

An agenda for ageing well  
within the  
Jewish Community  
in the 21st century

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# An Introduction

The Torah considers growing old a blessing; 'zakein' (old) is synonymous with wise. Our heroes and heroines were not young – Abraham, Sarah, Moses. It would benefit us all if the Jewish community began to challenge youth obsessed culture.

## The Background

- The Jewish community has twice the number of people over 60 compared to the general UK population. Yet most of our resources – energy and money – are directed towards young people.
- The Jewish community does welfare well.
- But growing old is not just about welfare.
- This report consulted with over 500 people representing a cross section of the Jewish community.
- This report is not about being old; it's about ageing – which we are all doing.

## The Key Recommendations

- The Jewish community should ensure that, as we age, we are enabled and encouraged to flourish and participate to the best of our physical and mental abilities.
- The emphasis should change from welfare to inclusion.
- Communal organisations should change to ensure they actively include older people.
- The community needs to focus on this important and growing area.
- The community needs to listen to what people are saying rather than deciding what they want and need.

## The Next Steps

- We need funding to create a post which will do further systematic research and help organisations implement changes.
- We need to create and inspire champions in each synagogue

## What will it look like?

- People of all ages will feel connected to the Jewish community – both spiritually and socially.
- People will be valued as individuals and not pre-judged by their age.
- People will have a more positive experience of ageing – which is proven to delay physical and cognitive deterioration.

## If we do this...

- People will stay connected and involved with the Jewish community – whatever their personal circumstances and religious affiliation.
- The community will benefit from the wisdom of all of its members.
- This will greatly enhance Jewish continuity
- and make Jewish values a reality.

# Executive Summary

## Purpose

The Jewish community has twice the number of people aged over 60 compared to the general population and yet the majority of our creative energy and resources is directed towards young people. As life expectancy continues to increase every year, it becomes crucial to assess how ready the Jewish community is to cope with this ever-increasing cohort, how best it can maximise this potential resource and how it can best serve people as they age within it.

The purpose of this report is to investigate what it is like for people as they age within the Jewish community and, taking account of our comprehensive consultation with over 450 people, make recommendations for the way forward.

We hope that this report will be taken seriously by community leaders and policy makers and that the recommendations will ensure that as we age within the community, we will remain connected and feel that we are always viewed as valued community members.

## Outcomes

The consultation has highlighted that, whilst we have an exceptional reputation for providing care for those who are most in need of it, we often do this in an old-fashioned and paternalistic manner. We often ignore the growing number of people within our community who are ageing well and thus contribute to their increasing isolation.

The report highlights some major themes for us to consider:

- How can we ensure that people in the Jewish community feel connected both spiritually and socially at all stages of their life?
- How can we create a sense of worth and engagement for all people whatever their age and personal circumstance?
- How do we ensure that people can access all the community has to offer by ensuring that we are open to, as well as thoughtful of, people's financial and physical situations?
- What can we learn from outside organisations and the growing international 'grey movement'?
- If synagogues are the main contact that older people may have with the community, how can we ensure they work collaboratively with other providers for older people?
- How can we maximise the huge success of initiatives that are both cross-communal and/or intergenerational?
- Given the resources of the community, how can we ensure that services and support to older people receive the same stature and status as the current investment in the community for younger people?

## Next steps

There are clearly identifiable next steps that need to be put in place to ensure the positive suggestions in this report become a reality. There are many recommendations and it is important to acknowledge that carrying them out involves the engagement of a much wider group of people and organisations than have so far been involved in the drafting of this report.

Thus, the first step we took was to take the report to as many communal leaders as possible to ensure they understand its importance and to gain their feedback and buy-in to the recommendations. The number of organisations who have endorsed this report is a testament, we feel, to the value of the subject matter.

The launch of the findings and recommendations at a major event will, we hope, ensure we have recognition for its importance not only within the Jewish world but in the wider society.

Our biggest challenge will be to receive the appropriate funding to carry out further research to more fully understand some key areas:

- What prevents people from participating in current local communities and services.
- Women – this is a key area as women live longer than men and face particular challenges of isolation, especially those who are or become single as they age.
- What activities older people are choosing outside the Jewish community and how we can learn good practice from initiatives from those activities?
- Work with Jewish communal organisations to help embed the principles of the report into their strategic planning.

Finally, the question of ageing presents the opportunity for cross-communal activity that is not hindered by the politics that exist within the various denominations of Judaism. Ageing is not a theological theory; it is a fact of life that binds us all together and it is hoped that this will be recognised by

# Executive Summary

## (Continued)

all who work within the community and embraced as a concept that needs addressing and one that will unify us all.

### Methodology

We have been researching this report for over 18 months. We have undertaken a very wide consultation process involving over 450 people. These people include those who work with older people, those who represent different sectors of the community, leaders – both lay and rabbinic – and, most importantly, many people both members of a community and the unaffiliated who are ageing.

Groups and representatives from groups include:

- United synagogue Chesed groups
- Participants at Limmud
- Members of
  - Alyth Gardens
  - Cross communal Women's Group
  - Finchley Progressive Synagogue
  - Finchley Reform Synagogue,
  - JCC
  - Jewish Care
  - London Jewish Cultural Centre
  - North London Rosh Chodesh Group
  - North West Surrey Reform Synagogue
  - Richmond Synagogue
  - South Hampstead Synagogue
  - South London Jewish Forum
  - South Western Reform Synagogue
- Assembly of Masorti synagogues
- Board of Deputies
- CEO forum (see main body of report for members)
- Interlink members (Charedi community groups)
- Jewish Leadership Council
- Jewish Social Action forum (see main body of report for members)

- Lead
- League of Jewish Women
- Liberal Judaism
- London School of Jewish Studies
- Movement for Reform Judaism
- Nightingale
- United Synagogue

Our findings have come out of these meetings and have been comprehensively explored in both group and individual settings.

### Our mission

To ensure that, as we age within our community, we are enabled and encouraged to flourish and participate to the best of our physical and mental ability as valued and respected members within both the Jewish and wider community.

### An age agenda for the Jewish community

This document is the result of a comprehensive consultation process. We have been researching for a period of over 18 months. During that time we have consulted a large number of groups, experts, organisations and, most importantly, older people themselves. Our findings have come out of these meetings and have been comprehensively explored in both group and individual settings.

In 2008 the UK Government commissioned a huge study into well-being. The Government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Well-being asked nef (the new economics foundation) to review the inter-disciplinary work of over 400 scientists from across the world. The aim was to identify a set of evidence-based actions to improve well-being, which individuals would be encouraged to build into their daily lives. Based on the latest

scientific evidence, nef created a set of five simple actions which can improve well-being in everyday life. What is so fascinating is that these steps we can take which improve well-being and delay physical and mental deterioration have their direct counterpart in Judaism. For example it is scientifically proven that lifelong learning, volunteering, community ties and being mindful have dramatic and very positive impacts on ageing – in other words Torah, Tzedekah, Kehillah, Tefillah and Brachot. We have woven these Jewish interpretations of secular concepts through our report.

We have divided the document into five areas:

- spiritual and emotional well-being,
- life-long learning,
- active participation and connection,
- independence and healthy living,
- care.

This is broadly in line with the UN's Principles for Older Persons (Resolution 46/91) which in preparation for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 gave a commitment to 5 areas:

**Independence:** access to sustenance, health care, work and other income-generating opportunities, education, training, and a life in safe environments.

**Participation:** integration into community life and active participation in the formulation of policies affecting their well-being.

**Care:** access to social and legal services and to health care so that they can maintain an optimum level of physical, mental and

# Executive Summary

## (Continued)

emotional well-being, including full respect for dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy.

**Self-fulfilment:** access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources and be able to develop their full potential.

**Dignity:** able to live in dignity and security, free of exploitation and be treated fairly regardless of age, gender and racial or ethnic background.

It is crucial to note that the Jewish community has a much larger percentage of older people than other communities. In fact, 40% of the Jewish community is over 60 which is **twice as large** as the national average of the whole UK population (2001 census).

Despite this being such a significant proportion of the community, our research has shown that the emphasis on this age cohort appears to be concentrated on welfare rather than inclusion. This leads to many of the older people in our community feeling undervalued and alienated from community leaders, decision makers and indeed from other community members.

In the focus groups of older people we were told that whilst synagogue bodies have invested in paid professionals to support and nurture young people, support for older members is carried out by volunteers and has concentrated on those with disabilities or particular needs. This gives the impression that being older equates with being needy. In addition, because the work has largely been left to volunteers, it gives the message that this is not

Older people in our community want the whole Jewish community to view them differently and to:

- **Value and include them as individuals, rather than letting their age define how we see and treat them.**
- **Not see someone who is older as automatically needing care or welfare**
- **Sign up to the concept of mutuality so that everyone, whatever their age or ability, can be a giver as well as a recipient**
- **Work cross-communally, and break down the barriers that exist within our community across the religious spectrum**
- **Think inter-generationally so that activities are not just focused on the young or families but are inclusive and appropriate to all who want to join in**
- **Be non-judgemental and not decide for them what they can and cannot do**
- **Be open and welcoming to everyone whatever their age, ability or religious affiliation**

a high priority for many synagogue leaders. It marginalises people with disabilities or those who are older and frailer at just that time when they need their community most. This affects not only the older members but also their carers who very often feel marginalised and alone as they are forced to concentrate all their efforts on the person needing their care.

The Jewish community has the most remarkable potential to create inclusive events and groups which transcend age divisions. Unlike secular society which has built in age stratifications and is generally arranged around age specific activities and groups, the Jewish community has many opportunities to naturally include older people and encourage intergenerational relationships. We need to celebrate these abilities and build on this potential. We do not need to patronise older people or lay on events which have old age as their focus but instead create opportunities for the entire age range to create spontaneous and natural interactions and relationships. This document gives a voice to the

older members of our community and expresses the views they have shared with us. We hope that this will influence those who make policy and strategic decisions within the Jewish community to look at things differently and ensure that all our community are valued and included when services are planned and initiatives are being formulated.

Going forward we believe that the Jewish community can not only lead the way in welfare provision for its older members but, with the right attitude, by positively embracing all its members, whatever their age, ability and religious affiliation, ensure greater cohesion across the community.

As we embark on the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing, we feel that this report, its findings and recommendations are timely. If we are successful in making the recommendations a reality it will firmly put the Jewish community at the forefront of the current international age agenda.

Abigail Morris ResponseAbility  
Sonia Douek Jewish Care  
March 2012

# A Blessing

## A Jewish Perspective

Judaism considers growing old to be a blessing. Although modern secular society is focused on youth, Jewish heroes are all old. Abraham and Sarah were famously elderly parents; Sarah was 90 when she finally conceived and was so surprised that she laughed when she found out. Moses might be portrayed by Hollywood as being the young Prince of Egypt but he was reputedly 80 years old when he stood at the burning bush and began his journey in which he led the children of Israel out of slavery. His sister Miriam was older than him so she would have been an old woman when she sang her famous song and led the dancing after the Egyptians were beaten at the Red Sea.

The language the Torah uses to describe these ageing heroes emphasises how old age is venerated and respected. The Hebrew words 'Chachamim' (the wise ones) and 'zekenim' (the elders) are used interchangeably because wisdom equals experience, old being synonymous with wise. So the Torah commands us to respect all the elderly, regardless of their scholarship and piety, because the many trials and experiences that each additional year of life brings creates a wisdom which the most accomplished young prodigy cannot hope to equal.

Moses brought the Jews out of Egypt, received the law at Mount Sinai and lived until he was 120 years old. Deuteronomy 34:7 states that Moses is 120 when he died but, more importantly, it says: "his eye had not dimmed, and his vigour had not diminished." Legend also says he dies 'mitat neshikah', with a kiss, a

peaceful death. This has led to a very common Jewish expression: 'May you live to be 120' or 'Biz a Hoondred oon Tzvuntzig'. In other words may you have what Moses had, a life well lived, until the very last moment.

The Torah describes Abraham as one who 'Ba bayamim' – who grew old and came along in days" (Genesis 24:1). The Rabbinic interpretation of this is lovely: his accumulated days, each replete with learning and achievement, meant that with each passing day his worth increased. In other words the Jewish tradition sees a ripe old age as bringing fullness, increasing not decreasing worth.

The biblical take on old age is that growing old lets us "wear the days of our life" as a complete garment. Growing old is not the end of life, it is the culmination of life; it is about completing a process, becoming whole. In Hebrew the word elder "zaken" is seen as a combination of two words: "ze kana", which means "This one has "it!" in other words, they are the ones who are full of life. Old people, finally, "have it, they have acquired it, earned it, achieved it. Clearly this is a cause for celebration and it would benefit us all if the Jewish community began to challenge the predominant youth obsessed culture.

Maureen Kendler and Abigail Morris

# Putting the Agenda in Context

One cannot pick up the paper, turn on the radio or TV today without hearing that we have a growing older population that is facing a long 'old-age' with diminished services and poor response to their needs and wishes. Indeed, by 2021 Age UK estimates that one-fifth of the UK population will be over 65.

In her article in the Telegraph (15 February 2011), Joan Bakewell cites the 5 new giants for this group of our society as poverty, isolation, discrimination, injustice and neglect. Of course, not all older people are poor. We are told, for example, that in developed countries three quarters of all financial assets are owned by the over 50s with people aged 50-65 spending twice as much on leisure and entertainment as the under 30s.

However, even for the more affluent elderly, with another pension crisis looming, the proposition of paying for long-term care whether at home or in a residential setting, and the prospect of a further and deeper recession, it is easy to believe that Bakewell's view may become a reality in time for many more.

Probably, though, the one thing that binds older people together, whatever their financial circumstances, is the one of isolation. 30% of women between the ages of 65-74 live alone and amongst the over 75s, 63% of women and 35% of men now live alone (General Lifestyle survey, Great Britain 2009). Indeed for the Jewish community, women over 65 outnumber men at a ratio of 5:2 so it is imperative to focus on inclusion

for older women in particular. (UK National Census 2001).

The good news is that older people are finding their voice and influencing policy. Indeed in Israel the older people's party is one of the most influential growing parties in the country.

In March 2009 the UN set out its five principles for older people: **Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfilment and Dignity** – recognising that older people need to continue to receive the life chances and fulfilment that younger people often take for granted.

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 led the way for the abolition of a mandatory retirement age and puts age firmly in line with all other forms of discrimination.

For the Jewish community, the demographics are more stark, and the views collected over the past year or so to gain a picture of what life is like within a community that has supposed respect for the elderly, often reflect a saddening reality for the actual individuals within that community. As a community we are ageing at a rate double those in the wider UK population with 13% of Jewish people showing on the 2001 census as being over 75 compared to 6% in the general UK population. The census also shows us as having the highest percentage of 90-95 year olds of any other group within the UK. Compare that to our 16-24 year olds where we have only two-thirds as many young people as our UK counterparts, we have to ask the

question – who will look after all of us in our old age in a way that meets our cultural and religious needs?

The Jewish community has always prided itself on its care of its older members, and we have organisations such as Jewish Care and Nightingale who ensure that our services are cutting edge and meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Our services for those with dementia are now second to none, and much work has been done to integrate those in our community with mental health issues. However, these and other disabling factors still carry a stigma within the community which isolates both the person with the illness and their carers.

Volunteering is central to Jewish ethics and there are many schemes to encourage people to volunteer in the community. New initiatives from youth organisations and schools are beginning to work productively on intergenerational projects with established charities, and these are creating pockets of great intergenerational relationships based on mutuality where both parties learn and develop with each other. In addition, in the States and Israel, new models of working by creating small supportive communities are being explored. As a community, we need to prioritise our funding streams to ensure we can take these models forward. The model of supportive communities vary but all have the basic principle of being locally based and encouraging those who



# Putting the Agenda in Context

## (Continued)

live near each other to offer their skills to the benefits of others within their locality. In some areas this has led to, for example, the setting up of local activity group in people's homes, the offer of a home cooked meal, taking someone shopping or doing small odd jobs around the home.

Many younger people within our community are engaged in volunteering, and the concept of Tikkun Olam has been embraced by our young people. The politics, however, within our own community, can create barriers that mean we find it easier to concentrate our efforts outwardly at how we can help others, whilst forgetting those within our own communities who need our support and contact.

Older people who use Jewish and other services specific to their needs are beginning to voice how they feel marginalised by other community members, especially with synagogue bodies focusing more and more on young people, leaving the older members to be seen as welfare cases or not seen at all.

As this report will reflect, older people especially, but not exclusively, who are members of the more orthodox or traditional movements, often feel the move to the religious right has created barriers for them to engage in synagogue life. These barriers may be physical (for example, transport difficulties in getting to synagogue), or social, in that the ambience of the synagogue life focuses more on religious practice than on community development.

There are a growing number of people who identify as Jews but are not officially linked to the community. They may not want to go to synagogue or to be formally part of a particular community. They may take part in ad hoc events like Jewish Book Week but they are not members of synagogues, which up until now, has been the mainstay of the Jewish experience in this country. This drifting away from synagogue membership has changed the picture of the community and changed the pressures on our communal organisations.

Our recommendations set out below have come from older people themselves. We have spent over a year listening to them, and learning from them and below we set out what it is like to be an elder of the Jewish community and what we would all want from our community to ensure we can be active participants with a definite role to play.

# 1. Spiritual and Emotional Wellbeing

## Tefillah/ Brachot

‘Thank God for the miracles that are with us everyday’  
(The Amidah)

- A clearer definition and understanding by communal leaders of spiritual well-being that is wider than religious practice
- A clearer understanding that pastoral care is not just the provision of welfare to the most vulnerable in our community
- The development of pastoral care for all older Jewish people wherever they live

We have intentionally used the word spirituality as many of those we consulted did not want engagement in any formal religious practice. However there was a hunger for both spiritual support and opportunistic spiritual exploration.

As we age we continue to have complex spiritual and emotional needs but it also needs to be acknowledged that these needs develop in new ways. Some of these changes are because of the ageing process and proximity to death and some are part of the emotional journey we are all on. Thus, when thinking about this area, as in so many, provision needs to be both general and specific, linking older people with younger for much of the time but allowing for specific, targeted provision when appropriate.

There is a general reluctance amongst people to talk, plan or prepare for older age. End of life issues are still very much taboo and we as Jews do not really challenge the values of secular society and the way that it places such a huge importance on youth and looking young. Respect is given to physical beauty, energy and vigour and much less to considered wisdom and experience. We Jews do have an amazing potential to counter

this prevailing culture as, not only are our Jewish heroes older, but traditionally Judaism itself respects and reveres older people. However we increasingly join the youth orientated majority culture. It is hard but it is important to resist. The inevitable reality of death makes us all uncomfortable and we try and push it to the outskirts of our consciousness, hiding it away in hospitals. We fear physical and mental deterioration and do not wish to be reminded of our own frailty.

The majority of the Jewish community are still affiliated to orthodox Synagogue groups. At a recent event to look at the needs of older people within the United synagogue, older members expressed their concerns that the ethos of the organisation has moved more to the religious right which has alienated many long standing members from their local communities. Indeed, even members of the progressive movements have voiced their concerns that more and more the emphasis on community life revolves around religious education and observance.

In traditional UK Jewish life, the synagogue created a place to feel connected, a community space that was far more a focal point

for making friends and building relationships.

The emphasis on more religious learning, a stricter observance of Shabbat and festivals, and the employment of Rabbonim from outside of the traditional synagogue groups has made many older people feel that synagogue life is no longer aimed at them.

In addition, the emphasis in both ethos and financial investment in young people has also made older people express their concern that they are no longer considered important members of the community. Older synagogue members have expressed that ‘if people are not synagogue goers they often don’t know what’s going on.

Discussions with a wider group of older community members expressed disappointment at the lack of creative and stimulating activity that is provided for older people. Current provision of activities for older people within the Jewish community was described by some as ‘God’s waiting room’ with few opportunities for intellectual and personal growth.

# 1. Spiritual and Emotional Wellbeing

## Tefillah/ Brachot (Continued)

We want the community and its leaders to:

### STOP

- Equating spirituality with religious observance or synagogue attendance
- Putting the emphasis on services that appeal and revolve around young families
- Assuming that families all live close by
- Moving Judaism of all shades further to the religious right
- Seeing religious observance as the only way of keeping people connected to Jewish life
- Forgetting those members of their community who go into long-term care
- Seeing pastoral care as something only a rabbi or religious person can offer.
- Jollyng people along when they feel down

### START

- Identifying the core elements of spirituality so that we can all understand the term and its relevance to each individual
- Embracing community members, whatever their religious leaning, so that they feel included at all stages of their lives.
- Recognising that families may not be living in close proximity to each other and therefore may not be attending synagogue services together
- Understanding that people address their identity in different ways
- Being open to difficult conversations, such as frailty, mental capacity and life after death.

- Provide pastoral care to people wherever they are living.
- Talking about end of life issues and exploring the nuanced Jewish perspective on these areas.
- Putting on events for grandparent and grandchildren. These can include things to overcome the divide that can exist when one of the parents of the grandchildren isn't Jewish.

### LEARN FROM

- The Hospice movement
- End of life resources that exist within the Jewish community such as Jewish Care's work with the Gold Standard framework for end of life care, Rabbi Alex Wright's involvement with spirituality at the end of life, Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg's involvement with the hospice movement, Jewish Bereavement service
- Hiddur – a very successful American centre for Jewish ageing.
- Communities whose services embrace everyone as one family but also acknowledge different people's needs from services at different stages of their lives.
- Streaming services on line for those who cannot make it to synagogue.
- Opportunities to say Kaddish on line.
- The hospital visitation committee which remains cross communal whilst being managed by the United Synagogue.
- Synagogues such as Finchley Reform who have set up groups for people to openly express their feelings on growing older.

## 2. Intellectual and Life-long Learning

### Torah

'Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers, 'Grow, grow.'" (Talmud)  
'Do not say, when I have time I will study. Perhaps you will never have time' (Pirkei Avot)

- Intellectual stimulation that is attractive and affordable to all, regardless of education, background, age or social class
- Imaginative programming for older people that recognises their intellect, interests and abilities
- Investment in looking outside the Jewish community and/or outside the UK for ideas that can be adapted or adopted for the community

Many Jewish organisations have, for a long time, been very inward looking, safe in the knowledge that Jewish people come to them because of their need and wish for a Jewish environment. However, as people become more secular and also aware of the diversity of programmes on offer they often sacrifice their need and wish to be in a Jewish environment to take part in more meaningful activity. It is for this reason that Jewish organisations need to invest more in learning from the outside world about programmes that work with older people and not be afraid of making partnerships with organisations both in the wider community or, where it would have an effect of being cost effective and more creative, with other Jewish organisations.

There are a number of factors that make programmes accessible and that need to be taken into account to make them as inclusive as possible. The first of course is content, ensuring that the subject matter is of interest to a wide range of people and does not make assumptions that their age will determine their level of interest. Others may not be as obvious – the cost of many attractive programmes prohibit members of our community who are living on benefits or, as is the case of many

older people, those who may be asset rich but cash poor. The Centre for Social Justice tells us that three-quarters of today's pensioners are home owners but have very little reserve capital.

There are also access problems for many people with mobility issues, hearing and visual impairments. Programmes should be designed in an inclusive way, taking account of subsidies for certain groups, travel access and aids for engagement such as visual aids and hearing loops.

Current provision of older people's programmes provided often appears either simplistic, traditional or only aimed at those who are intellectual and educated. Discussion groups, bingo, musical entertainment and simple craft may work for some, but there does not appear to be much imaginative programming for those who do not wish to engage in these more conventional type activities.

There is a mistaken belief that 'big is beautiful' – groups are judged successful and worthwhile only if they are large. There is clearly a financial imperative since big groups bring in more money and can be seen to be better 'value' and yet small ones may allow for older people's needs to be more

carefully addressed. By using our amazing talent pool we should be able to create programmes led by community members for community members.

Programmes in Israel and America for supportive communities work on small local networks where members of local groups support each other to maintain independence and create meaningful relationships. These networks enable people to create friendship groups where people can share simple activities such as having a meal together, as well as offer their skills as good neighbours to maintain independence whilst not having to resort to 'welfare'. Those simple activities could be taking someone to an appointment, doing shopping for another, baking a cake, the list is endless.

Whilst there have been times that this approach has been trialled in the UK, in the past the barrier to new and flexible services, such as these supportive communities, has been that, whilst these programmes can be run by volunteers, they do need investment to ensure that there is a professional manager to oversee the work and link the members into services should the members need this. This sort of investment would create a real shift in

## 2. Intellectual and Life-long Learning

### Torah (Continued)

community thinking where often the need for investment is always seen to be building based, and these projects are more 'invisible' within the community.

We want the community and its leaders to:

#### STOP

- Building buildings as a solution for the need for more activity and services
- Dividing learning and intellectual stimulation by age groups

#### START

- Using the buildings we have across the community to full capacity
- Ensuring that the buildings we have are accessible at all times for those with disabilities
- Ensuring that programmes and resources take account of all members of the community, e.g. large print, lifts, transport
- Making education for the Jewish community affordable to all
- Seeing possibilities to widen activity of existing organisations so that it is the programme not the age cohort that drives the membership.
- Investing in community projects that are not building based
- Ensuring that our marketing is attractive to all ages
- Encouraging synagogues to produce and promote more intergenerational learning

#### LEARN FROM

- The U3A (University of the Third Age) approach where participants can be both pupil and educator, drawing from the talent pool of those who wish to attend.
- Limmud that plans for, and attracts teachers and learners from across the age and religious spectrum.
- The United Synagogue Living and Learning programme, especially the Kinloss Learning Centre, that creates vibrant learning opportunities that are open to all and of interest to all age groups.
- Programmes from LJCC that has high quality lectures
- The London School of Jewish Studies that stretches and challenges on Jewish subjects
- Melton programme a Jewish education course that was developed by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and attracts students of all ages from all backgrounds.
- NADFAS (The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts society) who offer monthly lectures on a broad range of topics as well as study days, educational visits and holidays at home and abroad.
- Prescription for Arts at Dulwich Picture Gallery who make creative art for older people meaningful and fun and invest in research so that their programme builds on the evidence of their research.

## 3. Active Participation & Connection

### Kehillah

‘Do not cut yourself off from your community and do not rely on yourself alone until the day of your death’ (Hillel)

- Buildings that are accessible to all and an attitude that is accepting of those who may not strictly adhere to constraints of halachah (religious law)
- Synagogue champions that keep the door open to all Jews when they move away from their community for whatever reason
- Breaking down the barriers that exist internally within the Jewish community
- Technology as a mean of engagement of all members

As we have said in our introduction, the Jewish community has the potential to create inclusive events and groups which transcend age divisions. The Jewish community has many opportunities to naturally include older people and encourage intergenerational relationships. For example, thinking more laterally there are activities that could be centred on the Jewish calendar or Jewish secular pursuits that lend themselves to creating a rich, unforced approach that naturally brings all age groups together.

Limmud has been hugely successful at creating a multigenerational model. It is not unusual to have three generations of one family learning together and this is true of all denominations of the Jewish community represented at their events. Limmud is particularly good at valuing both learning and teaching, questioning and knowledge. This means there is a natural respect given to good presenters of whatever age so that it is a common sight to see older people learning from younger as well as young people excitedly learning from people three times their age. Limmud achieves this by providing careful practical provision for all ages – for example early suppers for those with young children, babysitting, programmes for teens, young adults etc as well as making sure that the sessions

are accessible to those with mobility problems and that the accommodation is suitable for older people. It provides a huge choice of programming some which is aimed at a specific age group but it also allows for a lot of cross fertilization and intergenerational activities.

The key for successful participation relies on someone during the planning stage thinking about all the stakeholders who could be attending and planning for their attendance before an incident arises. With careful attention to transport, disabled access, hearing loops, large print, visual aids and so on, the events can then run and be accessible to all without drawing attention to people's different abilities.

Other places which focus on Jewish learning, in particular the LJCC but also LSJS and Leo Baeck, have also been successful at providing intergenerational learning. They provide daily activities which are particularly appealing to the retired as well as evening events. The LJCC is particularly good at putting on events which actively include older people whilst not being solely aimed at them. Their café provides a good meeting place and enables the different groups to mingle. Once again this has the effect of creating environments which are inclusive, accessible to older people but not exclusively for them.

The Jewish community has a long history of volunteering and giving time. As a community we should be embracing the concept of mutuality that has been developed by organisations such as Timebanking, where everyone is viewed as having a valuable skill they can give to others whether it be drawing on their life experiences or doing something practical for another. We need to draw on our history and ensure that people in the community always have the opportunity to give something to others, even at those times that they need more support for themselves.

Volunteering is not only good for one's mental well-being, it is often a way in which people can stay connected and express their community identity. A number of reports and books are now coming to the fore, identifying not just what an organisation or its beneficiaries gain from volunteers but also highlighting the way that volunteering creates social contact, personal development, personal satisfaction, a sharing of experience or skills and as reported by Alan Luks in his book 'The Healing Power of Doing Good' there is medical evidence that volunteering strengthens the immune system and enables a speedier recovery from surgery.

# 3. Active Participation & Connection

## Kehillah (Continued)

We want the community and its leaders to:

### STOP

- Excluding those who are, for whatever reason, outside of the mainstream synagogue communities.
- Seeing big as beautiful in the provision of activity.
- Only investing in young people
- Preventing people from attending synagogue on the grounds of halachah if they need to use aids to enable them to feel more connected to their community.

### START

- Really listening to older people
- Recognising that at least 40% of our synagogue membership is over the age of 65
- Recognising that older people have so much to give in wisdom, time and commitment
- Making our buildings accessible to all in an inclusive way
- Keeping in contact with all members of the synagogue – not just those that are regular attendees
- Seeing how creating links across the religious spectrum can meet the needs of the individuals within our community
- Seeing the eruv as a means to enable those with disabilities to be connected to others during Shabbat (the eruv is not just a means to enabling those with young families)
- Ensuring that those women who cannot climb the stairs of an orthodox synagogue are in a place that makes them feel included.
- Looking for solutions that enable people with disabilities to be active participants in their synagogue life.

- Helping people to find solutions to boosting their income by understanding better areas such as equity release.

### Learn from

- Other communities, such as local churches, and open all our community buildings for local activities. For example, open the synagogues for hairdressing, chiropody etc during the day
- Our history of participation with others and make this more effective across the religious spectrum of the Jewish community
- Technology and see how it can be used in a positive way
- Intergenerational activities, like the South Hampstead community project, that brings all ages together to learn from and support each other
- Activities like the Alyth weekend where access is checked out beforehand so that anyone, whatever their age, disability or situation can feel welcomed and included.
- The solutions the Eruv has created and find other ways that will enable everyone to be active participants in synagogue life.
- Orthodox communities where families do not sit together and ensure that anyone coming to a service has someone to sit with and feel connected to.
- Charedi initiatives that have per learning groups, and community schemes that actively encourage older people to volunteer to support the nuts and bolts of community events.

## 4. Independence and Healthy Living

Pe'ilut Cashah

'One must avoid that which harms the body and accustom oneself to that which is helpful and helps the body become stronger' (Maimonides)

- The use of technology that enables people to be active participants in their community
- Ensuring that we see what people can do and creating positive messages of all ages to all ages
- Transport schemes that enable people of all ages and disability access to all activities in the community

The community has, for a long time, had a very paternalistic approach to disability and old age. This means that for those providing services, whether they be paid professionals or volunteers, there needs to be a culture shift so that they look at what people can do, then what they want to do, and if anything needs to be put in place to enable them to do so. This should be done first and instead of deciding what people need without asking them.

Many Jewish communal buildings are old and, by their nature of design, exclude people from using them or mean that people who attend are unable to be full participants. Examples would include women's galleries with no Shabbat lift so that women have to sit in a segregated part of the men's section, or activities that happen upstairs in a building without easy access, a bimah that does not enable an older person to have an aliyah if they are a wheelchair user, or as simple as not having proper toilets for the disabled.

In addition, for those who may have a disability or live in an area that is not a hub of Jewish activity (such as south London), the biggest barrier to accessing services and

activities is transport. With a future of government cuts, we need to find a way of creating successful, sustainable and affordable transport solutions.

Over the past few years a new phenomenon has emerged that has yet to reach the UK Jewish community. Building on the concept of mutuality, organisations such as Timebanking and Participle have built communities by identifying the everyday things we all need and are able to offer each other. The old fashioned good neighbour schemes have re-emerged and been enhanced by the use of technology. The ethos behind both organisations is founded on the belief that there are many things we currently pay for that could be delivered by the exchange of goods and services within local community groups. From learning how to use a computer to helping with shopping, from baking a cake to babysitting and from individual support to local group parties, these have started to build communities in the most disparate and disconnected areas of society. These could be incredibly effective in strong Jewish communities such as Golders Green and Stamford Hill.



## 4. Independence and Healthy Living

### Pe'ilot Cashah (Continued)

We want the community and its leaders to:

#### STOP

- Taking over people's decisions and start seeing the person as having expertise in relation to their own situation.
- Seeing people one dimensionally, identifying them by what they cannot do.
- Deciding for older people that certain activities are inappropriate for their age.

#### START

- Encouraging people to take more responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- Creating opportunities for older people to learn how to use technology effectively.
- Building social networks that will create aids to independent living – eg shopping.
- Self-help groups that promote physical activity and active living.
- Creating real accessibility for people especially women who want to participate in synagogue life.
- Devising alternative transport systems that are successful and sustainable.

#### Learn from

- Organisations like Timebanking that create communities through mutual exchange of skills.
- Technology that assists people to live independently but does not replace human contact.
- The current personalisation agenda which allows people the autonomy to choose the support they feel would best help them to be independent even if this is not an established service, rather than make the decision for the person on what would be best for them.
- The Equalities Act and the positive messages it brings about on celebrating difference, and creating inclusion for everyone whatever their life style.
- Independent living facilities such as Jewish Care's Selig Court where there is the back up of care and access to the social aspect of living with others, with the privacy of having your own front door.
- Activities such as 'Race for Life' or health clubs which encourage all ages and abilities to join in physical activity together.
- Peer to Peer in Stamford Hill that holds regular events, including healthy living seminars, that are delivered by older people, to older people using their own expertise.

## 5. Care

### Gemillut Chesedim

‘Everyone is required to give Tzedakah, even while receiving it’ (*Maharam*)

‘We are all interdependent all the time’ (*Rabbi Yochanan*)

There is a basic principle to understand – **being old** does not necessarily equate with needing care.

Where people do need extra support we need:

- A greater commitment to Tikkun Olam that starts at home with people of all ages
- The creation of a central point for all information on care that is simple to access and keeps up to date
- Acknowledge and support the family carers within our community who may become isolated through their caring role
- The creation of supportive community circles that embrace the concepts of mutuality and intergenerational activity

As people age, and with better healthcare and personal knowledge of the need to take greater care of ourselves, many older people do not view their age as a hindrance to them being independent and pursuing active roles. For these people the traditional provision of older people’s service and activities is outdated and paternalistic.

The move by government towards personalisation means that people who do need to receive services to alleviate ill-health are encouraged to take more control over how they spend the money allocated to them and which services they feel would make life better for them.

This builds on the concept of ‘Every Child Matters’ which treated children as individuals rather than a group and focused upon how individuals can prosper as independently as possible.

The reality is that more people are living for longer within the community. Residential care is often seen as a last resort with the Care Homes Guide stating that 75% of people who now live in care homes have some form of dementia.

This means that the burden of care increasingly fall upon the family carer. The Kings Fund estimate that

over 25% of people over the age of 65 are themselves providing more than 20 hours of care to a relative. Judaism teaches us that we have a duty to care for our own, but this often then leads to a heavy burden of guilt for those who are either unable to do so because of their own ill-health or where work or family commitments make this almost impossible to do so.

Jewish communal organisations are trying to implement new schemes that will embrace the idea of creating and enhancing independence. For example, even within residential settings, Nightingale and Jewish Care are developing models that enable individuals to live independent lives with support when they need it.

In the community, the United Synagogue have long recognised the need for local support networks through their US Cares programme. More recently they have taken on board the fact that older people can themselves be the givers of community support and introduced a programme whereby regular telephone calls to those isolated in the community are made by their older members, giving them the opportunity to be givers rather than always be seen as recipients.

However, the breadth of services within the Jewish community is complex and hard to navigate. Whilst Jewish Care Direct is meant to be a one stop shop many people do not know this or feel that the person who they speak to does not understand them and their need for independence. As well as promoting and expanding the role of Jewish Care Direct, those we met with felt that a service like this could be enhanced by creating a bank of knowledge that uses older people and those with disabilities to produce, disseminate and offer practical advice to others. We should also look for community ambassadors who would be able to signpost and talk with authority to their local community members about what is available within the community in the way of care.

## 5. Care

### Gemillut Chesedim (Continued)

We want the community and its leaders to:

#### STOP

- Using paternalistic marketing campaigns around care
- Seeing what people can no longer do
- Seeing care as 'women's work', something that is contracted out to non-Jews or something that is only provided by volunteers

#### START

- Promoting care as a reputable profession for Jewish people
- Paying carers a good salary that reflects the respect for that profession
- Use synagogue and other communal buildings for more localised services
- Allowing people to be the experts on their own health and social situations
- Seeing the person and what they can do
- Visiting our community members who live in care homes and help them stay connected to the synagogue and community
- Ensuring that family carers are supported and enabled to

continue being active community members with a life of their own.

- Educating the community on the cost of care and the different options available to making financial provision that will meet their particular needs and wishes.

#### Learn from

- The training that Rabbis in the more progressive movements receive on pastoral care.
- Neighbourhood watch schemes that ensure people are safe and have all they need and that encompass those who live nearby even if they do not belong to our particular synagogue.
- The expert patients project within the NHS that uses the experience of those who use services to develop new and existing ones.
- The provision of support to family carers provided through Jewish Care.
- What we do well, share this and build on it across the community.
- Hiddur (the American organisation for Ageing in the Jewish community) and support it gives to the family – for example how to deal with medical interventions for older relatives

# Next Steps

## By March 2012

Launch the Agenda to a wide range of community groups and leaders, and ensure press coverage that extends beyond the Jewish community.

Create an ongoing dialogue with older people and community leaders through a variety of mechanisms, including blogging, open forums, meetings and press.

From April 2012 begin a process of implementation of the Agenda through influence, partnership, research and planning:

### Influence

- The involvement of an extended 'Jewish Care Direct' that will engage older people as volunteer peer advisors.
- Synagogue bodies to commit to investment into older people participation with the creation of appropriate posts and creative solutions that enable older people to become actively involved in all areas of synagogue and community life.
- Communities to create an annual mapping to see where Jewish people from their community are physically, spiritually and in their connection to their community and identify ways to keep them engaged at whatever level meets their needs at that stage in life.

## Research and Planning

- By June 2012 identify funding and create a partnership group to research why people do not participate at present in their local communities and services that are already being provided.
- By October 2012 identify funding and create a partnership group to research and make recommendations, with an action plan, on the role and position of older women within the Jewish community to include:
  - Older women and their role in the synagogue
  - Women representation at all levels and roles in our communal organisations, both in lay and professional capacities.
  - Isolation of women as they continue to live longer than men in the community.
  - The issues facing single women within the community.

## Partnership

- By January 2013 begin the creation of a champion or professional in each synagogue community who is responsible for ensuring that members remain connected in some way that is meaningful for them.
- Creation of better local links for all ages by breaking down the barriers that currently exist across the different strand of the community. Using communal organisations, such as Jewish Care, find examples and create new opportunities for people to come together in the pursuit of an interest or activity.
- Commitment and creation of opportunities that bring together the generations by looking at commonalities within the age spectrum rather than differences.
- By September 2012 the compilation of a bank of good practice from across the world or accessible and appropriate activity for older people, together with appropriate links with other organisations, Jewish and non-Jewish, who are pursuing the same goals.

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– Holocaust Education Trust  
– Industrial Dwellings Society  
– Jewish Association of Business Ethics  
– Jewish Association for the Mentally Ill  
– Jewish Action and Training for Sexual Health  
– Jewish Blind and Disabled  
– Jewish Community Centre for London  
– Jewish Child’s Day  
– Jewish Community Housing  
– Jewish Marriage Council  
– Jewish Museum  
– Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade  
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Liberal Judaism  
Limmud  
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Nightingale  
Norwood  
South London Jewish Community Care Forum  
United Synagogue

# Action Plan

	Must do	Should do	Would like to do
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify funding for continued research on isolation and participation</li> <li>• Identify funding for community organisations to implement their area of the action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a cross communal dialogue group to look at some quick wins and longer term plans</li> <li>• Identify funding for a separate research on older women in the community</li> </ul>	
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify new activities that engage older people in community life</li> <li>• Identify funding for those who cannot afford to participate in community life</li> <li>• Look for sustainable solutions to transport issues</li> <li>• Ensure that, where appropriate, community activities are intergenerational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement some of the recommendations on older women</li> <li>• Create opportunities for cross-communal activities that engage older people</li> <li>• Create older people champions in each community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate streaming opportunities for engagement of isolated people in synagogue services</li> </ul>
Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure physical access that does not segregate older people from synagogue life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a bank of good practice of Jewish and non-Jewish activity that pursues the same goals of inclusiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open all community buildings to facilitate cross communal and intergenerational activity</li> </ul>

# Glossary of Terms

## Personalisation

Personalisation means starting with the person as an individual with strengths, preferences and aspirations and putting them at the centre of the process of identifying their needs and making choices about how and when they are supported to live their lives. Funding for services is then allocated directly to the individual so that they can purchase the services they want to help them live as independently as possible.

## Timebanking

A concept that started in the USA and has been adopted through Timebanking UK. Time banks link people locally to share their time and skills. Everyone's time is equal: one hour of your time earns you one time credit to spend when you need. The aim of the time bank is not just to exchange skills but to use the exchange of skills to build personal relationships and thus break down isolation and build intergenerational communities.

## Supportive communities

There are a number of models for supportive communities but all have a general principle of developing a service that harnesses the skills and resources of older people and creating communities that combine public, private and voluntary contributions to meet older people's needs and desires for practical help, stronger social networks and a renewed sense of purpose.

ResponseAbility  
Jewish thinking in action

**JEWISH CARE**