

Connection, Continuity and Community

British Jewish
Women Speak Out

Synagogues can do
participate equally in prayer

The divisions within our

Why shouldn't the role of women
within synagogues be challenged
future of the community

intra-community networking
Jewish education is the
good understanding of Hebrew

Women are still

Connection, Continuity and Community

British Jewish Women Speak Out

The 2009 Women's Review was initiated and implemented by an independent group of professional and lay women led by Rosalind Preston OBE. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the Review group and are based on the extensive research undertaken by it. The Review acknowledges the administrative support of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

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Project Manager Marlena Schmool used her considerable organisational skills to oversee the management of the project. Her understanding of statistics and demography together with her knowledge of surveys and questionnaires has guided the group throughout. I could not have undertaken the work without her.

I am indebted to author and journalist, Tobe Aleksander, who dedicated her energy and creativity to the writing of this document. Her ability to comprehend women's priorities and to draw out themes and messages from the hundreds of responses we received has fashioned the focus of our report.

Technology has played a vital role throughout this exercise and sincere thanks are due to Daniel Vulkan, The Board of Deputies IT expert, for his professional expertise and unfailing willingness to help and advise whenever asked. I am deeply grateful for his generous support.

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Rosalind Preston OBE

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Introduction

Since the publication of *Women in the Jewish Community* in 1994 I have been asked on numerous occasions, 'What happened to your report and its many recommendations?'.*

In 2008 I approached the Board of Deputies of British Jews with a view to re-visiting the work we had carried out a decade and a half earlier. It soon became apparent that we had to broaden the scope of our original project, reaching out not just to those women who contributed to the ideas in our 1994 report and whose lives had now moved on, but to a whole new generation of younger Jews. The intervening fifteen years had seen many changes in family structure and attitudes to personal relationships, in the economic climate and above all in the ways in which we communicate through new technologies. How had these changes impacted on women's lives, on their approaches to their Judaism and on their sense of Jewish heritage? How had they influenced women's perception of community?

One of the most exciting elements of the 2009 Review was our on-line survey facilitated by SurveyMonkey. Through this survey along with our focus and discussion groups, Facebook site, questionnaires and face to face meetings we elicited the views and opinions of almost a thousand Jewish women.

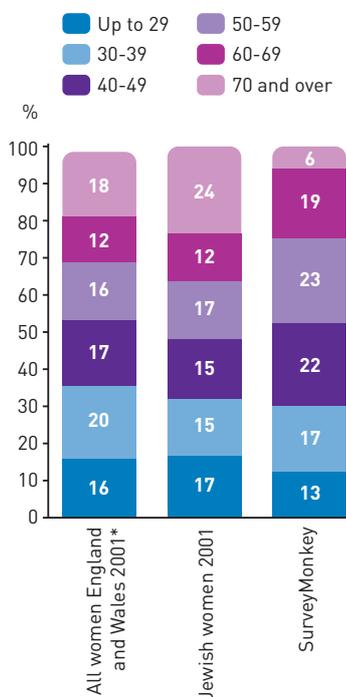
We decided to let the women speak for themselves and this report *Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak Out* is the result. We believe it represents the authentic voice of female Jewry in Britain today. Women are very articulate about their desire for a cohesive, dynamic, inclusive community. We sincerely hope they will be listened to and that the leadership of the community, across the religious spectrum, will heed their concerns and their hopes.

Rosalind Preston OBE

June 2009

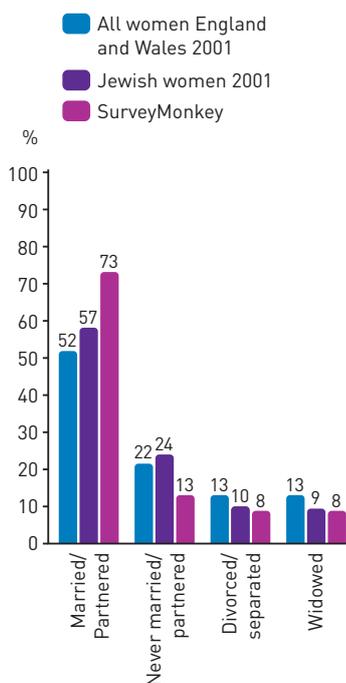
**The 1994 Review was carried out at the behest of the Chief Rabbi, Professor Sir Jonathan Sacks.*

2009 Review process



Age structure for women aged 18 and over

* Total = 99% because of rounding



Marital status of women aged 20 and over

The objective of the 2009 Review was to re-visit the recommendations of the 1994 report *Women in the Jewish Community* and to pursue those issues which appeared most relevant today.

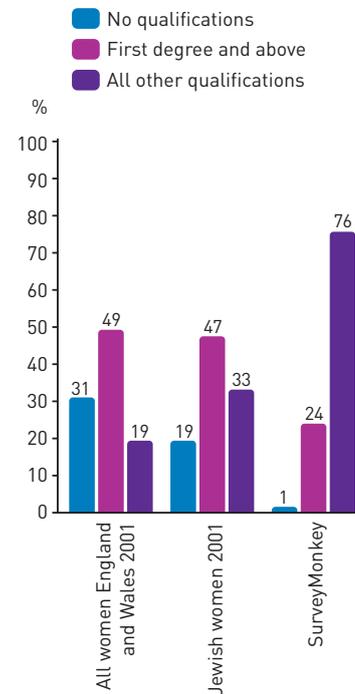
Rosalind Preston, who headed the 1994 Review, formed a Task Force to take the new project forward. Many of its members were also involved in the original review. The Task Force circulated the 1994 Recommendations to a group of men and women community activists asking them to select the topics which they regarded as currently most pertinent and suggest additional issues which may not have made the 1994 agenda. Based on their responses a series of focus and discussion groups were held in South London, Leeds, Newcastle and Scotland. Members of the Task Force then each led a number of topic centred sub-groups circulating questionnaires to the heads of major organisations and key professionals. They also facilitated a further series of focus groups and discussions. Based on the outcome of this work the Task Force identified a limited range of core issues for further exploration through a national online questionnaire. The SurveyMonkey questionnaire was available via the Board of Deputies website from October 2008 until mid-January 2009. The questionnaire was promoted through adverts in the Jewish press, public relations activity, flyers and word of mouth. Hard copies were available on request. In addition the 2009 Review set up a Facebook group. Over 700 people, overwhelmingly women, (only 7% were men), responded to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire and it is their opinions and voices along with the background work which preceded the launch of the questionnaire which form the basis of this report.

This report makes no claims to be statistically representative. The respondents to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire were self selecting. Respondents range in age from 18 to 80. Almost half (45%) are aged 40 – 59 and only 11% are aged 65 and over. They live in all parts of the country – including locations away from established communities. Over two thirds (68%) are in the Greater London area, 13% in large regional communities and 11% elsewhere. The women are mainly married or living with a partner (73%) although significantly just over a quarter (27%) are ‘single’. Most (88%) are synagogue members and of these, more than half (57%) are

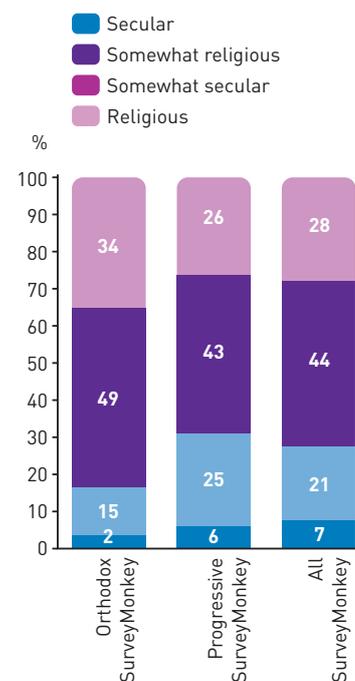
members of an Orthodox congregation and around a third (32%) are Progressive. Their religious outlook is broad. The figures highlight the fact that making assumptions about women’s religious outlook based solely upon their synagogue affiliation can be misleading. Of those who define their outlook the majority (45%) describe themselves as ‘somewhat religious’, just over a quarter (26%) as ‘religious’ and just over a fifth (21%) as ‘somewhat secular’. Among Progressive respondents a quarter (26%) describe themselves as ‘religious’, almost a half (43%) as ‘somewhat religious’ and a quarter (25%) as ‘somewhat secular’. A third (34%) of Orthodox respondents regard themselves as ‘religious’, just under half (49%) as ‘somewhat religious’ and 12% as ‘somewhat secular’. The respondents are very highly educated. Over three quarters (76%) are educated to degree level and beyond. For fuller demographic comparisons please see the charts shown on these pages.

The 2009 Review report is drawn primarily from qualitative rather than quantitative data. The highlighted themes are the result of an analysis of the write-in statements from the SurveyMonkey questionnaire as well as the comments from the various focus groups. The write-in statements provide a personal interpretation of the quantitative elements of the questionnaire and offer much deeper insights than those afforded by the numerical data alone. The themes are presented within the community’s demographic framework, drawing mainly from the 2001 census of England and Wales, which for the first time included a question about religion.

There are three sections to the main report: connection, continuity, and community. Each section begins with an overview highlighting the significant themes and citing appropriate quantitative data from the SurveyMonkey questionnaire. There are then a series of statements from the Task Force together with relevant quotations from the write-in comments by the SurveyMonkey respondents. All the quotations are tagged with information supplied by the respondents on the questionnaire about their geographic location, marital status, age, synagogue affiliation and religious outlook. Tagging may be incomplete because some respondents did not provide all the data. Following the three main sections is the separate report of the 2009 Review Agunah Group. A glossary can be found at the end of the report.



Educational attainment



Religious outlook of SurveyMonkey respondents according to type of synagogue membership

[†] All data relating to the 2001 census are taken from **Census 2001: National report for England and Wales (2003). London, HMSO**

Connection

Inclusion and exclusion, engagement and disengagement, enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, these are the themes of the 2009 Review. The review process identified three key factors which influence the extent to which women feel connected to, or disconnected from, their Judaism and the Jewish community: attitudes towards 'family'; interpretations of *halacha*; and personal knowledge.

The historical pattern of a monolithic, married Jewish community is slowly but surely being undermined. There is seepage at both ends. Younger people are increasingly choosing to cohabit (although cohabitation is not the exclusive preserve of young Jews) and also to enter into relationships with non Jews. People generally are living longer and as women tend to outlive men, there is a growing population of single, older women. Divorce is on the increase but post divorce men, rather than women, are more likely to remarry. These trends are important because they underscore the underlying themes of this report.

There appears to be something of a reality gap between the ways in which Jews today live (and will increasingly live) their diverse lives and the ways in which the leaders of institutional Judaism would ideally wish they might live their lives. Women are very articulate about this reality gap. On one hand they talk about what they regard as the perceived norm of the Jewish community – a stereotypically married, heterosexual, halachically Jewish couple with children. On the other, they describe through their personal experiences and observations a scenario which contradicts this stereotype. This inevitably raises questions about what is the family norm within Jewish communal life – or if there can any longer be a predominant norm – and the extent to which the community organises communal and spiritual life to reflect the current demographics.

The SurveyMonkey respondents overwhelmingly regard inclusivity (86%) and equal opportunities (75%) as 'very important' issues in terms of synagogue and prayer. Getting on for half (42%) say that inclusivity is personally important and just over a third (35%), equal opportunities. Of these, Progressive women (43%) are more likely than Orthodox women (30%) to cite equal opportunities as personally important but the fact that almost one third of Orthodox-oriented women say that being able to participate fully in synagogue and ritual life is personally important is noteworthy. However, Orthodox women (46%) are more likely than Progressive women (38%) to say that inclusivity is important to them. In citing equal opportunities and inclusivity as personally important it is likely that these two groups have different starting points. For Orthodox respondents inclusivity is important because it is something to which they aspire, and which they regard as lacking, in their religious and communal lives. For Progressive respondents equal opportunities are central to the choices they make in their religious affiliation and practice, even where Progressive options may not be their natural spiritual 'home'. Hebrew language is cited by just over half (53%) of all respondents as a 'very important' issue today with a fifth (20%) saying it is personally important. This is more likely to be true among the over 60s group (25%) than the under 40s (14%). They are also more likely to be Orthodox women.

Women are very clear about the benefits of an inclusive community. There is a strong sense that the leadership of the community must acknowledge and accommodate the changes in the structure of family life. There is also a huge feeling of dissatisfaction among singles which crosses all religious boundaries. Women in mainstream orthodoxy express their frustration about what they see as archaic and inconsistent attitudes towards women's participation in synagogal leadership and spiritual life.

Inclusivity is everyone's gain

We cannot afford to be exclusive. The arithmetic is not difficult. The genetic pool of born-Jews is very small. Unless we effectively engage those already affiliated Jews and embrace others who feel, for whatever reason, disconnected from communal life then we will see an unconscious drift away from Jewish heritage and an inevitable demographic downward spiral. However, a vibrant community is about more than numbers. It is about the quality of engagement with the community. We need to invest in a professional approach to seek out and meet the needs of all members of the community.



We should all be treated as equals no matter what our level of religiousness, our gender, our financial situation and our marital circumstances.

Outer NW London, married, 34, Orthodox, somewhat secular

If a synagogue is not inclusive, its very existence is meaningless.

Inner London, married, 51 years, Orthodox, somewhat secular

People drift away because they feel undervalued or not rich or clever or knowledgeable enough to be part of the community.

Anon

We appear to exclude without realising.

Anon

A non-inclusive community misses out. People within a non-inclusive community miss out.

Outer NW London, divorced, early 50's, somewhat secular

All people should be considered important enough to be included in all aspects of Jewish life.

Leeds, married, 71, Orthodox, somewhat secular

The British Jewish community is very small and we cannot ignore or marginalise half the community on the basis of their gender and expect to survive.

Edinburgh, married, 42, Progressive (Liberal), somewhat religious





The community is still geared towards couples and traditional nuclear families and that makes life very hard for those who do not fit into this narrow category.

South London, married, 50, Progressive (Reform), religious

I am concerned about the emphasis on marriage and family life, and feel strongly that non-traditional family units should be welcomed in the community.

Edinburgh, single, 22, Progressive (Liberal), somewhat religious

One parent families need a lot more support especially over bar/bat mitzvah where children are required to sit on the other side of the mechitza.

Outer NW London, married, 38, religious

The growth of single parent families within the Jewish community is a continuing trend, and the future of the children involved is more at risk unless there is greater communal support for those families.

Outer NW London, married, 39, Orthodox, religious

I increasingly see confused Jewish women in non-Jewish partnerships without any status whatsoever. Jewish men with non-Jewish partners do not connect into the community at all.

Leeds, married to a non-Jew, 45, Progressive, somewhat religious

Facing up to the realities of new family norms

One of the major shifts since 1994 has been the general acknowledgement of far reaching changes in family structure. The leaders of institutionalised British Jewry must recognise that the community is a microcosm of the wider modern world. The nuclear family of Jewish mother, Jewish father and two Jewish children will not necessarily predominate. We have to accept that there will be a rich variety of prevailing family structures. Single parent families, complex step-family arrangements, mixed faith and same sex partnerships, couples who choose to cohabit rather than marry, increasing numbers of people who will remain single; these are the realities we must embrace and to which we must positively respond.

We need a better understanding of families with non-Jewish partners and more attempts to make the whole family feel welcome and involved.

Edinburgh, married to non-Jew, 28, Progressive, somewhat secular

There are more and more children in the Orthodox community who have non-Jewish fathers. More needs to be done to help their mothers to feel comfortable in the community and to help the children, particularly the boys, to feel part of the community.

Outer London, married, 57, Orthodox, religious

The issue of gay Jews is buried in the sand. 1 in 10 people are gay – that’s a lot of lonely orthodox women who are single or stuck in marriage with no grasp of what to do.

Manchester, civil partnership, 29, Progressive, religious



Single perceptions of a family-oriented community

Congregations across the religious spectrum urgently need to reflect on the effects of an historically family-orientated ethos on an ever growing single population. There appears to be an endemic complacency among many congregations who fail to recognise the issues confronting Jews who are single and therefore do not conform to the familiar married-with-children stereotype. For many singles, communal life is an intimidating and excluding experience. We have to acknowledge the great diversity of circumstance, expectation and outlook among single Jews. There is often a tendency for institutionalised Judaism to compartmentalise its constituents: singles, families, the young, the elderly. The single-only focus for many is demeaning and irrelevant. The reality is that across the congregation individuals will have as many different needs as they will share common ones. We must respond to both.



...it is not rocket science to realize how vulnerable a lone woman feels when walking into a room where all others are couples...

Outer NW London, divorced, 63, Orthodox, secular

Being single at 20 is acceptable. At 30 folk wonder why and at 40 one is written off.

Outer NW London, married, 56, Masorti, somewhat secular

I am the mother of unmarried, un-partnered older children and am worried about the extent that they will be included, or excluded, from traditional Jewish life, especially when we the parents are no longer here.

Anon

As a single person inclusivity in the community becomes an important issue.

Inner NW London, single, 73, Orthodox, religious

As a single woman, it can be difficult to meet people and get involved at shul. Men know each other as they meet at weekday minyan, are called for aliyot, whereas as a woman it's easy never to speak to new people.

Inner NW London, single, 31, Orthodox, religious

I am divorced and in my 60's and feel marginalized in the activities of the synagogue.

Leeds, 60s, Progressive (Reform), religious

I'm single and I HATE going to the Passover Seder and being put on a table with all the other singles, as if we're un-integratable.

North East, single, 59, Progressive (Reform), somewhat secular

I still feel you need a man by your side to feel integrated.

North London, divorced, 38, Orthodox, somewhat religious

I am not a synagogue member mainly because I have never felt that anyone is much bothered by single women with no children.

Inner NW London, single, 55, somewhat secular

As a progressive Jew I participate equally in prayer, ritual and shul management. However, as a single woman I am frequently excluded as Judaism is family orientated.

Inner NW London, divorced, 56, Progressive, religious

Having divorced twice I know how it feels not to be included and I am someone who is fairly orthodox and carries out communal activities.

Leeds, 61, Orthodox, somewhat religious

Shuls are great for families but not for 'singletons' – I no longer belong to one!

Outer NW London, divorced, 56, Secular





Learning or physically disabled children and young people and those with mental health issues should be included in every aspect of learning. Jews most of all should understand the issues around exclusion.

Anon

I believe that children with special needs should go to where those needs will best be addressed, regardless of the faith of the institution. Jewish education should reach beyond the school gate.

Oxford, single, 21, Orthodox, somewhat religious

Individuals with special needs are isolated in a number of settings. Religious practice and education should be an inclusive environment, rather than one which excludes and isolates.

*Edinburgh, single, 22,
Progressive, somewhat religious*

People with special needs are in danger of losing their Jewish identity. I have one such adult in my community and his care home has been recently very active in enabling him to participate in community activities, which makes him and his family very happy.

Essex, divorced, 58, Reform, religious

Mental health problems are perhaps the most neglected area for our society at large, and all the more so for the Jewish community, and even more so for women in our community. We should work to dissolve the stigma attached to mental health issues, and help people to integrate in our community.

*Inner London, 34, single,
no synagogue membership attends Orthodox, religious*



Special needs and inclusivity

The Jewish community's perception of special needs – in its widest interpretation – has not kept pace with the secular community. It is the area in which the least progress has been made since the 1994 Review. Provision is patchy and frequently relies on the intervention of passionate individuals; money is often the key. Far from dragging our heels, the Jewish community should be leading the way in special needs provision. It is unconscionable that Jews, regardless of their age, are allowed to become disenfranchised from their Judaism because of their mental or physical health.



It is good for children to see their mothers and other women involved in everything rather than just preparing food.

Outer NW London, married, 46, Masorti, somewhat secular

I am a member of a Liberal community... it would not tempt me to be part of a community where I was not allowed to participate fully.

Inner NW London, married, 65, Progressive (Liberal), somewhat religious

We were happy with a woman running the State of Israel but not the shul board.

married, 33, somewhat religious

A 1950's attitude to women means the main roles in shul are still tea-making and charity. Working women are not satisfied by this narrow view and disengage.

Leeds, married, 45, Progressive (Reform), somewhat religious

I was Vice Chairman of my Synagogue and head a number of other US development and advisory groups but I am not allowed to be a Chairman of my Synagogue or sit as a main Board Trustee. Our rabbinic colleagues are happy to have my advice and input but not to formally recognise this contribution and the time that I give.

North London, married, 53, Orthodox, somewhat religious

Modern working women often find it hard to reconcile their role within the United Synagogue with their role outside it.

North London, married, 37, Orthodox, somewhat religious

Shul is a men's club.

Lancashire, married, 28, Orthodox, somewhat religious

As I take an equal role to my husband in every aspect of our secular life it is alienating to feel that I do not have equal opportunity to join and participate in the synagogue.

Inner NW London, married, 34, Orthodox, religious



Communal leadership for the twenty-first century

Leadership in Orthodox Jewry remains an anachronism. The community is brimming with dynamic, able women whose business and management skills are acknowledged and rewarded within their secular lives but who cannot receive proper recognition within the community simply because of their sex. It is the community's loss that these women's abilities are not effectively utilised. Unless women are offered opportunities to lead the community on an equal footing with men the gap between their secular and their communal lives will become unbridgeable. Young women have no desire to sustain another generation of tea-makers. They will find other more productive outlets for their talents, potentially outside of the Jewish community.

Why shouldn't the role of women within synagogues be challenged? It's time orthodox Judaism moved into the 21st century.

Brighton, widow, 63, Secular

When a woman can operate in a man's world in business and in every other aspect it no longer makes sense for equal opportunities not to exist within prayer and a synagogue environment.

Outer NW London, married, 44, Progressive (Reform), religious

Equality in spirituality

Women’s participation in spiritual life is often a rabbinic lottery within mainstream Orthodox Jewry. There is a lack of coherence about policy and its implementation which needs to be addressed. If men’s halachic role underpins their relationship with synagogue life, it is not surprising that without such underpinning women in many communities feel disenfranchised. Enlightened attitudes towards female participation can greatly enhance how connected women feel to their Judaism, and more importantly, the extent to which they can in turn inspire and enable their children to connect with their Jewish heritage.

There is no need for a “glass ceiling” in modern Judaism. As they say: “Where there’s a rabbinic will there’s a halachic way”. The way pettifogging bits of ritual are hallowed makes me sick and tired. It’s all about power not about law.

*Birmingham, married, 54,
Progressive (Reform), somewhat secular*

I am comfortable with my role in the community and have no desire to participate further, but the opportunities should be available for those who do.

Anon

I was born Orthodox, but feel very excluded from the religion as a woman. Living in a society where we are attaining equality, I see no valid reason for this not to be mirrored in my spiritual life.

*Yorkshire, single, 38,
Progressive (Reform). somewhat secular*

As a Reform Jew, I highly value being able to wear a tallit, participate in all prayers and read from Torah as these enhance my spirituality and connection to the Jewish people.

Manchester, separated, 58, Progressive (Reform), somewhat religious



I no longer want to be a spectator at shul. I would like to be called up when I have yahrzeit and to be able to say kaddish and bensch gomel and to make a third at grace after meals.

*Inner NW London,
married, 73,
Orthodox, religious*

I was born Orthodox, but feel very excluded from the religion as a woman. Living in a society where we are attaining equality, I see no valid reason for this not to be mirrored in my spiritual life.

*Yorkshire, single, 38,
Progressive (Reform). somewhat secular*

I’m a modern orthodox woman and I find many women discouraged from coming to the synagogue because they feel that there is nothing there for them.

*North London, married, 30,
Orthodox, religious*

I do not feel part of the community unless I can participate fully in ritual and prayer.

*Leeds, married, 45,
Progressive (Reform)*

I have always been made to feel unimportant in Judaism despite, and probably because of, having a frum background.

Leeds, widow



It is very difficult to give a positive role model for daughters if their mothers are excluded...

*Leeds, married, 45,
Orthodox, somewhat religious*

Lack of inclusivity can leave women feeling dispossessed not only from their community but most worryingly from their G-D.

*Manchester, married, 50,
Orthodox, religious*

Connection through language

Hebrew language is at the heart of Jewish learning and practice. Without an understanding of Hebrew, religious services and studies often remain inaccessible especially within Orthodox Jewry. We need to broaden opportunities for Hebrew language learning at all levels and to find new means of inspiring and helping young people to acquire those language skills. Rabbinic leaders should also recognise that many of their congregants, particularly women, possess a limited knowledge of Hebrew and therefore they must find ways to make services – and study – more meaningful and more engaging.



A lack of Hebrew means the disenfranchisement of swathes of the community from access to text, tefillah and Jewish literacy.

Inner NW London, single, 28, Orthodox, religious

I was not taught Hebrew, and therefore find participation in services awkward.

Oxford, widow, 66, Orthodox, somewhat secular

There can be little understanding of the synagogue service and prayer within a United Synagogue setting without a knowledge of Hebrew.

Outer NW London, married, 61, Orthodox, religious

I think that a fuller understanding and ability to argue one's ground with recalcitrant men can only come from a deep awareness of halacha. Hebrew language is extremely important in developing this awareness.

Inner NW London, divorced, 38, Orthodox, religious

If we understand what we are saying in shul, it would make it more meaningful.

North London, separated, 56, Orthodox, religious

The key to involvement is literacy. It is vital to be able to read Hebrew fluently and follow the leyning and then hearing the leyning should be pleasurable.

Leeds, married, 50, Orthodox, religious

Education and learning for me is the basis of Jewish culture and this starts with a good understanding of Hebrew.

Brighton, married, 35, Progressive, religious

When I sit in shul I see many women who cannot read Hebrew and therefore cannot join in. They look disconnected.

Outer NW London, married, 29, Orthodox, religious



Continuity

Education remains at the top of the agenda. Women see a direct correlation between effective educational interventions and the future well-being of the Jewish community. Women perceive the need for an holistic approach to learning. Our children's desire to connect with their Jewish heritage, particularly in adulthood, will depend not just on the quality of the Jewish education they receive in their formative years but on the ability of their families to support their growing understanding of Judaism within the home. We cannot hope to educate and motivate the next generation of children if we do not educate and inspire their parents. Mothers have a pivotal role especially as traditional family units become more fractured. Unless we can find ways of engaging women and giving them the confidence to mentor their children in Jewish belief and practice, then regardless of whether our children participate in formal Jewish learning programmes we run a real risk of producing a disaffected and disconnected generation of young adults.

The 1994 Recommendations highlighted 'the urgent need for suitably qualified and charismatic Jewish educators'. Fifteen years on almost three-quarters (73%) of the SurveyMonkey respondents cite Jewish

educators as very important and over half (54%) say the issue is personally important. There is no difference in terms of the synagogue affiliation or the educational attainment of respondents. Those aged 30 – 59 are more likely (58%) to say Jewish educators are personally important than those over 60 (48%). The consistency of personal need is marked across age groups, status and religious affiliation. Women recognise that they need to expand their educational horizons. We have already seen that they understand the impact of their limited knowledge on their sense of connectedness. As we stated earlier over half the respondents believe Hebrew language is very important and a fifth say it is personally important which underlines how women feel about their capacity to participate in worship.

Women regard education and effective educators as the means by which to ensure the future vitality of the community. They recognise the critical role that women have to play in securing their children's Jewish identity. Equally they acknowledge the shortcomings of their own knowledge and understanding and the impact that this will have on their ability to influence the next generation. Women express a thirst for learning and a demand for unrestricted educational opportunities.



It is essential that all Jewish children are taught a thorough Jewish education, ensuring they have a clear understanding of our values before they embark on adulthood.

*Manchester, married, 30.
Orthodox, somewhat secular*

Jewish education is the future of the community.

*North London, single, 23,
Masorti, somewhat secular*

Education is vitally important if we want the next generation to have any connection to Judaism at all.

Single, 22, Orthodox, religious

Education, the future of the community

For the majority of Jewish women, education is the number one priority. In order to flourish as a community we have to instil in our children a love and understanding of their Jewish heritage. However, we cannot pass on what we don't ourselves love and understand. From our own experiences we recognise how ignorance and unfamiliarity serve to fuel a sense of disconnection in adulthood. Yet education is not simply the preserve of the young; opportunities for lifelong learning are crucial to our continuity.

Education, well delivered, should help to inspire children to identify and remain so throughout their lives, thus going some of the way to stem disconnection amongst our young adults.

Leeds, married, 58, Orthodox, somewhat secular

I have three kids. Educating the future generation is most important to keep Judaism alive.

Inner NW London, married, 40, Orthodox





Parents as well as educators are the backbone of Judaism to pass on the culture to future generations. It is not always parents, however, who have the knowledge.

Leeds, widow

Jewish education should be made available to the parents more than the kids. There is very little point trying hard to educate kids without any kind of support from the parents.

Married, 32, religious

During my childhood I learned my Jewish knowledge from my parents and grandparents. Such knowledgeable people are no longer there so today's children require first rate Jewish educators who will inspire the young.

Liverpool, married, 71, Orthodox

Whose responsibility?

Jewish education is founded on the biblical premise that it is a parent's duty to teach their children. The reality is today's parents are often unable to fulfil this task and grandparents, for a variety of reasons, similarly so. While formal Jewish educational programming is crucial, we should not underestimate the vital contribution of parents. If children and young people perceive their families are disconnected from Judaism then even the most inspiring interventions will be less than effective in securing a lifelong bond. Education must be a partnership between home, school and other programmes; it must embrace parents and other adults as much as children and young people.

In some cases children rely entirely on what they are being taught at school for their Jewish education and identity.

Outer NW London, Orthodox, religious

Jewish education does not always come from the home and children can often be influenced for the better by a good Jewish education at school.

North London, divorced, Orthodox



Empowering mothers – the key to continuity

Disempowered Jewish mothers disempower their daughters. Unless we find the means to empower women through knowledge there is a real danger that the community will atrophy. We cannot afford to create another generation of ill-educated and consequently disenfranchised women who will in turn pass on to their own daughters – and their sons – an ever-growing sense of disconnection. This is not what women want for themselves, their children or the community.



There need to be excellent Jewish educators who can accept that within the mainstream it is women who are most likely to be supporting their children’s Jewish education and who are prepared to teach women all aspects of Judaism.

Inner NW London, 63, married, Orthodox, somewhat religious

My Cheder education was poor so I have poor knowledge and Hebrew reading skills. This has hindered me in taking my involvement forward. I do not want this to happen to my own children, especially my daughter.

Anon

I teach Bat Mitzvah girls and still find that the majority of their mothers have learning needs and wants that they have not been able, or encouraged to fulfil. I worry the girls will learn from these role models that although they have a Bat Mitzvah, as an adult they don’t need to be competent within shul.

Anon

Some women have not had the Hebrew education that men have had and feel inferior about it

Leeds, married, 57, Orthodox, somewhat religious

As a child I never acquired the knowledge in Cheder that I would have had had I been a boy.

West London, widow, 79, Progressive (Liberal), somewhat secular

I think women need to be taught how to daven. Many of them never really learn, so in shul they talk, and then wonder why their kids wriggle around.

Outer NW London, married, 29, Orthodox, religious

There is scope for essential Jewish education for non affiliated women or for women from non observant backgrounds who want to be able to impart a sense of what it means to be Jewish, including the understanding and application of Jewish rituals to their families.

Inner NW London, married



The thirst for knowledge

It is time women’s desire for learning was taken seriously. Jewish women celebrate their educational achievements in the secular world where their levels of academic attainment exceed those in the wider community. It is therefore deeply disheartening that so many respondents feel frustrated by the learning opportunities currently available, especially within mainstream Orthodox Jewry. With women playing the pivotal role in securing the future of the next generation of Jews it is short-sighted to deny them equal access to all aspects of study. Educational opportunity is not simply about how much is on offer but what is on offer and how, when and where it is delivered. We need first class responsive teachers who can meet women’s educational ambitions. We should aim to produce not just learned individuals but more high calibre women educators as role models. We have to satisfy this thirst for unbounded knowledge.



Still an assumption within Orthodox Judaism that Jewish education for women is not crucial.

Yorkshire, divorced, 41, Progressive (Reform), religious

My secular education and career was entirely based on meritocracy and my spiritual world and religious education should be no different.

North London, married, 32, Masorti, secular

We need more female teachers teaching women more Jewish academic subjects rather than being relegated to the touchy, feely realm as ladies shiurim often are.

Lancashire, married, 28, Orthodox, somewhat religious

There is still a general feeling of “education’s not for me” among many Jewish women and teenage girls. That alienation must be overcome so that women recognise and claim the right to a Jewish education at a level that matches their secular education.

Glasgow, divorced, 48, Orthodox, religious

Jewish women are well educated in secular subjects and have a well developed thirst for knowledge. Many are now interested in acquiring a Jewish education of an equally high academic standard.

Outer NW London, married, 57, Orthodox, religious

There are not enough serious learning opportunities for women in the Orthodox community. There are not enough female teachers to act as role models. There is little follow-up learning for women who went to Sem.

Inner NW London, single, 31, Orthodox, religious

Women are still playing ‘catch-up’ and need access to high quality, in-depth education in Jewish issues to match the secular opportunities available to them.

Oxford, divorced, 50, Orthodox, religious

Girls should have equal access to opportunities for in depth Torah study.

Outer NW London, married, 43, Orthodox, somewhat religious



Educators who can switch our kids 'on'

Jewish education is not about words on a page, it is about inspiring a lifestyle choice. It is imperative that we address the issue of the calibre of Jewish educators. We cannot assume that Jewish schools by themselves will automatically secure the commitment of future generations of Jews. It is the quality of the educational experience that is decisive. Educators' subject knowledge or religious observance alone will not switch on our young people to their Judaism. We need charismatic teachers, educators and youth leaders who can enthuse our children and provide dynamic role models.



Some Jewish schools, secondaries in particular, are schools for Jews rather than really embodying Jewish ethos and giving Jewish skills.

Inner NW London, married, 52, Orthodox, religious

Charismatic, well qualified Jewish educators are the key to inspiring our young people to positively engage with their Judaism. How many times has a good teacher turned someone "on" to Judaism and equally, a bad teacher turned someone "off"?

Anon

Too many Jewish educators have been selected on the basis of their own personal level of observance, rather than their ability to excite and communicate learning to others.

Leeds, married, 58, Orthodox, somewhat secular

Without charismatic Jewish educators, our children and grandchildren will drift away from Judaism.

Outer NW London, widow, 75, Progressive (Liberal), somewhat religious

Educators are gatekeepers to the Jewish Community.

Brighton, married, 70, Progressive (Reform), religious

Reaching out

While we applaud the fact that more than fifty per cent of Jewish children in the UK attend Jewish days schools, we must emphasise that this figure is skewed demographically and geographically. Many children live nowhere near a Jewish day school – even those living in Greater London or other major Jewish areas. This geographical disparity reflects the reality for adults as much as for young people in terms of educational provision. Community leaders and educators need to think more creatively about reaching out to Jews in smaller and more isolated communities. We have yet to utilise the full potential of new technologies. Above all we must be more positive and pro-active about working across community and congregational boundaries.

Living in a small community where there isn't a Jewish school, I think it's more important that all schools should make it possible for children to have their Jewish identity fully acknowledged, than that Jewish schools should make it possible for all children to enter them.

Lancashire, divorced, 54, attends both Orthodox and Progressive (Reform), somewhat religious

There is little provision in the North East of England for giving our children a good Jewish education.

North East England, married, 35, Progressive (Reform), somewhat religious

South of the Thames, where we have no Jewish Schools we need our youngsters to receive more than just religious studies in Cheder as there is no other place to keep their Jewish heritage safe.

South East London, married, 36, Progressive (Reform), somewhat religious



Community

One of the most interesting and all embracing themes to emerge from the work of the 2009 Review is women's attitudes to 'community' and the purpose of institutional buildings (synagogues). At its core women are expressing their *emotional* attachment to the *notion* of community and how synagogues both as communities of people and as bricks and mortar facilities can enhance that attachment. It is a perception of an ideal that appears to shape their expectations. However, throughout this Review women are questioning the whole concept of 'community' as traditionally defined within the narrow confines of 'congregation'. For generations the two have been used interchangeably in Britain. The reality is that 'congregation' does not begin to embrace (and may positively dis-embrace) the many who identify with 'community'. Women are also debating the purpose and remit of congregation based communities especially in relation to social welfare. Furthermore, there is a sense that while 'congregations' cannot represent the breadth of 'community', synagogues as physical entities have an important role to play in anchoring communities.

The SurveyMonkey questionnaire asked about facilities and training. These were based on some of the 1994 Recommendations which related to childcare, special needs and training. Childcare remains a major concern. Women are still clamouring for affordable childcare options within a Jewish *heimesh* setting; options such as after-school clubs, holiday schemes and all-day nurseries that reflect the demands of their working lives. The 1994 Review also introduced

the notion of 'Jewish Grannies'. While the idea may have been mis-interpreted by some respondents as a paid-for childcare programme, there is an overwhelming sense throughout the 2009 Review that today's generation of growing families are suffering from a grandparent deficit. The absence of grandparents, for whatever reason, also implies a redefinition of the traditional trans-generational notion of community.

Finally, there is the issue of training. There is a strongly held belief that volunteering in the traditional sense is no longer enough. Professionalism in terms of attitude and training is now perceived as crucial. Volunteering activity of all kinds from parent groups to eldercare schemes make up the social capital that supports and binds people into a meaningful community. Yet the desire for 'professionalism', compounded by an ever diminishing pool of would-be volunteers, together with the introduction of extensive new legislation, has made this traditional approach increasingly problematic. This is a theme that runs throughout the 2009 Review and applies as much to education as to social welfare.

Women identify the need for a strong, inclusive and supportive community but debate how far the support network should extend. They question the existing limited use of synagogues and overwhelmingly demand a more dynamic, community centred role for such buildings. Above all women recognise the important benefits of cross communal working and deplore divisive attitudes within communities.

Re-thinking community

As traditional family structures become progressively dislocated, the community often becomes a surrogate family for many people. Yet there is a dichotomy between the desire to see the congregational community as an all embracing provider and the pragmatic recognition that it does not have the resources to do so and furthermore, that individuals should take some responsibility for creating their own support networks. There is an urgent need for the leadership of synagogues in particular, and of the community in general, to acknowledge and respond to the increasingly diverse needs and expectations of the Jewish population. We are likely to witness a shift away from communities based on highly structured institutions to more relaxed networks where social exchanges rather than physical edifices become the primary route through which people connect with their Jewish heritage. This does not necessarily imply the demise of conventional synagogue centred activity but it does require re-thinking how we facilitate the business of connection for the coming generations. Most of all we have to recognise that the desire to connect may be motivated by ethnic rather than religious considerations.

I would be pleased to see a greater emphasis on inter-generational relationships with activities and opportunities for all individuals to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.

North London, married

Developing a culture of looking out for, and looking after, those in need will enhance a caring culture and broaden the "standard" of what the community is.

Outer NW London, married, 49, Orthodox, religious



Visiting the sick and elderly, or the lonely in our community, breaks down barriers, emphasises real priorities and builds a sense of community.

Inner London, single, 34, religious

The synagogue is a club, a community and should be as supportive as possible to all members without distinction.

Inner North London, separated, 56, Orthodox, religious

Many people expect "the community" to look after social issues on their behalf. Although facilities should be available I don't believe that responsibility should be delegated fully.

Cheshire, married, 51, Orthodox, somewhat religious

Many people live in cities without the support of families. When there is a difficulty it is vitally important for people to help each other.

Leeds, married, 50, Orthodox, religious

The more different things on offer within the community, the more people will engage. It's about diverse opportunities for all.

Manchester, married, 43, Orthodox, somewhat religious



Breaking out of the sanctuary: synagogues for the twenty-first century

The view that synagogues are primarily places of prayer and education is out-moded and does not reflect the realities of our modern world. Too many of our synagogues were built as monuments for prayer. Yet, synagogues have always been conceived of as multi-functional: as Beit Midrash (house of study); Beit Tefilah (house of prayer); and as Beit Knesset (house of meeting). It is this latter that we need to re-think. Leaving synagogue buildings empty and underemployed is a shameful waste of a valuable communal resource. There is a desperate need in many neighbourhoods for safe and secure places to meet. Utilised effectively, synagogues as dynamic and vibrant centres offer tremendous scope to enhance the quality of life for many in the surrounding area. Synagogues ought to be not just at the heart of the congregation but at the heart of the local community. We recognise that this will take resources and the vision of a very determined leadership but it will also help us towards realising the ideal of community to which we aspire.



Synagogues can do so much more to strengthen communities and involve people in different ways. They could serve as community centres rather than just prayer houses.

North London, married, 45, Progressive (Reform), secular

It is pathetic that we have large, often empty premises that could be used as facilities to bring people together and yet because of ridiculous political barriers we refuse to do so.

Inner North London, single, 40, Orthodox, religious

We need to ensure that synagogues are valued and invested in. Synagogue communities can play a key role in social provision locally.

North London, living with a partner, 52, Progressive (Reform), religious

Synagogue sites should be more than just places people go to for Tefilah. Dues should be used to ensure that low cost, good quality, secure facilities are available to meet the varied needs of a community.

Outer NW London, married, 49, Orthodox, religious

It is important that people can feel that the synagogue is not just a place of worship but a focal point of the community and that the building “earns its keep” by being available for out of service activities.

North London, single, 73, Orthodox, somewhat secular

When shul buildings are empty for more than half the time, it seems a shame. Shuls are meant to be community centres.

Outer NW London, married, 28, Orthodox, somewhat religious

The Shul should be used fully as a ‘communal’ venue instead of somewhere people go either once a week or even 3 times a year.

Outer NW London, married, 61, Orthodox, somewhat religious





One difficult issue in many communities is that each part of the community is organized in its own circles and synagogues, but there is a lack of a feeling of a unified Jewish presence in the city.

Leeds, married, 38, Masorti, secular

Different streams of Judaism must have a little tolerance when dealing with each other.

Outer NW London, married, 28, Orthodox, somewhat religious

I think communities could be better at intra-community networking.

Outer NW London, married, 49, Orthodox, religious

The divisions within our community are painful and sometimes cruel. Leaders are required who are able to understand their differences and to respect one another.

Outer NW London, divorced, 69, Progressive [Liberal], secular



A cohesive and mutually respectful community

One of the highlights of the Review programme was the focus groups which provided an opportunity for women across the communal spectrum to have a chance to talk to, and learn from, each other. These exchanges are incredibly valuable; they should be a regular feature of Jewish communal life. There is huge scope for the community to work together and many successful models of it are doing just that: from The Board of Deputies to women's organisations such as The League of Jewish Women and educational initiatives like Limmud. Intra-community respect must be a priority. Rabbis and community leaders need to think carefully about the effects of their pronouncements both locally and nationally and the impact these have on their own and other communities, on their ability to work together and their regard for each other. Hostility between different congregations is self-defeating. Moreover, faced with falling numbers communities must consider re-grouping rather than clinging to the vestiges of the past. Where congregations work together everyone benefits regardless of their 'brand' of Judaism.

Agunah and Get

Introduction

Around 220 Gittin are delivered each year in the UK. National divorce trends suggest that this figure does not reflect the number of divorces between Jewish couples. Yet a lack of awareness about the significance of Get can have a detrimental and lifelong impact on people's lives. Many Jews for example, do not realise that if they cohabit with a new partner before a Get is delivered and received they will not be able to have a religious re-marriage even if they are already divorced under civil law.

Our recommendations in the 1994 Review report *Women in the Jewish Community* brought many positive outcomes. The 1994 Review raised awareness of the issue of agunim and agunot in the community and the Batei Din became more determined in dealing with recalcitrant spouses. Women befrienders were introduced at the London Beth Din. The Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act 2002 allows judges discretion to postpone a *decree absolute* until both parties have fulfilled their religious obligations. Even though few applications have been reported it is thought to have proved a useful incentive to encourage spouses to deliver or receive a Get. The United Synagogue amended its by-laws to provide for the effective ostracism of recalcitrant husbands. This approach has been

adopted informally by other synagogal bodies. The Chief Rabbi's pre-nuptial agreement although not enforceable under English civil law* remains a helpful educational tool even though many couples are reluctant to discuss divorce on the threshold of their marriage.

However, challenges remain. Neither the current legislation nor synagogue policies will necessarily be able to deal with the most recalcitrant spouses. More fundamentally, although rabbonim and academics worldwide have put forward possible halachic solutions, none have been found to be acceptable globally. We are optimistic that dayanim, rabbonim and academics will continue to work to secure a resolution. In the meantime our immediate objective is to put forward a twofold action plan which we hope will encourage people, especially young Jews, to understand the significance of Get and find practical ways to address the problems and alleviate the distress that unresolved Get related issues cause.

HH Judge Dawn Freedman

The Agunah Group of the 2009 Review

*The Family Law Group of the Board of Deputies is to give evidence to the Law Commission which is currently examining the possibility of introducing legislation which would make pre-nuptial agreements legally enforceable. Their report is due in 2012.

The 2009 Review: Agunah and Get

In the vast majority of cases the Get is delivered and received as part of the divorce proceedings or by mutual undertaking. However, there would appear to be a significant minority of cases where problems arise. (Forty five of the SurveyMonkey respondents had been divorced from a Jewish husband in the fifteen years since the 1994 Review. Of these thirty six had received a Get and twenty nine of those said the issue had been resolved voluntarily by both parties.) There seem to be two reasons why Get remains unresolved: one, ignorance or a lack of sound advice at the time of divorce; and two, where Get is used as a bargaining tool in divorce proceedings to obtain a financial or child related order to which there would otherwise be an objection.

We therefore propose a twofold action plan. First, we need to raise awareness of the importance of obtaining a Get and of the scope of current policy and practice. Secondly, we must guarantee the obligation to give and receive a Get regardless of any other unresolved issues between divorcing couples. There are four key areas where we intend to implement this action plan. We believe that our proposals are eminently achievable within the current policies in place and the resources available.

1 Young people's education

Working with Jewish Women's Aid as part of their education programme we will be targeting sixth formers, youth leaders and university Jewish Societies to promote an understanding of the obligations of marriage. Our aim is to enable young people to become familiar with the concept of Get well before they may

consider marriage. We are delighted that the Chief Rabbi has offered to make a DVD / podcast for use in school discussions on relationships in which he will mention Get. We will also be urging Education Ministers and their shadow counterparts to include references to Get in the PHSE (Personal, Health and Social Education) curriculum in non Jewish schools.

2 Pre-marriage

We will continue to encourage rabbonim and organisations such as the United Synagogue and the Jewish Marriage Council which provide marriage preparation programmes to discuss the full implications of the Ketubah, including Get, with prospective wedding couples. We also intend to promote the facts and realities of Get through Jewish dating agencies and other relevant sites as well as through women's organisations. Both the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the London Beth Din are keen to give the issues maximum publicity including through the Jewish press. We recognise that by getting the message across to parents, they in turn – especially mothers – will be able to get the message across to their children. In this way we hope to reach a wide cross section of affiliated and non affiliated Jewish men and women.

3 Pre-divorce

From the SurveyMonkey responses we can see that during divorce Jews turn to a diverse range of sources for information on Get. Some obtain advice from their rabbis or their lawyers, the majority from an unspecified person. We want to see the expansion of the scheme pioneered by Woodside Park Synagogue where volunteer advisors from the community work alongside the rabbi to provide information and guidance on obtaining a Get. Such schemes could be

effectively advertised not just within the synagogue but in local health and other community centres. We would encourage all rabbonim to make such appointments and provide appropriate training as a matter of urgency.

We are concerned to ensure that rabbis are aware of the current by-laws of the United Synagogue which provide for the effective ostracism of recalcitrant husbands. We also want to be certain that those rabbis make their Honorary Officers and other communal leaders aware of this policy and ensure its implementation.

We intend to work with professional bodies such as Resolution (the Solicitors' Family Law Association) and the Family Law Bar Association to ensure the Get message reaches lawyers. The London Beth Din will be asked to host a seminar for lawyers in conjunction with other Batei Din. We will also be looking at how lawyers can provide guidance on the use of collaborative law, as well as the use of waiver letters as a means of ensuring that clients are advised in relation to Get and where necessary, requiring them to sign that they have declined the advice. In addition we will be considering with Ministry of Justice officials and the President of the Family Division ways in which we can alert divorcing parties to the fact that a civil divorce will not dissolve a religious marriage.

4 Get mediation

Although we were disappointed that the Jewish Mediation Register set up as a result of the 1994 Recommendations was not effectively utilised we still believe in the role of mediation in the process of Get resolution. We will be looking at new ways of promoting mediation as well as identifying specialists in the field who can work with divorcing couples to enable them to find the means to secure a Get.

Acknowledgements

The Agunah Group of the 2009 Review was led by HH Judge Dawn Freedman. Members of the group were: Sarah Anticoni; Jodi Berg; Angela Hodes; Eleanor Platt QC; and Esther Tager. Consultants to the group included: Sandra Blackman of the Agunot Campaign; Flora Frank; and Deanna Levine, author of *Getting Your Get*.

The group heard evidence from the following: The Chief Rabbi; all the UK Batei Din; Jewish Women's Aid; the Jewish Marriage Guidance Council's Get Advisory Service; representatives of synagogal bodies; academics from the UK, USA and Israel. It also gathered information from responses to its questionnaires together with anecdotal evidence from family lawyers.

Heeding the voices: securing our future

Jewish women have spoken out. The voices you have heard are those of spiritual and lay leaders, professionals, community activists and academics as well as hundreds of women from across the religious spectrum with diverse religious outlooks. All of them were motivated to articulate their hopes and concerns about the future well-being of the British Jewish community. They illustrate the perceived gulf between women's achievements and aspirations in secular life and their Jewish communal and spiritual experience. Women highlight the fact that we may have become complacent about what it means to be truly inclusive. They prioritise the need to recognise and embrace new family structures. Women pinpoint high calibre

education delivered by charismatic educators as the key to our future. They note the critical link between knowledge, connection and continuity. Women recognise that if we do not empower them with learning and understanding they will not be able to empower and inspire their daughters and their sons. Above all women acknowledge the importance of community. However, they identify the need to re-think our assumptions about how we define community and the ways in which we connect with it. Although women express many deeply held frustrations and disappointments there is a real sense that by listening and responding to what they have to say we will secure a dynamic and vibrant future for Jews in Britain.

Glossary

Agunah / Agun	A woman (agunah, plural agunot) whose ex-husband will not deliver her a Get or a man (agun, plural agunim) whose ex-wife will not receive a Get.
Aliyah/ Aliyot	To be called to give a blessing during the Reading of the Law (Torah) at a synagogue service.
Bar / Bat Mitzvah	Rite of passage marking the entry of a boy / girl into the Jewish religious community. Held at 13 for all boys, at 13 for girls in Progressive communities and at 12 for girls in Masorti and Orthodox communities.
Bat Chayil	Rite of passage in Orthodox congregations for girls at age 12 or 13.
Beth / Batei Din	Jewish court/s giving rulings according to halacha .
Bensch gomel	A prayer said by, or on behalf of, an individual after a period of illness or difficulty.
Cheder	Jewish religious supplementary school.
Daven	To pray.
Dayan / dayanim	Judge/s in a Rabbinical court.
Frum	Yiddish expression for observant.
Halacha / halachic	Pertaining to Jewish law or a specific ruling within it.
Heimeshe	Yiddish description of Jewish culture / ethos.
Get / Gittin	Religious writ/s of divorce given by a man to a woman.
Kaddish	Prayer said for a year following the death of a close relative.
Ketubah	Jewish contract of marriage.
Kodesh staff	Jewish education teaching staff in Jewish day schools.
Leyning	Reading or chanting from the Torah during the Sabbath morning and other services.
Liberal	There are 31 congregations, groups and religion schools which make up Liberal Judaism which was established as the Jewish Religious Union in 1902.
Masorti	There are nine congregations in the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues. Masorti is traditional Judaism which accepts the binding force of Jewish law and understands that it has developed throughout history.
Mainstream Orthodox	The 177 congregations that make up this group include the United Synagogue together with those regional Synagogues which recognise the authority of the Chief Rabbi and a small number of London and regional independent Orthodox congregations.
Mechitza	A physical divide, usually a curtain, between men and women in Orthodox synagogues.
Progressive	Generic term for non-Orthodox branches of Judaism.
Rabbi / rabbonim	Spiritual leader/s of a Jewish community.
Reform	There are 43 congregations within the ambit of Reform Judaism which is rooted in tradition while engaging with modern life and thought.
Seder	Service and meal, usually in the home, at the start of the Passover.
Sem	Colloquial abbreviation for Seminary, Orthodox Jewish Studies colleges for girls after completing secondary school.
Shiur/ shiurim	Study sessions/s.
Shul	Yiddish term for synagogue.
Tallit	Prayer shawl. Worn by men only in Orthodox congregations.
Tefillah	Prayer.
Torah	First five books of the Bible which form the basis of Jewish law.
United Synagogue	London based Orthodox organisation of 63 synagogues providing for over 100,000 people which was established by Act of Parliament in 1870. It is the largest synagogal organisation in Britain.
Yahrzeit	Anniversary of a death.

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