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The Jewish voluntary sector in the United Kingdom: its role and its future

This paper examines issues currently facing the UK voluntary sector, suggests special challenges which face the Jewish voluntary sector, and considers the need for a systematic enquiry about the Jewish voluntary sector and its future.
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Foreword

The Jewish voluntary sector in the UK is a large, well-developed, independent non-profit enterprise with an annual turnover of tens of millions of pounds. Its guiding spirit is the concept of *tzedakah*. This conveys the broader biblical notion of justice rather than mere charity, as commonly translated. Moreover, the wide definition of the term 'Jewish voluntary sector'—used by Margaret Harris to cover the whole organized Jewish community—is also in keeping with the historic *Kehilla* approach to communal organization.

The medieval *Kehilla,* like today's voluntary sector, existed to help the community achieve its religious, cultural and humanitarian ends as stipulated in biblical and rabbinic literature. As envisaged by rabbis like Maimonides, it consisted of a philanthropic system built upon a number of *hevrot* or brotherhoods. Individual *hevrot* dowered brides, saw to the needs of the sick and took care of the elderly and itinerants. The most prestigious of these groups, however, was the 'Holy Brotherhood', or *hevra kadisha,* who buried the dead. The successful operation of these brotherhoods required that each member of the community had an intimate knowledge of his fellows. There were no professionals, and in a sense there were no volunteers as we now know them. The opportunity to participate in the life of a brotherhood was not open to all. These guild-like bodies recruited the most prestigious members of the community. To become a member of a brotherhood, you did not volunteer as you might in a contemporary non-profit organization. Instead, you were vetted by those already recognized by the community as persons of probity, piety and—in some instances—wealth. To serve in a brotherhood was an honour bestowed rather than a position sought.

When returning to Cromwellian England in the mid-seventeenth century, the Jews had to promise that they would not become public charges and that they would also take responsibility for their poor. From the perspective of the ruling authorities, this was a way of limiting whatever burdens the Jews might impose upon the established church and state. From the perspective of the Jews, taking care of their own did not require making a pledge to the authorities. This is what they expected, what their tradition demanded and what they understood to be in their own best interests as well.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a series of events occurred that radically changed the nature of Jewish community life across Europe. The intimate community of the Jewish small town gave way to the impersonality of the big city, particularly among migrants to the west. The emancipation and the Enlightenment shattered the religio-cultural consensus as well as the institutions built upon that consensus. Waves of Jewish migration came to Britain—a country that allowed for and encouraged voluntarism but did not support the autonomous, self-regulating community that was the traditional norm for Jews in Europe and the Mediterranean world. The care of immigrants and the downtrodden increasingly became professionalized and the role of the newly emerging field of social work. The same process occurred with education and health. From then on there would be donors, professional workers, some volunteers and clients. These factors, together with modern notions of efficiency and effectiveness, led to the creation of networks of professionalized service agencies.

Although the voluntary sector is rooted in both Jewish tradition and Anglo-Jewish history, it faces particular challenges today. The Jewish population participating in and served by the Jewish voluntary sector at the end of the twentieth century is vastly different from that which created the major institutions in the Victorian period. The problems of British Jewry are not those of seventeenth-century foreign merchants nor impoverished industrial workers of the Victorian East End. The 1995 JPR survey of the *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews* reveals challenges created by Jewish socio-economic success and increasing acceptance and integration into British society. These trends have given rise to new forms of differentiation in lifestyles and patterns of behaviour.

Even now, in the midst of what is undoubtedly the most secular period in Jewish history, the ancient commands to perform *mitzvot*—or virtuous deeds—still resonate. Contemporary British Jews are seeking ways of coming to terms with their historic conscience while living in a society far removed from that which spawned the ideals of the Jewish voluntary sector. However, in order to accomplish this task the sector will first have to consider new approaches and organize itself in an appropriate manner. The dilemmas, problems, challenges and opportunities presented to Jewish communal services are clearly set out in this paper.

We at JPR hope that both Jewish organizations and the Jewish public will respond positively to Margaret Harris's call for serious thinking on these issues. Given the Jewish voluntary sector's impressive record of autonomy and self-help this offers an exciting opportunity for the Jewish community to be creative and innovative and thus provide a model for other sections of British society.

Barry A. Kosmin
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1 Introduction

Jews in the UK often refer to themselves collectively as 'the Jewish community'. This 'community' comprises not only those individuals who identify as Jews, but also an interlocking network of formal and informal organizations run largely by and for Jews. These organizations are, in effect, 'voluntary organizations'. They are not part of the governmental or commercial sectors of society. They were established voluntarily, and they rely to a greater or lesser degree on voluntary contributions of human and/or financial resources.

The Jewish 'voluntary sector' includes:

- social welfare agencies which provide care services
- membership associations and clubs
- self-help and mutual-aid groups
- synagogues and confederations of synagogues
- fund-raising charities
- grant-making trusts
- educational institutions including schools and museums
- housing associations
- pressure-groups or 'advocacy' groups
- 'ad hoc' consultative or event-organizing groups
- umbrella, intermediary and representative bodies

Many organizations fall into more than one of these categories.

Whereas there is a fairly substantial body of knowledge about the *individuals* who comprise the Jewish community (for example, Baker, 1993; Miller, Schmool and Lerman, 1996; Waterman and Kosmin, 1986), much less attention has been paid so far to the *organizational infrastructure* of the Jewish community. There have been a few studies of particular organizations or groups of organizations (for example, Community Planning and Research Committee, 1985; Garbacz *et al.*, 1984; Newman, 1977; Schmool and Cohen, 1991), and some parts of the sector are mentioned in wide-ranging descriptive studies of British Jews (see for example, Brook, 1989, Glinert, 1985 and Moonman, 1980). But there has been little attempt so far to look at the Jewish voluntary sector as a whole, or as a sector.

How is the Jewish voluntary sector funded, for example? Who serves on its committees and governing bodies? Who volunteers and what motivates them? Who are the paid staff and how are they recruited? To what extent do Jewish voluntary organizations compete with each other for human and financial resources? Are they effective, individually and collectively, in meeting the needs of Jews who are their 'users'? What mechanisms do they use to ensure that they are responsive to their 'users'? How have they been affected by, and responded to, changing demographic patterns? What has been the impact on them of the major shifts in public policy in the UK over the last twenty years? And what challenges face them for the future?

In the UK the role of the voluntary sector as a whole has been a matter of growing interest and comment amongst those who work in and for the sector and amongst policy-makers and academics. Voluntary organizations, it seems, are generally robust and adaptable plants but they do require supportive and hospitable environments if they are to thrive. And those who run them experience distinctive organizational challenges which may require specialist responses (Billis and Harris, 1996).

How far do such findings about the UK voluntary sector generally, apply to the Jewish voluntary sector in particular? In many respects Jewish voluntary organizations share the same environment as the rest of the UK voluntary sector and we would expect to find them confronting similar problems and issues. At the same time, the particular characteristics of UK Jewry pose additional or different challenges. They might also offer special advantages. The purpose of this paper is to provide background for a discussion about the Jewish voluntary sector and its future by:

- outlining issues currently facing the UK voluntary sector as a whole;
- suggesting special challenges which face the Jewish voluntary sector; and
- considering the need for a systematic enquiry about the Jewish voluntary sector in the UK and its future.

2 The UK voluntary sector

The debate about the definition of 'the voluntary sector' is ongoing (Kendall and Knapp, 1996). This paper follows common usage in the UK and takes the terms 'voluntary sector' and 'voluntary organizations' to refer broadly to non-governmental, non-profit-seeking institutions. (Other countries use other terms to refer to this sector including 'third sector'; 'nonprofit organizations'; 'non-governmental organizations' (NGOs); and 'the social economy'.)

In the last twenty years, the UK voluntary sector has moved into the spotlight of public attention and debate.

Voluntary organizations are more formal than associations of family and friends. They are self-governing and benefit to some degree at least from voluntary contributions of time and/or money. They may, or may not, rely on volunteers to deliver services or do other essential work. Despite the tendency for the press to use the terms 'charity' and 'voluntary organization' interchangeably, voluntary organizations may, or may not, be 'charities' and may, or may not, be incorporated as companies limited by guarantee. Thus 'the voluntary sector' encompasses far more organizations than those registered with the Charity Commission or recognized as charities for taxation purposes.

In the last twenty years, the UK voluntary sector has moved into the spotlight of public attention and debate. Politicians of all persuasions have praised its capacities for innovation, flexibility and responsiveness and its ability to remain 'close to the people'. Government ministers have sought ways to encourage volunteering and 'active citizenship'. The mass media have been proactive in encouraging public support for 'good causes' and, at the same time, have become ever more keen to hunt down examples of misuse of charitable funds. Most recently, the National Lottery has generated debates about who are 'deserving' recipients and about the impact of lotteries on traditional philanthropic giving.

This increased interest in the voluntary sector has been fuelled by a number of national and international trends. Of these, the two most significant have probably been:

- a changing approach to 'the welfare state'
- a growing interest in 'civil society'

The welfare state

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local and national governmental institutions were increasingly involved in responding to social needs. All the same, charities and mutual-benefit associations (including synagogues and other specialist Jewish organizations) remained the main means through which those human needs, which could not be dealt with by immediate family and friends, were met. By the 1930s, however, the inadequacies of the voluntary sector were increasingly apparent: its patchy geographical distribution and standards, the stigma attached to recipients, the heavy element of social control, and the inability of private philanthropy to provide adequate financial support.

Growing awareness of the inadequacies of the voluntary sector combined in the 1940s with new ideas about citizen rights and centralized planning to provide popular support for the development of a 'welfare state'. Thus, from the later 1940s to at least the late 1970s, it was widely assumed in the UK that government institutions would take prime responsibility for the planning, funding and provision of services such as social welfare, education, health and social housing. Voluntary organizations were generally seen as complements or supplements to 'mainstream' provision by state agencies such as the National Health Service, state 'social security' and local authority departments. This applied equally to Jews and other religious and ethnic minorities; they still had their 'own' welfare and social organizations, but state institutions were often the first port of call and, at the very least, provided a basic safety net.

During the 1970s and 1980s, assumptions about the primacy of the state role in responding to human needs started to break down—in the UK as well as in other countries of Western Europe and North America. 'Welfare pluralists', critical of the inflexibility of government bureaucracies, argued the need to involve the voluntary and commercial sectors in human service provision (Hadley and Hatch, 1981). They were supported from all parts of the political spectrum: from those concerned to increase consumer participation and empowerment and from those who wished to see the demise of large residential care institutions, to those whose prime concern was to restrict government spending or introduce market principles into public sector organizations.

These various strands came together to create a climate in which the voluntary sector was expected to have a much increased role in

responding to human needs. Today, the voluntary sector is no longer confined to its post-World War II role of complementing and supplementing government provision. Increasingly voluntary agencies are engaged in direct provision of essential welfare, educational and housing services—funded in whole or in part by government agencies. They are not confined to self-help, advocacy, community development or 'top-up' activities. At the same time, emphasis has been placed on professionalism, efficiency and responding to the most severe cases of social need such as the most dependent older people and children 'at risk' (Billis, 1993). In short, the sector is expected to act as an *alternative* to the state, providing basic services and responding to new needs.

As the policy spotlight has moved from governments and markets to a 'third sector' of activity, interest has grown in the organizational entities that characterize that sector—nonprofit organizations, voluntary associations, clubs, self-help groups and co-operatives.

Civil society

The demise of the welfare state model is not the only reason for the focus on the voluntary sector. A second important trend has been a worldwide resurgence of interest in the concept of 'civil society'. As with the term 'voluntary sector', the definitional debate about 'civil society' is ongoing (Kumar, 1993). All the same, the term has been taken up by politicians, pundits and policy-makers worldwide to refer to groupings of like-minded people meeting needs and obligations in a 'public space' dominated by neither the state nor the market. The puzzle of how to build new societies in places such as South Africa and the former Soviet Union countries, as well as increasing disillusion with 'big government' and 'nation states' in North America and Western Europe, has re-focused attention on the way in which people can do things for themselves and each other through collective action (Etzioni, 1992; Siegel and Yancey, 1992).

As the policy spotlight has moved from governments and markets to a 'third sector' of activity, interest has grown in the organizational entities that characterize that sector—nonprofit organizations, voluntary associations, clubs, self-help groups and co-operatives. There is also increasing interest in the functions which the third sector appears to perform especially well: building 'social capital', integrating individuals into the wider society, nurturing trusting relationships, providing opportunities for self-expression, and encouraging volunteering (Fukuyama, 1995; Mason, 1995; Putnam *et al.*, 1993). The realization that modern technology may bring about a long-term reduction in opportunities for traditional forms of paid employment has also fuelled an interest in alternative work in the 'third sector' (Rifkin, 1995). In short, the value of the 'voluntary sector' as a building block of a healthy society is increasingly recognized (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996; Home Office, 1992; Labour Party, 1996; Sacks, 1995).

3 The future of the UK voluntary sector

The changing environment within which the voluntary sector operates, especially the expectations that it will take an increased role in welfare provision and in building civil society, has raised numerous questions about the future of the sector. These have been the subject of comment by policy analysts (for example Knight, 1993, Landry and Mulgan, 1994), academic researchers (Billis and Harris (eds), 1996) and, quite recently, a specialist Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector (1996) funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and chaired by Professor of Social Policy at Birmingham University, Nicholas Deakin.

Taking together these various writings, and drawing selectively on lessons from North America, five key areas can be highlighted:

- trends in voluntary giving of time and money
- organizational impact of public policy changes
- the legal and regulatory framework for voluntary sector activity
- accountability of the sector
- the scope and nature of the sector

Voluntary giving

One key theme is 'voluntarism'; the propensity to give time or money without being forced to do so and without expectation of immediate personal benefit. Concerns have been expressed about whether the multiple and complex needs of a technologically sophisticated, ageing society can possibly be met through the efforts of voluntary associations of individuals (Salamon, 1995). There is also speculation about whether the 'spirit' of voluntarism and philanthropy can be sustained in the current climate and whether, indeed, there are positively damaging pressures.

It has been found, for example, that government schemes to encourage volunteering opportunities, to formalize existing informal helping schemes, to specify volunteer involvement in contracts, or to make volunteering compulsory for some categories of young or employed people, can be seen as a form of 'colonization' or social control. Thus, they may have the perverse effect of *discouraging* altruistic and civic commitments (Abrams in Bulmer, 1986; Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996). Similarly, pressures for volunteer trustees and service-providers to be trained to improve their 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' may actually serve to demotivate rather than improve performance (Harris, 1996).

With respect to voluntary contributions of money, here again there has been concern about the impact of increasing governmental involvement in the funding and activities of the voluntary sector. It was feared, for example, that the instigation of the National Lottery would lead to money being diverted from traditional forms of charitable giving. Recently published statistics seem to allay these fears (Hems and Passey, 1996), but concern remains about the financial impact of government interest in voluntary activity.

Once the voluntary sector loses its distinctive organizational features, it could also start to lose the respect and privileges it currently enjoys.

There is also a more general concern about the ability of the voluntary sector to sustain itself financially (Mulgan and Landry, 1994). A paper prepared for the Deakin Commission painted a consistently gloomy picture of future funding prospects for the voluntary sector (Halfpenny and Scott, 1996). It suggested that voluntary income is not increasing, that individual donations are under pressure, that large voluntary organizations are gaining ground on the smaller ones in fundraising, that increasing proportions of voluntary income are tied to projects, and that grant-making trusts are under siege from desperate and multiple applicants.

In short, there is a concern that in seeking to use the voluntary sector as an instrument through which *government* goals can be achieved, state agencies cannot necessarily expect financial help from voluntary donors. In fact, government could very well damage the golden goose of voluntarism and altruism on which the future of the voluntary sector depends.

Organizational impact of public policy

A second, related theme raises questions about the organizational impact of public policy changes on the voluntary sector. As voluntary organizations expand their income, the number of their paid staff, the range of services they provide and their contacts with government agencies, they tend to undergo important organizational changes including bureaucratization, professionalization, formalization and centralization (Billis and Harris, 1992). They are also inclined to compete rather than co-operate with each other. In effect, they come to look and behave more like government bureaucracies.

At the same time as voluntary agencies have come closer to government agencies, the public sector itself has been changing. It has increasingly adopted 'business' management practices, market-based competition and measures of 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness'. Pressures to become more 'businesslike' have reached voluntary agencies via both government and corporate funders.

In the longer term these trends towards growth and business-like behaviour could give rise to disillusion with the voluntary sector, or at least major parts of it; a mirror image of the disillusionment which underpinned the criticisms of the welfare state and the public sector in the 1970s and which, ironically, contributed to the current return to favour of the voluntary sector. Already one widely-quoted commentator has suggested that those voluntary organizations which accept large proportions of government funding and which are formalized and bureaucratized should be treated differently from the 'true' voluntary sector of community associations and advocacy groups (Knight, 1993).

Here the theme is not so much one of the golden goose *being destroyed* by government interference, but of the voluntary sector golden goose *destroying itself.* In gobbling up government-funded nourishment it may be turning itself into a different kind of creature which is no longer distinctive. Once the voluntary sector loses its distinctive organizational features, it could also start to lose the respect and privileges it currently enjoys.

Legal framework

Some of those privileges relate to the third theme which concerns the legal and regulatory framework within which the voluntary sector operates. Voluntary agencies which are registered with the Charity Commission or which are recognized as 'exempt charities' enjoy fiscal

privileges and also acquire a 'halo' of legitimacy which encourages financial and other kinds of support. The relevant law relating to charities dates back to the seventeenth century and is heavily influenced by Jewish and Christian principles. But in many respects it no longer reflects public opinion about what is a 'good cause' or an activity 'for public benefit' (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996; Landry and Mulgan, 1994). Thus, many private schools and hospitals which primarily serve the needs of the wealthy can enjoy the benefits of charitable status, whereas self-help groups, organizations campaigning against poverty, and those which aim to generate employment opportunities in deprived areas are amongst those which are generally *not* able to register as charities.

The debate about the appropriateness of charity law has been fuelled by UK membership of the European Union. Other countries of Western Europe have different legal and regulatory frameworks which govern their 'social economy' or 'third sector' (Baine *et al.*, 1992). So far, the drive towards convergence within the Union has only affected UK voluntary agencies in marginal ways, but in the longer term major changes may be necessary to bring UK practice into line with practice elsewhere in Europe. Since the gradual build up of pressure for consistency from Europe is taking place alongside publicity in the United States about abuses of tax-exempt status (Gaul and Borowski, 1993) and persistent voices of concern from within the UK, it is highly probable that we will see a major review of charity law and tax exemption within the next few years.

There has been a noticeable increase in media interest in recent years in voluntary sector 'scandals', with the pages of the national press reflecting a particular fascination with misuse of money, incompetence or inappropriate behaviour within religious-based organizations.

Meanwhile, codification and clarification of existing charity law, in 1992 and 1993, have served to draw attention to the responsibilities, as well as the privileges, of charitable status. The onerous responsibilities of charity trustees—those who serve on the boards and management committees of charities in a 'governance' role—have been especially highlighted (Phillips, 1994). There are indications that this has had the effect of discouraging and demotivating the very 'active citizens' on whom so many expectations have been pinned (Harris, 1996).

Accountability

Concern about the legal and regulatory framework within which the voluntary sector operates is related to a fourth theme, its accountability. As the sector has moved into the mainstream of human service provision, and as interest has grown in the potential of civil society, so questions have been raised about the sector's accountability (Leat, 1988). There has been a noticeable increase in media interest in recent years in voluntary sector 'scandals' (Fenton *et al.*, 1993), with the pages of the national press reflecting a particular fascination with misuse of money, incompetence or inappropriate behaviour within religious-based organizations. The media interest is likely to continue so long as the voluntary sector remains in the public spotlight and is the recipient of larger and larger amounts of 'public' or 'government' funding.

The concern about the accountability of the voluntary sector is itself part of a wider debate about accountability within the political system. Over the last fifteen years there has been a major structural change in the organization of the public sector (government departments, local authorities, quangos, the health service and so on). Economic markets and contracts are now the favoured models for calling to account those who provide services or spend money; they have largely replaced reliance on hierarchical systems of accountability and control and systems based on principles of democratic election and representation (Ferlie *et al.*, 1996).

In so far as the voluntary sector is in receipt of public sector funding or requires the approval of governmental agencies for its work, the new systems of public accountability may be expected to impact more and more on the sector. Increasingly voluntary organizations in the UK are seen as agents of the state and as instruments through which public policy is delivered. There are some indications that the introduction of contracting between voluntary agencies and government funders has already created some confusion within voluntary agencies about who is accountable to whom and what forms of accountability are appropriate for the sector. Questions have been raised, for example, about the extent to which voluntary agencies are free to set their own goals once they are cast into the role of 'providers' for government 'purchasers' and become heavily dependent on government funding (Gutch, 1992; Lewis, 1993). To what extent can the sector remain 'independent' and 'innovative' as the demands for its public accountability increase and the means of ensuring accountability multiply (Smith and Lipsky, 1993)?

Nature and composition of the sector

The fifth and final theme that emerges from current debates and writing about the voluntary sector and its future concerns the nature of the sector itself. As indicated in the introduction, the concept of the voluntary sector is a wide-ranging one. The sector, however it is defined, encompasses a range of organizational types, and serves a range of human needs. At the same time, our society is creating more and more 'hybrid' organizations which operate on the boundary between the voluntary sector and either the public sector or the for-profit sector.

The recognition of the heterogeneity of the voluntary sector and its blurred boundaries has led some commentators to suggest that the whole concept of a 'voluntary sector' is now inappropriate: that there is insufficient commonality between the various organizations which are said to comprise the sector for the concept to be useful. Those commentators whose prime interest is in the meeting of human needs have also questioned why we need to make distinctions between sectors in any case. Surely, such writers argue, the important thing is to respond to need? In that case, which organizations make the response and which 'sector' they belong to is an irrelevance (see, for example, Salamon 1995).

The Jewish voluntary sector is unlikely to be immune from the challenges which are facing the general UK sector.

There are also strong arguments against this viewpoint. International studies have demonstrated that it is voluntary organizations rather than states which are most responsive to religious and cultural diversity. It is also clear that those who work in and with the multifarious organizations of the 'voluntary sector' recognize that they have in common numerous shared and distinctive experiences, values and organizational problems. They want to identify with each other and learn from each other. They do not want to be dominated by other sectors. They also want education and training which is sensitive to the distinctive management challenges that arise in the sector (Billis and Harris, 1996; Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996). Moreover, the dominant ideas about welfare pluralism and civil society are in fact underpinned by an assumption that there is a discernible voluntary or third sector, that it has special and different features and that it is worth preserving and nurturing.

Despite this, it is likely that the debate about the 'authenticity', 'reality' or 'essence' of the voluntary sector will continue in the future. This in turn will demand that those who recognize the distinctive features and values of the sector, and wish to preserve them, will need to look hard at the evolving relationship between voluntary organizations and organizations of the central and local state. They will also need to take a pro-active stance to ensure that the independent and diverse nature of the voluntary sector is preserved and that voluntary organizations are not absorbed into hybrid organizations or into other sectors altogether (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996; Harris and Billis, 1996; Knight, 1993).

To what extent, then, does the 'Jewish voluntary sector' face the same challenges as the rest of the UK voluntary sector? Does it face any additional or special challenges for the future? These questions are addressed in Section 4.

4 The Jewish voluntary sector

By any definition, the Jewish voluntary sector is part of the broader UK voluntary sector. Many of today's Jewish welfare agencies have grown in parallel with equivalent secular and Christian organizations; for example, the historical roots of Jewish Care (formerly the Jewish Board of Guardians) are in the same Victorian tradition of philanthropy which gave rise to agencies like Barnardos and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Today, institutions run by and for Jews encompass the whole range of voluntary sector groupings and organizational forms—from large bureaucratized service-delivering agencies, synagogues, pressure groups and umbrella bodies to small, informal self-help groups and clubs. Thus, the Jewish voluntary sector is unlikely to be immune from the challenges which are facing the general UK sector.

Indeed, the Jewish press, and a few specialist research studies done in recent years, provide preliminary confirmation that all five of the themes discussed in the previous section have been identified and are already engaging the minds of those who work in and with the Jewish voluntary sector. For example, the need to make effective use of volunteers and financial donations to Jewish voluntary organizations was a key theme of two enquiries in the late 1980s (Garbacz *et al.*, 1984; Community Planning and Research Committee, 1985) and has subsequently been explored further by Shear (1987) and Tihanyi (1989). The organizational implications of an early merger between two Jewish welfare agencies was explored by Brier in 1988. Senior staff

members of Jewish Care have been active in pressure groups which are attempting to change the way in which charities are affected by VAT regulations. Letters querying the accountability, authority and composition of the governing bodies of synagogues, umbrella bodies and Jewish welfare agencies appear regularly in the columns of the *Jewish Chronicle* and reflect questions being raised in the USA (Litvag, 1996). And a recent study of synagogues has argued that they have much to gain from seeing themselves as part of the broader voluntary sector (Harris, 1995).

In addition to facing the same issues as the rest of the UK voluntary sector, the available and emerging data about the demographic characteristics of the Jewish community and how they are changing (Goodman, 1996; Miller, Schmool and Lerman, 1996; Waterman and Kosmin, 1986) suggest that the Jewish voluntary sector will face some *special* challenges in the future; challenges which are different from, or perhaps more intense, than those experienced by the broader UK voluntary sector. These include:

- securing financial and human resources
- meeting rising expectations
- developing cohesiveness
- maintaining a 'Jewish' character
- links with the wider voluntary sector and the wider society

The fact that the community has a high proportion of elderly people means that an increasing gap could appear between the available resources of volunteer time and money and the incidence of need and demand.

Resources

The UK Jewish community is small (currently estimated at under 300,000), and it is not growing. It is geographically concentrated in a few areas and it has a high proportion of elderly people (25 per cent compared with 17 per cent in the population generally). These characteristics may give rise to special problems in the future in relation to both funding and volunteer time.

With such a small total population to serve there are limits on the extent to which duplication of provision can be tolerated, choice can be offered, specialist needs can be responded to and services can be extended to every person who defines herself or himself as a Jew. The fact that the community has a high proportion of elderly people means that an increasing gap could appear between the available resources of volunteer time and money and the incidence of need and demand.

These points apply not just to welfare service organizations, but also to other voluntary organizations including self-help and advocacy groups. They apply as well to synagogues which are essentially self-funding mutual-benefit associations: most synagogues have to sustain themselves financially through the efforts of their own members. As the proportion of members who are unemployed or retired increases, synagogues may find it increasingly difficult to sustain the full range of spiritual, educational and pastoral services which their members expect.

On the other hand, if ways can be found of motivating early retired and 'young elderly' people to contribute volunteer time, the Jewish voluntary sector could find itself comparatively advantaged. Volunteers are needed not only for fundraising, administrative and service-delivery tasks but also, and crucially, for governance functions. Recruitment of more men and women with life experience in the professions and business to serve on boards would help to sustain and develop the quality of leadership in the sector.

The recruitment and training of paid staff pose separate problems. As the demands on the Jewish voluntary sector increase, the demand for care staff, support workers and professional employees such as social workers and teachers also increases. Questions are raised about whether such staff should themselves be Jewish, how they are to be recruited and trained; and how their careers can be developed. Are special initiatives needed or can the employment market look after these issues?

With respect to funding, the Jewish voluntary sector may face the same danger as other voluntary organizations of becoming over-dependent on one or two powerful funders. However, in the case of Jewish voluntary organizations, those funders may be not only government agencies but also individual philanthropists. The advice generally given to the voluntary sector to diversify funding sources may be unrealistic in the context of a small community. Thus, the question of accountability is even more important here than in the rest of the voluntary sector: can the Jewish voluntary sector avoid being policy-driven by individual philanthropists and religious factions?

Little can be expected from legacies. These are likely to diminish in number and size in the future. As people live longer, they are increasingly likely

to have to exhaust all their life savings and capital prior to their death in paying for their own long-term care needs. Less money will then be available for legacies to Jewish voluntary organizations. Less will also be available for securing the future of children and grandchildren who may then, in turn, expect the Jewish community to give help which would formerly have come from within the family.

In these circumstances, where the securing of sufficient and suitable human and financial resources is likely to become ever more problematic, should we be extending our thinking and our organizational links? Is there scope for more co-operation with the rest of the UK voluntary sector? And should the UK Jewish voluntary sector be doing more to share resources (for example, training and fundraising know-how) with other Jewish communities in the European Union, or in North America or in Israel?

Expectations

The expectations for the Jewish voluntary sector to respond to all cases of 'need' are rising—amongst Jews themselves, amongst the non-Jewish community and, as explained earlier, amongst government agencies. At the same time the demand for the services of the Jewish voluntary sector is also rising due to demographic factors such as ageing, family breakdown, female employment and general unemployment. As new needs emerge and new conceptualisations are made of existing problems, the response is generally an organizational one—to set up a new project or a new voluntary organization (the establishment of Jewish Continuity is a recent example).

Setting priorities may be made more difficult by the fact that often there is close overlap *within* the Jewish community between 'users', funders, planners and deliverers of services.

If Jewish voluntary organizations are expected to respond to all need experienced by Jews, rather than to complement or supplement government, commercial and family provision, the problem of 'philanthropic insufficiency' described in the previous section will be exacerbated. In the future there could be damaging disputes about who should make rationing decisions about available 'Jewish' resources and on what basis. Setting priorities may be made more difficult by the fact that often there is close overlap *within* the Jewish community between 'users', funders, planners and deliverers of services. Pressures for co-operation and co-ordination for planning may increase and may challenge the existing tendencies towards fragmentation within the organized Jewish community.

Cohesiveness

Contemporary Anglo-Jewry is faction-ridden to an extent not encountered in any other major Jewish community in the Diaspora. Cross-community or 'non-aligned' groupings and associations (such as Limmud and JPR itself) provide positive signs that sections of the community are no longer willing to tolerate threats to the idea of a single Jewish people. On the other hand, the schismatic nature of the community does raise the question of whether the concept of a single 'Jewish voluntary sector' is useful for either analytical or practical purposes.

There have been a number of 'take-overs' and 'mergers' in the Jewish voluntary sector. The most recent are the merger of Ravenswood and Norwood and the merger of Jewish Continuity with the JIA. They are generally thought to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in relation to matters such as fundraising, administration and use of volunteers and to increase the overall cohesiveness of the Jewish voluntary sector. To what extent has this been borne out in practice? Who benefits from mergers? To what extent do the merged organizations fall victims to bureaucratization and inflexibility? Do mergers limit choice and diversity and stifle innovation? Do they contribute to community cohesiveness or do they reflect the 'capture' of two organizations by a dominant faction? These are all questions that need to be faced before the idea that take-overs and mergers are necessarily a 'good thing' becomes taken-for-granted.

Jewish character

It seems that increasing proportions of those who work for pay in the Jewish voluntary sector, especially in social care, are not themselves Jewish or have little understanding about Jewish values and customs. This raises questions about what is 'Jewish' about the Jewish voluntary sector and hence about its legitimacy. Does the Jewish voluntary sector have a distinctive ethos? Does it have different approaches to its work? Are Jewish religious and cultural values reflected in internal organizational relationships between people? Is enough use made of potential learning across different Jewish communities through links with Jews in Europe, Israel and other continents? Or is the only 'Jewish' element in Jewish welfare agencies the fact that the majority of their 'clients' regard themselves as Jewish? Is the only thing that is Jewish about Jewish voluntary associations the fact their members regard themselves as Jewish? In short, is 'Jewishness' reflected in any *positive* goals, actions or affirmations?

The way we answer these kinds of questions

could have implications for the very future of the Jewish voluntary sector. The motivations of those who donate time and money to the Jewish voluntary sector could be undermined by trends in moving away from distinctive Jewish underpinnings. Government and private funders of the Jewish voluntary sector could also start to question the distinctiveness and, therefore, the value of what is being offered. In a competitive funding environment, all voluntary organizations need a positive self-image and sense of their own distinctive contribution.

Links with the wider society

If the Jewish voluntary sector comes under increasing pressure and its voluntary resources of time and money are stretched too far, there could be a knock-on effect on the broader voluntary sector. Jews often play an active part in secular society as well as in their own community, but if resources are over-stretched such 'active citizens' may face choices about whether to respond to the needs of the Jewish community *or* to the needs of the wider community. Any loosening of existing links across communities could be damaging for the Jewish voluntary sector which currently benefits from new ideas and expertise brought in from the secular community.

What is lacking is knowledge about the *organizational* characteristics of the Jewish community and hence the challenges that it faces.

Finally, we might ask ourselves what the Jewish voluntary sector can offer the wider society. Have we learned lessons that could help the voluntary organizations of other ethnic and religious minorities, for example? Do we have special insights in some areas such as fundraising, mergers and volunteer recruitment which we could share with the wider voluntary sector? As the Jewish voluntary sector itself comes under more pressure, there is a temptation to turn inwards. But this is a short-term solution only. A small community needs to have a reciprocal relationship with other parts of the voluntary sector so that lessons and scarce resources are used to maximum effect.

5 The need for discussion and systematic investigation

This paper has suggested that:

- 'the Jewish community' comprises a network of formal and informal organizations run largely by and for Jews;
- these organizations are part of the wider 'voluntary sector' in the UK;
- the UK voluntary sector has recently moved back into the public spotlight and there are expectations that it will expand its role in service provision and in the building of civil society;
- these expectations have raised issues for the voluntary sector which faces a number of key challenges in the future in relation especially to voluntarism, organizational structures, legal frameworks, accountability, and its own composition and nature;
- the Jewish voluntary sector is unlikely to be immune from the key challenges which are facing, and will face, the general UK sector in the years ahead; and
- the Jewish voluntary sector faces some special challenges including obtaining appropriate financial and human resources, meeting rising expectations, developing cohesiveness, maintaining its Jewishness, and relating to the wider community.

Is it time to move beyond speculation and anecdote and to undertake some systematic investigation into the Jewish voluntary sector and the problems and issues it faces? There is now an accumulated body of equivalent knowledge about the UK voluntary sector generally, and an impressive body of knowledge about the demographic characteristics of the Jewish community is developing. What is lacking is knowledge about the *organizational* characteristics of the Jewish community and hence the challenges that it faces. Without such knowledge, decisions about priorities and policies for the future will be ill-founded.

An enquiry into the Jewish voluntary sector and its future could include one or more of the following elements:

- A debate within the Jewish voluntary sector about the content of this paper and its possible implications for those who work in or with the sector or who benefit from its activities.
- A mapping of the existing voluntary sector. This would include identifying and locating the full range of organizations which could be included in a definition of the 'Jewish voluntary sector', and documenting characteristics such as funding sources, income, numbers of paid staff, numbers of volunteers, composition of governing body, age, history and so on. This

would involve drawing together published data and carrying out new investigations where necessary.

- An investigation into the extent to which the Jewish voluntary sector is experiencing, and is likely in the future to experience, the same challenges facing the rest of the UK voluntary sector. Such an investigation could take as its starting point the five key themes identified in Section 3.

- An investigation into the distinctive features and challenges facing the Jewish voluntary sector by reason of the special characteristics of the Jewish community. Such an investigation could, in the first place, look systematically at the latest demographic data about the Jewish community and juxtapose it with what is known about the voluntary sector generally and the Jewish voluntary sector in particular. It could also look at the changing needs and pre-occupations of the UK Jewish community.

- A strategic overview of the existing UK Jewish voluntary sector with a view to assessing how far Jewish voluntary organizations are responding to the needs of the UK Jewish community and how far they can continue to do so in the future. Such an overview would consider, for example, the extent to which new issues and problems can be tackled by existing organizations; the extent to which new organizations or amalgamated organizations could provide more appropriate responses; the extent to which Jewish people can expect to have their needs met in the future by 'Jewish' voluntary organizations; issues surrounding training and career development; the possible sources of funding for the Jewish voluntary sector in the twenty-first century; and the potential for closer links with Jewish communities outside the UK in order to share experience and resources.

One of the key themes to emerge from the Deakin Commission report was the need for the voluntary sector to have a sense of its own nature, worth and identity as a prerequisite for planning for the future and negotiating with funders and regulators. That argument can be applied equally to the Jewish voluntary sector. Perhaps the organized Jewish community can even provide a model for the wider UK voluntary sector in how to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century?

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