institutions and their own sense of British identity that respect their community traditions. The Government can foster and encourage that development, but

it is bound to take several generations before new immigrant communities feel a sense of belonging and attachment to this country. Shared values are needed to create a cohesive society, but this means that all sections of society should feel that they are part of the process of developing these values. The Jewish community feel that they are part of that process.

The process of identifying, articulating and promoting shared values is a complex one. One starting point may be the values held by different faith communities. Despite the diversity of faiths, experience shows that many concepts and aspirations are similar in different faith traditions. This may therefore be a more fertile starting point than efforts to identify shared political or legal values. In some cultures respect for the law, democracy or tolerance have very different meanings and implementation from the way we perceive and maintain them in the UK. This would seem a fertile area for dialogue between Government and faith communities.

In the meantime the Government needs to utilise the education system to promote a sense of Britishness. The Board of Deputies welcomes the duty to promote social cohesion that the Education Bill (2006) placed on schools and we support the notion of teaching 'British values' as part of Citizenship Education. However, we would like to see an inclusive concept of Britishness which highlights the diversity of this country and the input of many cultures and communities to the success of this country. The history of the United Kingdom is the history of these islands and also the history of all the communities which have settled here. This inclusive approach will mean that all young people have a sense of belonging. However, in the long term young people will feel more of a sense of belonging when they consider that they have equal opportunities in schools and the labour market.

Finally, the Board heeds to the advice of Alec Ward, a survivor of Auschwitz living in the UK, who observed on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day 2007:

I believe society is like an orchestra. If we were all the same instrument it would lead to a cacophony of noise. However, if you have different instruments in an orchestra, you can create a beautiful melody. Society needs different people to make it rich<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hmd.org.uk/>

## **7. Building Cohesive Communities**

The Jewish community is keen to promote good community relations. The community has developed formal and informal groups to dialogue with other communities. The Board of Deputies plays an active role in the Inter Faith Network, the FCCC, Religious Education Council and the Commission for Racial Equality's Safe Communities as well being involved in many other national and strategic initiatives, including the DfES Faith Providers Group and the DCLG Muslim-Jewish Steering Group.

There are a growing number of groups that focus on promoting greater understanding between the Jewish community and other faith and ethnic groups. These groups include the Council of Christians and Jews; Maimonides Foundation; Three Faiths Forum; Jewish-Muslim Forum in Hackney; Aliph-Aleph; Indian-Jewish Association; Jewish Council for Racial Equality; and various Black-Jewish forums.

These groups are designed to promote understanding and respect. In some cases they have led to the building of practical partnerships dealing with regeneration issues. In all cases these groups are committed to promoting the betterment of the community and society. We believe that these initiatives should be backed up with proper public support.

Many Synagogues have relationships with other faith communities in their area and are involved in local interfaith and social action projects (see below: Local Initiatives).

The Board of Deputies has a Jewish Way of Life exhibition that has been running for over twenty years. This exhibition travels around the country promoting Judaism in a positive light to children of all religions and breaks down pre-conceived stereotypes. The effectiveness of this exhibition was recognised by the Home Office, when the Board successfully received a grant from them under the Positive Images programme of its Race Equality Grant scheme in September 2003.

Civil renewal is an area in which the Jewish community has been involved for decades. In 1885 Lord Rothschild and others formed the Four-Percent Industrial Dwellings Company, which aimed to charge fair rents and build flats that were large enough to house families in more than one room. The largest of a series of tenement blocks built by the company were the Rothschild Buildings on Flower and Dean Street in central London, clearing an area known as 'the foulest and most dangerous in the whole metropolis'.

Currently, there are several examples of Jewish welfare organizations working in partnership with local authorities to promote urban regeneration e.g. two recent housing projects by Agudas Israel Housing Association in Stamford Hill. Also the community has been involved in promoting community services in partnership with local authorities e.g. Jewish Care (Scotland) Day Centre in Glasgow. In other cases individual members of the community have been involved in urban regeneration.

Jewish Women's Aid works to support women and children experiencing domestic violence. When there is spare capacity at the refuge, they offer accommodation to non-Jewish women of any ethnicity, nationality or religion. To quote from a report by JWA's representative to the Board of Deputies:

Our staff work hard to give a temporary non-Jewish woman a positive experience so that she feels integrated for the period that she is resident. Whilst the woman is in the home she is included in all the services that are available to other residents and no distinction is made. It is also hoped that she will take with her an informed demystified view of the warmth and culture of the Jewish way of life.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lorna Cohen, Jewish Women's Aid's response to the Board of Deputies internal consultation in preparation for this report (January 2007).

## **8. Local initiatives: the growth of national and local interfaith and inter-cultural groups**

The Jewish community has been engaged in a process of interfaith dialogue for decades. Essentially, the foundations of interfaith dialogue in Britain stems from an initiative established between Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz and Archbishop William Temple during the Second World War. The two leaders saw an urgent need to develop this dialogue in the light of the tragic extermination of Jews that was occurring in Europe at that time.

The two religious leaders established the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) in order to promote better understanding between the two faiths. The Presidium of the CCJ includes the leaders of major Christian denominations, the Chief Rabbi and Chief Executive of the Movement for Reform Judaism.

Whilst the initiative was set up on the highest level, the group established branches throughout the UK. Today, there are 3500 members and 53 local branches working towards the aim of bettering understanding in counteracting prejudice and intolerance.

The development of local activism is an important lesson. The engagement between local leaders and others broke down barriers and promoted respect in the face of centuries of animosity between the two faiths. In developing local relationships, it was easier for the faith communities to communicate and act together where there was a common ground.

It appears that where there is better communication between different groups then tensions could be resolved quickly when triggered.

The CCJ has served as a model for other groups. Other groups that have used similar local models to the CCJ are the Three Faiths Forum. This specialises in a three-way dialogue between ‘Abrahamic faiths’, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

More recently, there has been much greater involvement from the public sector in interfaith activities. This has seen the establishment of several Interfaith forums that are either set up by or have participation from local councils or the police representatives. This appears to be effective. Some research has been conducted into this by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Recent interfaith and intercultural forums are not necessarily set up to discuss “religion” or “faith” issues. The Jewish-Muslim Forum in Hackney avoids discussion of theological differences and was set up primarily as a channel of communication between the two communities living in Hackney. This is the first forum to be set up in order to promote a dialogue between the strictly Orthodox (Haredi) community in Stamford Hill and the mainly Indian Muslim community in the area.

On several occasions this group has helped quell tensions rapidly between the Jewish and Muslim groups. It has helped to develop links between the two communities and focussed on joint local initiatives in terms of looking at the issues of social deprivation and local regeneration.

All around the country there are new schemes that are aiming to bring together faith groups.

By way of example, there is an innovative proposal to build a Multifaith Centre at the University of Surrey in Guildford with specific facilities for Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists that was endorsed by both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi last summer. This builds on their already existing Multifaith Chaplaincy project. In Bristol there is a proposal to have a Muslim-Jewish radio station.

In the words of Francis Berry, the Rabbi of the Bristol and West Progressive community:

“Salaam-Shalom Radio [is hoped] to help Jews and Moslems work together to explore shared values and express themselves, so as to build understanding and engender mutual respect. We think that when people work together creatively, technically and socially their negative preconceptions and stereotypes will be dispelled. We can thus steer people away from extremism.”

Interaction of this nature is a key to promoting better understanding between communities.

Local inter-communal groups are agents of integration and should be encouraged. In some cases these groups have been supported through public funding. However, it seems that funding is often very short-term and some important projects with no staff are not getting the funding they need.

## **9. Jewish schools as agents of social cohesion and promoters of active citizenship**

There are around 120 Jewish schools in the UK (all but one are in England), 39 of these are Voluntary Aided. Jewish faith schools date back to the eighteenth century and were used initially to integrate waves of immigrants into British society in a culturally-sensitive way.

Today, Jewish schools promote an ethos of social cohesion and citizenship. Jewish schools in the UK, while primarily serving as a place for children to learn about their Jewish heritage and culture<sup>10</sup>, have at the same time a track record of promoting diversity and social cohesion.

Jewish schools are also a place for British acculturation. A recent straw poll of Jewish primary schools revealed that 12-16% of children do not have English as their home language. British Jewish schools are known for their comprehensive intake and their ability to cater for pupils from a wide range of social-economic backgrounds. All teach social responsibility, multicultural education and active citizenship and are frequently lauded by OFSTED for achieving these goals in addition to their high academic standards, for example in Autumn 2006 *Yesodey Hatorah* a school for strictly-Orthodox Jews in Stamford Hill, received full marks in its OFSTED inspection for social cohesion and citizenship.

The Board of Deputies contends that through the teaching of Jewish societal values and a commitment to teaching citizenship these schools have an excellent record of producing well-rounded and integrated citizens.

### *Response to DFES Faith Summit*

The Board of Deputies prepared a co-ordinated response to the DFES Faith Summit in December 2006 in consultation with the Agency for Jewish Education, Leo Baeck College (JCDSAB schools), Jewish Secondary Schools Movement, Menorah Foundation, Manchester Mesivta and other communal bodies.

This response contended that Jewish Schools are already agents of cohesion and promoters of active citizenship as these are classic Jewish values. Jewish schools already have an ethos in keeping with the definition used by the Department for Communities and Local Government that

- a) 'Education is a fundamental tool in promoting positive values and a common identity as it shapes the opinions of young people... well placed to tackle social exclusion and encourage cohesion' and
- b) that to develop cohesion policy it is necessary to follow the Home Office advice on this and to 'develop more sophisticated, tailored approaches to meeting the specific needs of different minority communi-

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<sup>10</sup> Faith schools are popular with parents and make a valuable contribution to the way in which this country discharges its duty under Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the ECHR to respect the right of parents to ensure education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. This is acknowledged by both Government and faith community organisations.

ties, and to focus on those groups who still suffer particular disadvantage rather than treating all minority groups as disadvantaged or having the same needs. This is the time to move on from one-size-fits-all approaches.<sup>11</sup>

All Jewish schools are known for their comprehensive intake and their ability to cater for pupils from a wide range of social-economic, national and linguistic backgrounds. All teach social responsibility, multicultural education and active citizenship and are frequently lauded by OFSTED for achieving these goals and high academic standards.

### *Developing Cohesion*

In developing community cohesion standards in Jewish Voluntary Aided Schools it is important to realise that there is a large variety of schools within the Jewish community, reflecting its diverse nature. Every school has its own ethos and may have different approaches to cohesion. We are committed to producing solid proposals within the next few months and to a package of policies. Additionally, the Board of Deputies is working with the Secretary of State, DFES and other faith communities in producing a memorandum of understanding between faith schools and the DFES. The initiative is being chaired by the Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson MP.

The Board of Deputies has been keen to develop innovative Extended School Service projects. Most Jewish schools act as a centre extended activities and services for the community and the community has already been looking at promoting this further.

The Board of Deputies in conjunction with the UJIA runs *Pikuach* which inspects Jewish Schools under s.48 requirements for assessing the denominational religious education in faith schools. *Pikuach* intends to include a comprehensive and religiously sensitive section on community cohesion in its newly revised framework. The Board of Deputies has drafted guidance on how this should be incorporated into the inspections framework and is currently engaging in a wide consultation with Stakeholders in Jewish Education. We are also committed to an internal process of community wide consultation on the best way that our schools can enhance community cohesion whilst respecting their integrity and distinctive Jewish ethos.

In order for real social and community cohesion there needs to be measures that help every child improve. This could be achieved by bringing the 60-70 private schools from the strictly-Orthodox (Haredi) community into the state sector. Children at these schools often come from large families with low income. However, these schools will need reassurance that their integrity and ethos will be respected and must be dealt with sensitively.

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<sup>11</sup> Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society 2005

## 10. History, Values and Grounding Principles

The Jewish community supports the Government in wishing to foster a sense of national identity, inter-communal cohesion, active citizenship, social responsibility, tolerance and respect. These are values that have driven the British Jewish community for 350 years since Jews were readmitted to England in 1656.

As Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote in *The Times* in 2005, the history of our community has much relevance to the current integration and cohesion debate:

"The Jewish experience challenges the received wisdom about minorities. Jews... sought to integrate, adapt and belong. Jewish schools focused on turning Jews into British citizens, at home in the nation's language, culture and history. Sermons were spiced with quotations from Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. The role model was Sir Moses Montefiore, whom *The Times* praised on his 100th birthday in 1884 for his 'determination to show, by his life, that fervent Judaism and patriotic citizenship are absolutely consistent with one another'... However, our experience of integration has shown that it does not happen overnight, it took 200 years before Jews were permitted to enter universities or be elected to Parliament. Jewish immigrants — poor, concentrated in ghettos, barely able to speak English — were caricatured as alien elements in British life. Jews who remember those days can readily sympathise with Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims today."<sup>12</sup>

Jewish experience of seeking asylum in Britain (first from persecution in Spain and Portugal, later from Eastern European Pogroms and the Holocaust) can give a message of hope to other ethnic and religious minorities.

For, as the Chief Rabbi continued, "yes, there were conflicts between immigrant parents and their British-born and educated children. There was a long struggle to define an identity both British and Jewish. But these are pains of adjustment, not permanent conditions."<sup>13</sup>

Judaism is based on an awareness of responsibility: responsibility to ourselves, to the community and to the stranger. Interestingly, while the Hebrew Bible only contains one commandment to "love your neighbour",<sup>14</sup> the commandment to not oppress the stranger appears 36 times, e.g. "You shall not oppress the stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt".<sup>15</sup> In other words, empathy is a key Jewish value. Having sought and been given asylum ourselves, we are bound to welcome aliens instead of deepening their alienation. The inextricable connection between responsibility to oneself and to others was articulated over 2000 years ago by Rabbi Hillel, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me,

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<sup>12</sup> The Times, 01/10/05

<sup>13</sup> The Times, Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Leviticus 19:18

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 23:9

but if I am only for myself, what am I?" and has been a guiding principle for Jewish people all over the world.<sup>16</sup>

Rabbinic Judaism, which forms the basis of today's Jewish religion, was forged in exile, for it was not until 1948 and the founding of the State of Israel that Jewish people had a homeland. Jews have lived, and British Jews still live, in Diaspora, and are constantly negotiating the challenges of retaining a Jewish identity as a minority in others' lands. Jewish survival has been predicated on education. The Jewish emphasis on education has biblical roots; in Deuteronomy 11:19, the Israelites were commanded to teach their children about the history and theology contained in the *Torah*.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE Jews had created the first ever system of publicly funded, universal education and, ever since, education has been the Jewish community's highest communal priority. In the 350 years since Jews were readmitted to Britain, we have founded almost 100 Jewish primary and secondary schools, in addition to many local Jewish nurseries. These schools teach Jewish children to know and appreciate their history and identity, both as Jews and British Citizens. Many Jewish schools and synagogues have substantial social action programmes through which the Jewish community can give back to the wider community. Jewish children are taught that it is their responsibility to respect others, if they are to expect respect themselves. In an Op.Ed. in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 2006, the Chief Rabbi cited John Locke "the architect of tolerance" on respecting the freedom of religion of others: "It is unreasonable that any should have a free liberty of their religion who do not acknowledge it as a principle of theirs that nobody ought to persecute or molest another because he dissents from him in religion."<sup>18</sup>

British Jews are a minority ethnic community, who seek to preserve their religious and cultural heritage through a focus on Jewish education. However, our experience and texts teach us that our identity can only flourish in relation to the wider society if our community is also taught to respect the values and history of the country in which we live. We remember the advice given by the prophet Jeremiah: "Seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to God for its community, for in its peace you will find peace."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mishnah Avot 1: 14

<sup>17</sup> First 5 books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

<sup>18</sup> The Jewish Chronicle, 17/02/06

<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 29:7

## **11. Tackling Inequality and Opening Opportunities for All**

The Jewish community is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all.

The Board of Deputies is concerned about the continuing discrimination that exists against religious Jews in the workplace. Jews are regarded as both an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act (following the ruling in Gillette v Seide) and a religious community. The Board of Deputies welcomes the tightening up of the Race Relations Act and the introduction of the new Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations in 2003. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this legislation.

The Board of Deputies has published 'A Practical Guide for Employers and Jewish Employees'. This has been updated to reflect the recent changes in the law. With support from the Department of Trade and Industry we are promoting and disseminating our booklet widely.

In terms of delivery of public services, we are concerned about the differing level of service provision provided by health, education and local authorities in terms of catering for Jewish needs. We are concerned with actual and anecdotal reports that some local authorities are not catering for the needs of Jewish clientele e.g. provision of kosher food in some health facilities. No doubt similar shortcomings affect other faith communities.

More generally, the Board of Deputies welcomes the Equality Act and opposes discrimination on any grounds, recognising the rights of those within our community and in wider society should not be infringed on the grounds of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or religious conviction. It must be possible for people to live their lives in the manner in which they choose as long as it does not impinge upon the rights of others. We hope that to this effect future equality legislation will be framed in such a way that allows for the effective combating of discrimination while respecting freedom of conscience and conviction.

## **12. Eradicating racism and extremism**

The Crown Prosecution Service and the Attorney-General have often been reluctant to utilise the Public Order Act to bring prosecutions for incitement of racial hatred. The Board has long pressed the need for more vigorous enforcement of existing race hate laws.

Furthermore, the Board believes that there needs to be a general review of race hate legislation to make the law more effective and to look at the extension of the law to cover hatred targeted at other minority groups.

The Board of Deputies welcomes the strengthening of the Race Relations Act in 2000 and 2003. In particular, we welcome the race equality duty now imposed upon public authorities. The Board would like to see evidence that these laws are being enforced.

### **13. Antisemitism**

Existing legislation dealing with race hatred has proved ineffective in preventing the increasing number of racist and anti-Semitic attacks occurring in the United Kingdom. In September 2006 the *Parliamentary Committee Against Antisemitism* published a report detailing the findings of their Inquiry. Chair of the Panel, Rt. Hon. Dr. Denis MacShane MP, commented:

The most worrying discovery of this Inquiry is that anti-Jewish sentiment is entering the mainstream, appearing in the everyday conversations of people who consider themselves neither racist nor prejudiced. All forms of anti-Semitism are racism and should be treated as such. This behaviour is driven by ignorance and complacency and allowing it to continue unchecked is not just a problem for the Jewish community but society as a whole. The Panel hopes that, by highlighting the damaging impact of anti-Semitism, all parties, including Government, the police, prosecution services, universities and the Jewish community itself, can take the steps needed to address this problem.<sup>20</sup>

Commenting on the recommendations directed at the Police and criminal justice system Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP added:

In this climate it is perverse that not all police forces record antisemitic incidents. This must not be tolerated. If we are to reverse the trend of rising anti-Jewish attacks, it is vital that we have a complete picture of the problem we are facing. Today we are calling on the Home Office to require all police forces across the UK to follow the example of the Metropolitan Police by recording these incidents as both racist and antisemitic. In some parts of the country, police forces verge on the complacent in their response to this issue. There can be no room for this in our society, particularly not from the police who have such an important role to play in stamping out this unacceptable behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

Speaking on behalf of the panel Chris Huhne MP explored the relationship between contemporary antisemitism and Israel:

Witnesses before the panel strongly indicated that the failure of some individuals to draw a distinction between Jews and Israel was a major contributing factor in contemporary antisemitism. Debate about international affairs is to be welcomed and criticism of Israel should not be considered antisemitism. But, there is a fine line between criticism and racism which is all too often breached in discussions about the Jewish community. Only by improving understanding

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.thepcaa.org/id60.html>

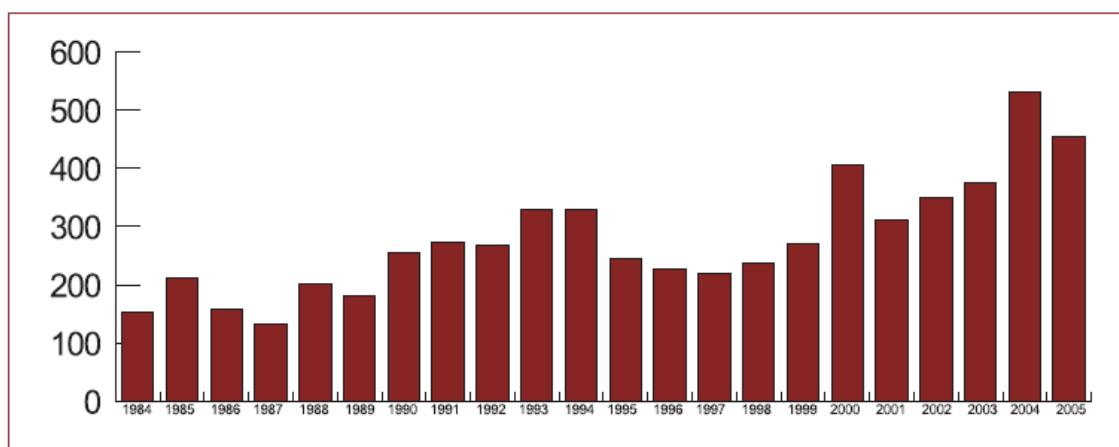
<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

and encouraging genuine debate can we effectively tackle this problem.<sup>22</sup>

John Mann MP, Chair of the All-Party Group against antisemitism welcomed the report and concluded:

It is staggering that in the twenty-first century the Jewish community has to spend millions of pounds annually to protect itself. The spread of antisemitic discourse is also cause for grave concern and it is time to redraw the lines in the sand and make clear that antisemitic language will not be tolerated.<sup>23</sup>

The Jewish community is concerned about the resurgence of antisemitism in Britain. Until recently, it appeared that anti-Semitism was on the wane and had existed only on the margins of society. However, evidence indicates that there has been a reversal of this progress since 2000. The most concerning aspect of this is that of attacks on Jewish people or property. In 2005, the Community Security Trust (CST), a charitable organisation concerned with community's security, recorded 455 antisemitic incidents, a 14% fall from 2004, but the second highest annual total since the CST began recording incidents in 1984. There are many who suspect as in all racially or religiously motivated crime that many incidents go unreported.



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The report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism (PPIA) looked at the causes of this and highlighted that rises in antisemitic attacks appear to be triggered at times of greater international tensions in the Middle East:

"Many of those who gave evidence recognised that, with the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, most agencies monitoring antisemitism throughout Europe and beyond, including the EUMC, have acknowledged a rise in antisemitic incidents. Often these peak at times when there is a particular outbreak of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or somewhere else in the Middle East. Mark Gardner of the Community Security

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Trust (CST) expressed concern that “the high number of trigger events since September 2000 has led to an increase in the background levels of antisemitic incidents that take place when there are no trigger events.”<sup>24</sup>

In addition, there has been a resurgence of extreme nationalist groups in the United Kingdom who appear to be growing both in terms of membership and electoral success.

The Jewish community has had to provide security guards for synagogues, Jewish schools, buildings and events for very many years. The Community Security Trust alone spends over £5 million per year on security and protection; in addition to this individual schools and institutions incur their own security costs.

In terms of tackling the growth of anti-Semitism, the PPIA has made some key recommendations that:

- The Home Office provides a greater level of support in addressing the security needs of British Jews, especially with reference to their places of worship and schools.
- The police should have one universal and comprehensive recording facility rather than leaving it to the discretion of individual forces and that the model adopted by the Metropolitan Police of categorising incidents as both racist and antisemitic should be introduced across all police forces in the UK.
- The Home Office directs research resources to the extent of antisemitism and reports annually to Parliament.
- There is intensified co-operation between the police and the CST, with particular focus on tackling dual reporting.
- The Crown Prosecution Service investigates the reasons for the low number of prosecutions and reports back to Parliament.
- The Crown Prosecution Service conducts a review of cases where prosecutions for incitement to racial hatred have been brought, in order to see what lessons can be learned.

In addition to this, the Board of Deputies feels that there is a need to:

- Support various groups that have been set up to promote respect, tolerance and understanding between different groups;
- For schools to utilise the citizenship syllabus to teach core values
- The promotion of key national projects that promote citizenship respect and tolerance

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<sup>24</sup> The Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism, p.7

## **14. Anti-racism: Learning from the lessons of history**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews recognises that as well as a law enforcement approach there is a need to tackle extremism and racism through education and changing negative attitudes. The use of the citizenship and history curriculum in schools is one place where this could be dealt with.

There are many groups of that deal with anti-racism education.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews believes that if we do not learn from the lessons of history can then we risk repeating our failures. In this respect the Board of Deputies welcomes initiatives that act as a reminder to humanity's previous failure to resolve racism. There are many groups who promote understanding between different ethnic groups. There are also various events in the calendar that remind us of the need to learn from history including World Refugee Day, Black History Month and Holocaust Memorial Day.

Holocaust Memorial Day is an issue for everyone. The lessons of the Holocaust are of universal relevance and have implications for us all.

In this respect the Board of Deputies recognises the enormous achievements of national day as appropriate time to remember all victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution; Jews, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), Russian prisoners of war, East European civilians, trade unionists, communists, political opponents, disabled people, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men and lesbians and Black Germans as well as reflect upon those affected by more recent atrocities in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Through various activities across the country, the day acts as a focus to educate poignantly about the dangers of antisemitism, racism and all forms of discrimination.

Ultimately it illustrates the continuing need for vigilance and to motivate people, individually and collectively, to ensure that the horrendous crimes, racism and victimisation committed during the Holocaust are neither forgotten nor repeated, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world.

Holocaust Memorial Day offers an opportunity for people in the UK in the 21st century to reflect upon, consider and discuss how those events still have relevance for all members of today's society.

## **15. The Concept of a Jewish Community: A Sociological Framework**

The notion of community is important to the majority of Jews living in Britain today. The Jewish community has been a centre for welfare, education, social and cultural activities as well as providing centres for prayer and religious observance. This sense of community has provided its members with support in a time of need whilst promoting notions of good citizenship and self-improvement through culturally-sensitive schooling.

There is no evidence to suggest that Jews are residentially, socially or economically segregated from the general population. This has been confirmed by several studies which go back to the 1980s<sup>25</sup>.

Having said that it is true that Jews tend to live in relatively close-proximity to each other, 17-18% of all Jews in Britain live in the London Borough of Barnet.

Some Jews, especially the more religious persuasion tend to be in closer residential proximity than those with a more secular outlook but then again this does not amount to segregation in strict sociological and geographic sense.

Waltermann and Kosmin said that in certain areas the Jewish pattern of Jewish residents was one of concentration e.g. Barnet, Radlett, and north Hackney. However, they live in streets and neighbourhoods that are mixed.

Traditionally, Jewish communities tended to congregate because it is more efficient to provide communal facilities such as, old age homes, kosher shops, synagogues, welfare and cultural associations in these areas.

On a much localised area, two census output areas were 75% Jewish out of 218,000 output areas and one of those happened to be a Jewish old age home. An output area averages 270 people. In only 108 output areas were Jews over 50% of the population. This is a tiny fraction of the Jewish population. Of 218,000, Jews live in 32,255 output areas. However, they live in 50% of the output areas in the Greater London area.

In the main the Jewish community is highly integrated in British society, living in mixed urban neighbourhoods and contributing to society in many disciplines.

The only section of the Jewish community that minimises contact with other groups (including secular Jews) are the haredim (strictly orthodox). However, their motivation for doing this is not out of animosity towards other groups or because they feel that there is animosity towards them. They have promoted a mechanism by which this community maintains its unique religious, culture and demographic structure in face of a threat to their identity. The haredi and hassidic groups tended to stem from either German Jewish refugees who came in the 1930s or Eastern European Jews who came afterwards. They

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<sup>25</sup> Waltermann and Kosmin, Residential Patterns and Processes: A Study of Jews in Three London Boroughs, 1988.

wished to maintain their communities and felt that in the light of the destruction of hundreds of communities during the Holocaust that there was imperative to do so.

Having said this, the Haredi community has developed some exciting projects to promote greater socio-economically integration within its own community including major mixed housing (social and private housing) developments by Agudas Yisroel Housing Association in Stamford Hill. The Schoenfeld Square project which has mixed housing and a school next to an old age home is an example of community cohesion that should be emulated elsewhere by all communities.

The Haredi community is part of the political process, with individual members of the community serving as Councillors on the Hackney Borough Council.

In addition, the community in Hackney has developed a Muslim-Jewish Forum in order to look at issues of common interest. This innovative project has seen the backing for the furthering of good community relations and an integration and cohesion programme within the religious and cultural parameters that they adhere to.

## **16. Immigration and Asylum**

2005 marked the centenary of the Aliens Act which was the first ‘Asylum and Immigration’ Act and was directly aimed at curbing Jewish migration.

Later, legislation by successive Governments acted to limit immigration of Jews from Nazi Europe to the United Kingdom or to Mandatory Palestine during the 1930s. Jews in Britain who were welcomed in were grateful for the refuge given to them. Many of them rebuilt their lives and communities, giving much back to this country. However, there were many who were not so lucky.

The Board of Deputies believes that tightening immigration controls further will make it difficult for those facing persecution. We are concerned that genuine asylum-seekers may be turned away from the United Kingdom on the basis of outdated country reports and the current policy that seeks to deter asylum seekers. We do not wish to see history repeat itself.

We are concerned about the tagging and detention of asylum-seekers. We believe that young people should not be incarcerated in detention centres.

In terms of supporting integration of arrivals, the Board of Deputies, believes that public resources should be allocated to provide new arrivals with necessary skills to access the employment market. This would ensure that new arrivals would be given genuine equality of opportunity in the labour market. Our own community set up and privately funded schools, welfare centres and housing projects in the nineteenth century to ensure the integration of new Jewish immigrants, and these institutions continued to operate into the twentieth century. Whilst the situation is different today, the Board believe that there is a place for the Government to work in partnership with faith bodies to ensure the absorption of refugees.

## **17. Social Cohesion: The Need to Tackle Poverty**

The cause of the greatest inequalities and the largest threat to social cohesion is poverty. The Board of Deputies believes that integration and cohesion can only be fully achieved by promoting the concept of equality alongside that of promoting good community relations.

The Jewish community has a long history of supporting the welfare and educational needs of both members of its own community and indeed beyond our own community. The community is committed to doing this in the future. Jewish Care is reportedly the fifth largest private social welfare organisation in Europe, privately raising millions to support its services.

However, there is a need to recognise that this needs to be done in partnership with the state. The Board of Deputies is becoming increasingly concerned by reports and evidence brought to it that individual members of the Jewish community appear to be increasingly discriminated against in terms of receiving the public provision due to them.

In terms of poverty indicators it is clear that those areas in which the Jewish population tends to experience a combination of poor and overcrowded housing, poor levels of secular educational achievement and low access to cars correlate with the geographical areas in which the majority of the Jewish population are Haredi (strictly-Orthodox). Several pieces of recently research published research reveals that the Haredi community members of the community tend to have high birth rates (estimated averages of around 6-8 children per family) and low incomes.

This is important for those providing welfare services to take on board, as one interesting trend that has become apparent from data collected by the Board of Deputies' CPRU is the growing size of the strictly-Orthodox community compared with other Jewish denominations. In fact, it is estimated that a quarter of all Jewish births are now strictly-Orthodox.<sup>26</sup>

A recently reported characterises the situation in the largest Haredi community in the country:

“Low income characterizes many Haredi households in the Stamford Hill area. This low level of income does not provide for the needs: the high cost of living in London; supporting the costly Haredi lifestyle; and paying the children’s tuitions since the government does not recognize the Haredi educational system and does not allocate funds for its schools. What all these amount to is that a large part of the Haredi population in London is in the throes of financial difficulties since its earners fail to earn a wage that corresponds to the standard of living of a society with a unique

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<sup>26</sup> Board of Deputies of British Jews Community Policy Research Unit [CPRU]: Jewish Community Statistics 2005, Graham & Vulkan (due to be published February 2007)

traditional culture in one of the largest and most expensive cities of the world.”<sup>27</sup>

In addition the Board has received worrying reports that various public bodies have a history of discriminating against members of the strictly orthodox Jewish community in terms of the provision of culturally-sensitive welfare, housing, education and social needs. In certain cases this has been resolved following interventions by the Commission for Racial Equality.

The Board is naturally concerned that other individuals who culturally specific needs may be facing similar discrimination and has received various reports of this nature. This has an impact on Jews from across the religious spectrum.

The Board believes that the best way to ensure social cohesion is to tackle poverty:

- Ensuring that in terms of the provision of public services that all individuals in society are treated fairly and according to their needs. Many public authorities do provide culturally-specific welfare provisions though others appear to be failing in their public duty to eliminate all racial discrimination and this causes resentment.
- Education is the key to helping people out of poverty. The Jewish community has put massive resources into schooling. In order to provide for better schooling there is a need to reassure strictly religious communities of the benefit of transferring private schools to the state sector (see above).

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<sup>27</sup> Amiram Gonon, Between Torah Learning and Wage Earning (The Floersheimer Institute For Policy Studies: Jerusalem, 2006)

## **18. Promoting Social Responsibility**

Social responsibility through social justice and action programmes is important to the Jewish community. A central tenet of the Jewish faith is treat our neighbours well and provide sustenance and justice to those who are disadvantaged in society. This includes a need to provide social justice and support for those both within our own Jewish community (there are many charities in the Jewish community providing welfare and education services) and also for those who are not members of our community.

Amongst the many national groups involved in promoting social justice for those outside of the Jewish community are World Jewish Aid and Tzedek (international development project), René Cassin (universal human rights and advocacy), JCORE (racial equality/immigration) and Noah Project (environmental issues). The Board of Deputies has an Environmental and Social Issues Action Group that is working actively on issues such as environmentalism, poverty and development issues and universal human rights / social responsibility.

The community has a high level of volunteerism and a number of philanthropic bodies that fund social action projects aimed at assisting others.

On a more local scale there are a number of projects that have developed practical projects to help others. By way of example this includes the New London Synagogue's refugee programme, Wimbedon & District Synagogue's involvement in Merton's *Faith in Action* group (helping homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, collections of food and clothes and congregants working within the centre) and the Apples & Honey Nursery regular collections of clothes for Brixton Refugee Centre.

The Board has been involved in assisting, training and advising other national faith communities on a number of issues including education, setting up minority faith schools, developing representative bodies, community safety and welfare development.

There is evidence that social responsibility programmes that involve communal interaction are growing within the British Jewish community.

## **Appendix 1: History of the British Jewish Community**

2006 was a significant year for the Anglo-Jewish Community as it was the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Readmission of Jews to England. There had been an earlier Jewish presence in London and other places such as York and Lincoln following the Norman Conquest but this was brought to an end by the expulsion of the Jews by Edward I in 1290. For the ensuing two hundred and fifty years there was no Jewish community in England, though individuals did appear from time to time. By the end of the sixteenth century circumstances had changed.

A number of New Christians, known as “Marranos”, (converts left behind after the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula – or crypto- Jews), had moved from Spain and Portugal and had spread along the Atlantic seaboard, going first to Antwerp and then settling in Amsterdam. England also changed; with the development of Protestantism and the Church of England the atmosphere was propitious for the return of the Jews. A more widespread familiarity with the Hebrew Bible reawakened a general sympathy with the Jews. There were also economic considerations. England, at the dawn of a new age of mercantilism, had much to gain from the useful, internationally connected, Marrano merchants and their trading networks.

In the mid-seventeenth century, these elements came together under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell who, in 1654, intimated that it was timely for a leading Jewish theologian, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, to visit London. The Rabbi did so in September 1655 and submitted a first Petition to Cromwell for the re-admission of Jews. This was considered at what has become known as The Whitehall Conference of December 1655, without the issue being formally resolved. The situation changed in 1656 when a small group of Marrano families, together with Menasseh ben Israel, submitted a second Petition to Cromwell on 24th March, asking for permission to meet for private devotions according to Jewish rites. This petition succeeded and was approved on 25th June 1656.

In a sense, there was no formal act of “Readmission”, simply a limited, practical acceptance that Jews living in England could reside and worship in their own manner. Thus Resettlement was effected in an unobtrusive and informal manner. More Sephardi (Spanish and Portuguese) Jews soon arrived, shortly to be followed by Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe.

During the eighteenth century the Jewish presence in Britain grew, and a joint committee of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities, which developed into the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was founded in 1760 to represent the combined communities. By the end of that century, before the more numerous immigrations of the nineteenth century, London Jewry was one of the largest urban Jewish communities in Europe. Following the Eastern European pogroms, the waves of Jewish immigrants seeking asylum in Britain increased in intensity and a large number of Jewish refugees came to Britain during and immediately after World War II.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.britishjews350.org.uk/>

In a letter published to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Readmission, Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote,

It is impossible to imagine the modern United Kingdom without the Jewish community. In the three and a half centuries since Oliver Cromwell's decision, so many different areas of our national life have been illuminated by the contributions of the Jewish community, making our country a better place for all. What is more, the community has consistently shown how it is possible both to retain a clear faith and identity, and at the same time play a full and valuable part in British society and public life.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Published in Living and Giving, a pamphlet celebrating the 'Jewish contribution to life in the UK' (2006) available on request from 350@bod.org.uk