



The Big Society and the UK Jewish Community

A Jewish Leadership Council Policy Paper



Top cover photo: As part of Mitzvah Day, pupils at Ilford Jewish Primary School make cards for children in hospital, with the help of teacher Rachel Symons.
Photo by Michelle Bauernfreund, Mitzvah Day

Left Photo: Rachel Avraham, a resident at a Norwood residential care home in Hendon, takes part in an art therapy session.
Photo courtesy of Norwood

Middle Photo: Dancing at the Michael Sobell Community Centre in Golders Green.
Photo by Vic Aboudara, Jewish Care

Right Photo: A volunteer's son plays with a child at the New North London Synagogue drop-in for destitute asylum seekers.
Photo courtesy of NNLS drop-in

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Contents

FOREWORD	2
THOUGHTS ON THE BIG SOCIETY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
OVERVIEW	8
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY	9
A COMMUNITY AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE	10
The Family	10
Schools and Nurseries	10
Jewish Youth Movements and Organisations	12
University Life	12
Synagogues	14
Older People	14
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES	16
Family Breakdown	16
Living with Disability	16
Gemachs	17
Finding a Job	17
Fighting Drugs Dependency	17
Responding to Discrimination and Antisemitism	18
VOLUNTEERING AND GIVING	19
Charitable Giving	19
Volunteering	19
TAKING A BROADER VIEW	22
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE JEWISH VOLUNTARY SECTOR	23
RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT	24

Foreword



Vivian Wineman

*Chair- Council of Members of the Jewish Leadership Council
and President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews*

When British Jews think about their relationship to each other, they tend to return to one word: “community”. This is no surprise; the Jewish religion has always placed a major emphasis on the community as the key part of the Jewish way of life. Some two thousand years ago, the sage Hillel instructed: “Don’t separate yourself from the community”.

The Jewish community in Britain today is most visible through its institutions. British Jews are institution-builders rather than passive clients of the State. We are social pioneers, always thinking about the needs of both our own community and of wider society, and how best these needs can be met through communal involvement, charitable giving and volunteering.

The Jewish Leadership Council, which brings together the heads of the major Jewish organisations in Britain, is uniquely placed to reflect on the astounding breadth of civil society organisations that have sprung up from within the Jewish community and, based on our own experience, give some thoughts about how Government and all the communities in Britain can learn from each other to build the Big Society.

Thoughts on the Big Society

**Mick Davis**

Chair of Trustees (acting), The Jewish Leadership Council

The Big Society is an intriguing idea that has inspired some and puzzled others. It is clear that people have different understandings of what the Big Society means, and that may be no bad thing. But at the heart of this idea is the importance of individuals' contribution to society; this, together with the recognition that communities know and understand their needs better than outside Government and should, where possible, try to respond to those needs themselves. Government's first role is to make this possible, both by providing resources and through supportive legislation that enable communities to take charge of their own destinies.

In the background of Jewish communal life is the Talmudic principle: "All Jews are responsible for one another". This is a profound statement about the role of the individual in society; it's wrong for someone to only think about themselves, and it's also wrong to assume that helping others is someone else's job. Instead, every individual has a duty to their fellow. This is at the heart of the Jewish approach to community: a sense of personal duty to each of one's neighbours. It is this civic duty that led the Jewish community to build strong institutions, give charity and volunteer. To quote the Ethics of the Fathers: "It is not your job to finish the task, but you are not free to give up on it".

To me, a Britain in which each of us truly feels responsible for one another, a Britain where we support one another, and work together to build a strong country and strong communities, a Britain where voluntary and community organisations can flourish - to me, that is a truly Big Society.

Introduction



Jeremy Newmark

Chief Executive, The Jewish Leadership Council

The Coalition Government's Big Society agenda presents both opportunities and challenges to those agencies that provide the infrastructure for Jewish life in the UK.

Charity, citizen service, volunteerism, connected communities, cooperation and collectivism. The entire lexicon of the Big Society could have been drawn from a study of the institutional base of the UK Jewish community. Since the General Election, many Rabbis have noted this similarity in a sermon or two.

However, against the current backdrop of spending cuts, drops in voluntary donations and a tightening regulatory environment for faith-based charities, the Jewish voluntary sector is working hard to adapt to the challenge of delivering the Big Society agenda.

We have produced this paper to encourage and facilitate discussion between the UK Jewish community and Government on these issues. As the umbrella body representing the major UK Jewish communal organisations, the Jewish Leadership Council is acutely aware that our members are living and building the Big Society every day. Beyond platitudes about how the Big Society is in step with Jewish values and practice, there should be a penetrating and informed debate about its implications for our community and about our own responsibility, as practitioners, to promote and develop the Big Society more widely.

This paper has been written in order to inform that debate.

The production of this paper has been a real reflection of collaboration and teamwork across the institutions of the UK Jewish community. It was largely written by Arieh Kovler, the JLC's Head of Policy, under the support and guidance of our Public Affairs Advisor Kate Bearman. The input of the senior professional heads of our member organisations, particularly Simon Morris of Jewish Care, Norma Brier of Norwood and Leon Smith of Nightingale is hugely valued. Their dedicated service as the professional heads of these organisations places them at the cutting edge of the Big Society agenda. JLC Fellow Samantha Lishak and project intern Yair Lehrer provided solid research support. Thanks go to Elizabeth Benjamin for her help at the conceptualisation stage. The guidance of colleagues in Government departments who are key partners in delivering the Big Society agenda was useful and important. As ever the time and dedication of JLC members and trustees and their commitment to all of our work despite heavy professional commitments is sincerely appreciated.

Executive Summary

- British Jewish community and civil society organisations have been providing services to Jews and the wider public for hundreds of years. They function in every area of civil society - from education to elderly and disability care, through to religious institutions and university campuses.
- Many Jewish organisations exist to help British Jews, but many also work to help wider society.
- Jewish community organisations have been successful because they have been able to use the energy and support of the wider Jewish community in order to deliver important social objectives.
- Jewish community organisations are, individually and collectively, a good example of the Big Society in action. They can serve as a good model for creating and developing civil society institutions that deliver both voluntary and public services.
- Jewish community organisations do face some new challenges, including the financial pressure of the fiscal contraction and the constraints placed on religious organisations and charities imposed by new equality laws.

IN ORDER TO HELP BUILD THE BIG SOCIETY, THE JEWISH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MAKES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS:

- 1. Without compromising their missions or neglecting their core audience, organisations that serve the Jewish community should, where appropriate, find ways of ensuring that their benefits spread as widely as possible**
- 2. Jewish organisations should help other communities develop new voluntary organisations, and work closely with these new community organisations, sharing ideas and best practice.**
- 3. Jewish organisations should be alert to barriers to building the Big Society and should make suggestions to the Government on how to remove them.**

AFTER CONSULTING WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS ON THE BEST WAY TO DELIVER THE BIG SOCIETY, THE JEWISH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Government should consider finding ways to promote the underlying values behind the Big Society by encouraging volunteering, charitable giving, and social entrepreneurship.
2. To best develop the Big Society, Government should encourage all sorts of communities to become active and deliver services: neighbourhood groups, social clubs, professional associations, religious groups, and people with shared circumstances and interests.
3. Rather than trying to limit and constrain community and voluntary organisations from being able to serve their own communities, Government should understand that a major part of their success relies on this relationship.
4. Government should avoid creating more technical hurdles for religious-based charities and should consider whether the current framework, following the Equality Act 2010, may be hindering the delivery of Big Society goals.
5. Government should find and promote showcase community organisations that can act as centres of excellence and best-practice for newer community organisations. Many Jewish community organisations would be perfect candidates for this.
6. Government should encourage Local Authorities to ensure that community organisations are not disproportionately harmed by cuts to Council budgets.
7. Where possible, Government should consider community organisations as an investment, supporting them through the fiscal contraction because they provide some of the best public services.
8. Government should consider establishing standard forms and procedures for organisations and those people applying to provide public services on behalf of Local Authorities.

Overview

The Big Society, in its essence, is about communities providing services to the public out of a sense of communal belonging and public duty, rather than Government providing services to everyone centrally.

The Big Society is made up of the combination and integration of small communities doing good things. It is about small-scale diversity, understanding that different communities have different priorities. This understanding of difference is at the heart of the idea of the Big Society, replacing a one-size-fits-all view imposed by central Government. Different communities may have different ideas about crime, reflected through an elected Police Commissioner. They may have different ideas about planning, given voice through a neighbourhood-based planning system. They may have different ideas about the priorities of their Local Authorities, more able to be enacted through the new Power of Competence, and they might have different ideas about their schools, reflected through the Free Schools policy.

But there's more than one sort of community. It is easy to narrowly imagine a community as essentially geographical, and to see communities as identical with neighbourhoods. Ideally, neighbourhoods should all be communities, but there are other sorts of communities too: communities of shared interests, shared faith, shared culture and history.

People give time and money to their own communities out of a sense of identification and simple self-interest, ensuring that their communities provide the sorts of services and voluntary organisations that they want. For the Big Society to succeed, it has to harness all of these communities, together with the energy and resources they contain, and to find a way to use people's and communities' self-interest constructively, to provide the widest benefit possible for society as a whole.

Of course, communities aren't mutually exclusive. This idea belongs to the naïve multiculturalism typical of the 1980s, which assumed everyone can be neatly put into only one box. In reality, people may have several senses of belonging, several connected identities, and can be active in several different communities.

This applies to British Jews as much as anyone else. This paper is specifically about British Jews as members of the Jewish community. Of course, all British Jews are also a part of their local neighbourhoods and other communities of interest or values, but this paper focuses on the Jewish community.

It aims to show the sorts of social capital that the Jewish community generates in all areas of life and to give some practical examples of how the vision of the Big Society can be realised. It will also note some potential stumbling blocks to our community – and other communities of all types – in building the Big Society for everyone.

Background and History

Jews were expelled from England in 1290 by royal decree, and were not 'resettled' until Oliver Cromwell encouraged the immigration of Dutch Jews in the 1650s.

At this time, there were really no public services. Education, alms for the poor and other services were delivered either through the Church or by individual philanthropists. Neither of these routes was open to Jews. Effectively, Jews in England were excluded from other communities and were only part of the Jewish community – linguistically, ethnically, religiously, culturally and physically separate from the rest of society.

The Jewish immigrants to the UK – encouraged to move here by Cromwell's Government – began to set up their own institutions: Synagogues, schoolhouses, orphanages, charities for the elderly, blind and disabled, and support for the poor. Partly, this was because of the Jewish idea of being part of one big, mutually-responsible family. Partly, it was because there was no other option, with Jews banned from the limited services which were open to the public. Over time, these institutions became critical to Jewish life in Britain.

As the Welfare State developed, some of these institutions, schools and care homes were able to join it. This allowed them to receive financial support from local authorities and central Government, while still benefitting from philanthropy and volunteers from the Jewish community. Some continued focusing their services to the Jewish community, and others chose to widen their approach, serving the general public while still inspired and guided by their Jewish values.

As time has progressed, some needs have changed. In the 19th and early 20th century, the primary focus of many Jewish welfare organisations was helping poor Jews, often recent immigrants, integrate into British society. Increasingly, however, the welfare needs of the Jewish community have shifted. Today helping elderly, ill and disabled people is seen as a more urgent priority. Some needs have stayed the same, with education still a major priority.

Now, as the barriers between different parts of society are broken down, Jewish community organisations often play a leading role in their respective sectors, and are recognised nationally as leaders, pioneers and centres of excellence.

A Community at all Stages of Life

THE FAMILY

Families are the building blocks of society; strong families lead to stronger communities and help build a strong, big society.

The family is also the basic unit of Jewish life. Rather than just the household, Jewish families are often extended families, where cousins and grandparents mingle together at the regular Jewish festivals. Some of the most powerful religious rituals and cultural experiences in Judaism, such as the Passover Seder and the Friday night Sabbath meal, take place at home inside the family unit. In some ways, Jewishness itself is seen as being part of a (large) extended family.

Many Jewish organisations are focused on supporting families to ensure that they can stay strong. This is particularly important when families have to deal with difficult situations like bereavement, illness, financial problems or abuse. This is discussed later in the section 'Overcoming Challenges'.

Adoption is one of those rare acts that is good for everyone: good for a child who can live in a loving home rather than in the care system; good for a family who wants to take care of a child, either because they are unable to have their own children or because they want to help children; and good for the State. In the Jewish community, Norwood operates a recognised adoption agency, which was originally founded to provide services for Jewish children and families from around the country, but now also works with children and families from many different religions, cultures and ethnic groups in five London boroughs.

SCHOOLS AND NURSERIES

Judaism has always placed an extremely high value on the education of children and young people. Education is a Jewish value.

There have been Jewish schools in the UK since the Great Synagogue established a small religious school, primarily for orphans, in 1732. In the 1780s, the religious school also began teaching English and Maths. That small school, run out of a single room in a synagogue, is today JFS, now based in North London and the UK's largest Jewish secondary school.

There are now about 90 Jewish schools in the UK, both primary and secondary, with approximately 27,000 pupils in them.

Most Jewish schools give preference in their admissions to Jewish students if they have more applicants than places. This means that popular Jewish schools in areas with a large Jewish population have mainly Jewish pupils; other Jewish schools in neighbourhoods with a smaller local Jewish population may have

relatively few Jewish pupils. King David School in Birmingham, for example, has a majority of Muslim pupils. Some of those schools with mainly-Jewish students serve the wider community in other ways, such as allowing access to their facilities on weekends.

Many Jewish schools – especially the older ones – were initially founded by groups of parents, teachers or Rabbis as private schools. This was not because of a particular commitment to private education; it was just the easiest way for parents to quickly set up the schools they wanted. Some of these schools have since converted to Voluntary Aided status, and others would like to do so too.

Additionally, many of the newer Jewish schools originally opened as voluntary-aided schools by Local Authorities. In almost every case, this was as a result of parental demand and local campaigning by parents. However, there has sometimes been resistance from Local Authorities to establishing new schools, or delays and blocks caused by the planning process.

The Government's Free Schools policy was therefore particularly welcome to Jewish parents' groups who are attempting to set up new schools, and two of the 16 schools accepted in the initial round as the first Free Schools will be Jewish.

Unfortunately, the Free Schools policy also included a new requirement that makes it harder for Jewish schools; Jewish schools set up under the Free Schools will only be allowed to reserve half of their intake for Jewish students. This has led to some parents' groups deciding that the Free Schools route is not suitable for their schools; they are working with Local Authorities to try and set their schools up through the Voluntary-Aided route. Other groups, however, are eager to open their schools to the wider local community, while maintaining a strong Jewish ethos.

In all of these schools, the Jewish Studies aspect of the curriculum are funded by voluntary contributions

FOCUS ON JFS

With approximately 2,000 students and 220 members of staff, JFS received an 'outstanding' OFSTED report in 2010. JFS students can get involved in extra-curricular activities alongside advancing their academic careers: the school offers its students opportunities to do charity work and volunteering, debating, drama, sports clubs, and Young Enterprise. These take place during lunch times and also as part of the extended school day programme.

from parents, not from the public purse. Families who are unable or unwilling to pay these contributions simply do not have to; however, there is a very high rate of contribution in most Jewish schools.

Some children have Special Educational Needs (SEN). These can vary from mild dyslexia to behavioural disorders through to severe learning and developmental difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorders and physical disabilities that may be a challenge in a regular classroom environment, like hearing and visual impairment. Often, it is possible to include children with SEN inside a mainstream classroom, perhaps with additional individual support; sometimes, however, this is not possible or not the best option for the child.

Unlike mainstream schools, state-funded Special schools (and SEN units inside mainstream schools) must admit children on the basis of need only. This provides the opportunity for Jewish organisations and schools to support the wider community; an SEN unit in the new Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS) in New Barnet, supported by Norwood and the Pears Foundation, specialises in Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Its places are allocated on the basis of need to children of all backgrounds, but it benefits from the resources of JCoSS and the expertise of Norwood.

Some Jewish organisations work inside schools to provide formal and informal education. Streetwise delivers programmes on topics like anti-bullying, personal safety and substance abuse, and runs after-school clubs. Jewish Action and Training runs some health education, including teaching about STIs and how to avoid them as well as relationships education. The Jewish Lads' and Girls Brigade acts as a provider for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.

To ensure that Jewish schools don't become monocultures and that students are exposed to different religions, many take part in school twinning programmes. One example of this is the Shared Futures school linking programme, run by the Three Faiths Forum. This links up Jewish, Muslim and Church schools, and provides a programme of activities where students from different religious backgrounds can meet, discuss ideas and work on joint projects in a constructive environment.

JEWISH YOUTH MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

The Jewish community has several active youth movements and organisations. Some are the youth wings of synagogues, whilst others are independent. These groups hold regular local meetings, and run residential events and overseas tours to Israel and Europe.

Although the youth movements are religious and ideologically diverse, they have much in common:

- All are focused on Jewish values-based informal education rather than simply being social clubs.
- All place a high value on leadership, and train the participants to be active youth leaders inside the movements and in wider civic life. Unlike many other national youth organisations, they all include a major element of peer leadership, with young people running activities for younger children or those of the same age.
- Most are run by very small full-time offices made up largely of graduates who take on the role as a one-year or two-year sabbatical position.

All of the youth movements can use the Jewish Life Education Centre, run by the UJIA, which has educational resources and specialist staff who can train and support the staff and volunteers. They are also financially supported by the major Jewish educational charities, particularly the UJIA.

UNIVERSITY LIFE

While Jewish schools are old and established, Jewish participation in Higher Education is historically more recent. Jews were banned from the ancient universities, which were still considered outgrowths of the

FOCUS ON HILLEL

There are approximately 8,000 Jewish students in UK Higher and Further Education. With residential kosher accommodation and a growing network of non-residential Jewish Student Centres, Hillel offers a wide range of facilities to Jewish students to enjoy a vibrant Jewish lifestyle on campus.

Church. It was only with the establishment of University College London in 1836 that Jews were finally able to gain academic degrees, and it took until the passage of the Universities Tests Act in 1871 for universities to be fully open to Jewish students.

Campus life is a challenge for all students, often away from home for the first time and having to manage work, finances and personal life. Many Jewish students face additional challenges. Keeping a kosher kitchen can be difficult or impossible when sharing with students who don't follow the same strict rules; observing the

Sabbath or other Jewish festivals can also be challenging. Additionally, Jewish students sometimes have to deal with antisemitism, which is particularly felt on campus and may be the first time that some young Jews find themselves as victims of racism.

The Hillel Foundation, a Jewish charity, works with private student housing providers and universities to build kosher flats at those universities with enough of a Jewish student population to support demand. This is an unusual three-way partnership of private sector building and management companies, public-sector universities and third-sector charities. It has proven to be a successful system that reduces the financial burden on the university and generates profit for the housing providers.

The large majority of Jewish students, though, choose to live in regular student accommodation. These students often organise the Jewish social, cultural and religious aspects of their university lives through University Jewish Societies. There are active Jewish Societies at approximately 55 campuses across the UK. They run group meals on Sabbaths and festivals, arrange prayers, and organise Jewish educational and cultural events. They also provide Jewish students with a voice for when they need to engage with their Student Union or university management.

Like most student societies, Jewish Societies are run by a dedicated group of student volunteers. Also, Jewish Societies are open to students of all religions, whether interested in Jewish culture or simply accompanying a Jewish friend.

Jewish Societies often function as a launch-pad into wider student involvement on campus. They support and encourage their members to get involved in other student societies, become active in Student Unions and maybe run for elected Union positions, raise charity through RAG, or get involved in student media.

Jewish Societies are all linked together through the Union of Jewish Students, a national organisation which supports Jewish Societies, subsidises some of their educational activities, and represents Jewish students at a national level to Government and inside the National Union of Students.

FOCUS ON BOREHAMWOOD AND ELSTREE SYNAGOGUE

With a membership of more than 1,200 families, Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue in Hertfordshire is a hub for the local Jewish community, and this is reflected in the breadth of activities that take place. The synagogue supports its members from baby and toddler groups to bereavement services, with a care phone line and a worker to help people through troubling times such as divorce or unemployment. Study groups are held for adults and youth groups for teenagers, with Brownies and Scouts for children. Of course, it also hosts Jewish prayer services three times a day.

SYNAGOGUES

The synagogue is perhaps the most famous institution associated with Jews. Synagogues are places of Jewish prayer. Traditional observant Jews pray in the morning, afternoon and evening, though in practice the best-attended prayers are on Friday nights, Sabbath mornings and festivals.

But synagogues have never been only for prayer. The word 'synagogue' – and its Hebrew name, *Beit Knesset* – both literally translate as 'Assembly Room'. Partly this is because Jewish prayer is traditionally a communal activity, with a quorum of ten Jewish adults (in Orthodox Judaism, ten Jewish men) needed for some important prayers to be said, but the word 'synagogue' also hints at its other role as a meeting place and community centre.

Many synagogues provide an active programme of lectures, cultural and festive events, Sunday-school classes and social activities. They allow

other communal charities and voluntary projects to use their premises for meetings.

The oldest synagogue still standing in the UK is Jew's Court in Lincoln, which dates back to the mid-12th century. It went out of use at the Expulsion in 1290. The oldest synagogue that has been in continuous use is Bevis Marks Synagogue in the City of London, which was built in 1702. Today, there are more than four hundred active synagogues in the UK.

Most synagogues today are membership organisations. While they are open to prayer for anyone, membership fees pay for upkeep, Rabbis' salaries, and all of the other services. Eighty two thousand UK Jewish households are synagogue members, which is a significant majority of all British Jews.

Synagogues of a similar religious outlook come together under bigger synagogal bodies. These include the United Synagogue, the Movement for Reform Judaism, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the Spanish and Portuguese Jews community, Liberal Judaism, the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, the Federation of Synagogues and others.

OLDER PEOPLE

According to research by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, based on 2001 census data, the Jewish community is older than the general population, with 12.4 per cent of the Jewish community over the age of 75 compared with 7.5 per cent of the wider population. Caring for older people is therefore a

FOCUS ON JEWISH CARE

Jewish Care's origins lie in the Jewish Board of Guardians, founded in 1859 to support the Jewish poor. Today, Jewish Care mainly helps the elderly and those with mental health problems. It runs more than 70 community and day centres, advice support and information for carers, care homes, and help living at home, for over 7,000 people. It has a staff of 1,100 and 2,500 volunteers. Jewish Care service users absorb Jewish heritage and culture through talking books, music and help carrying out everyday tasks.

key concern for the Jewish community, and a big proportion of Jewish charitable giving goes to those charities that care for the elderly.

There are different levels of support for older people depending on their individual needs. In some cases, older people need home-help to provide a little more support in their daily lives. In other cases, they need activity and companionship. And in some circumstances, they may need more significant personal care and attention in a residential setting.

Several Jewish charities focus mainly or solely on older people. These include Jewish Care and Nightingale in London, and Heathlands Village (part of Manchester's Federation of Jewish Services). Most of the Jewish charities for older people work closely with – and on behalf of – Local Authorities to deliver public services. They

provide top-class services using, depending on the sort of service and the user's means, a combination of public funds, personal contributions and donations from the wider Jewish community. Residential care homes allow older Jewish people to keep the kosher dietary laws, observe the Sabbath, and celebrate festivals and attend prayers together. There are also several housing associations that provide sheltered housing to older people, including the Jewish Community Housing Association.

Some services are largely provided by volunteers, such as Jewish Care's befriending programme, where volunteers (including older schoolchildren) visit a lonely older person regularly to keep them company and check in on them. This programme can be very rewarding for the visitor.

Other services, though, require specialist and highly-trained staff, such as the specialised dementia care unit in Nightingale, a residential home in South London. All of the care charities provide specialist services like these on behalf of Local Authorities. These sorts of services cannot be provided by volunteers and can't be easily scaled back without compromising the quality of care. They rely on core support from central and local Government.

Overcoming Challenges

As discussed above, civil society organisations can enrich people's lives through education and culture. But charities and community organisations also have a critical role in helping people through adversity, tragedy, challenge and misfortune. Many Jewish community organisations exist to help those in need.

FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Jewish families are not immune from the strains of modern living. Divorce, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse can affect children, young people and the family as a whole. Many organisations work to prevent family breakdown by providing services that work directly with children and families. Jewish Womans Aid supports women and children who have suffered domestic violence, and other organisations such as Camp Simcha offer support to families where children are experiencing life-limiting conditions.

LIVING WITH DISABILITY

Disability can have a profound effect on a person and their family. Support for people with disabilities and their families can make an enormous difference to their lives.

FOCUS ON NORWOOD

Formed at the beginning of the 19th century, today Norwood supports thousands of people with learning disabilities as well as adults, children and families in need. It helps people live as independently as possible and ensures that they have the best opportunities to lead a fulfilling life. Norwood runs school Special Educational Needs units, day centres, respite centres and care homes including Ravenswood, a residential campus for people with learning disabilities. While Norwood services are targeted at the Jewish community, they will never allow a place to go unfilled, and frequently have non-Jewish guests in their respite homes, special needs units and other services.

There are different sorts of disability – physical, developmental, learning disabilities and others. There are many Jewish organisations that support disabled people and their families, providing a wide range of services. These include Norwood, Kisharon, Jewish Care, Jewish Blind and Disabled, and many others.

For children with learning disabilities, this includes specialist nurseries and schools, individual support for children in mainstream education, and specialist therapies such as speech therapy.

Caring for a child with severe disabilities can be incredibly rewarding, but can also be physically and emotionally draining on parents and carers. Respite care allows full-time carers to recharge their batteries and can help keep a family happy and together. Several Jewish charities run respite centres. Norwood, in particular, does not allow places in these centres to go empty; on days when there is less demand from within the Jewish community, it ensures that they can be used by the wider local community instead.

Some severely disabled adults require intensive round-the-clock care inside residential care homes or by live-in carers and helpers in private accommodation. Jewish organisations provide these largely publicly-funded services too. As with elderly care, caring for vulnerable adults is highly specialised work that cannot easily be taken on by volunteers, though volunteers have a role in running arts and crafts, computer training, drama and other life-enhancing activities inside residential centres.

An important aim is helping those with all types of disability to live independent and fulfilling lives. The charity Jewish Blind and Disabled rents specially-modified flats to 320 disabled tenants. Residents have access to 24-hour wardens and social and emotional support, but are as independent as they want to be. Norwood has 30 residential homes ranging from specialist facilities for adults with profound and complex learning disabilities, to supported flats for greater independence plus a work-hub to support adults into the world of work. Kisharon, a charity which works with people with learning disabilities, runs a business centre which includes a print shop, a bicycle repair shop and retail sales. It employs learning-disabled people who might find it difficult to get a first job, trains them so they learn useful skills and accustoms them to a working environment.

GEMACHS

One of the most local and basic ways in which Jewish communities help the less fortunate is the 'Gemach' – a contraction of the Hebrew words *Gemilut Chassadim*, meaning 'Acts of Kindness'. They are essentially lending clubs which loan for free or for a voluntary contribution to those who need help. Gemachs can be for furniture, baby-clothes and equipment, toys or even money. Money Gemachs function as credit unions, providing interest-free hardship loans to those who have fallen on hard times.

Gemachs are often run by synagogues, particularly those in Orthodox communities, with the objects or money to be loaned donated by members of the community.

FINDING A JOB

The 12th century philosopher and Rabbi Moses Maimonides codified eight ranked levels of charity. The highest form, he said, is to make people self-sufficient.

Unemployment is a particular problem in the Strictly Orthodox community, though it is a problem exacerbated by the downturn which affects all of the Jewish community as a part of wider society.

Groups including Resource, Agudas Israel Community Services and Traine-Traide were set up to reskill Jewish unemployed people and help them into work. They offer qualifications that can help the long-term unemployed into the workplace. Traine-Traide, in particular, was set up to help those in the Strictly Orthodox community that may never have had experience of the workplace, but found that this sort of tailored service is also ideal for people from other ethnic and religious minorities, who naturally find Traine-Traide's services helpful to them too.

FIGHTING DRUGS DEPENDENCY

Drugline, a Redbridge-based project of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement of Chassidic Jews, was originally set up to serve the Jewish community, especially those more Orthodox parts of the Jewish

community where hidden drugs problems could take root. Today, Drugsline serves the whole Redbridge community of all religions and none, providing its services in Gujarati, Bengali and Urdu as well as English, Hebrew and Yiddish. The project runs a helpline, one-on-one and family counselling services and drugs education.

RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION AND ANTISEMITISM

Unfortunately, antisemitism is still a problem in the UK, and Jews are still the victims of discrimination based on their religion or ethnic origins.

Most of the discrimination that Jews suffered in the past has ended in the UK. Jews aren't excluded from Parliament and Universities, as was the case 150 years ago. They aren't banned from some professions, or banned from joining golf clubs, as was the case only 40 years ago. However, there is still some discrimination against Jews in the workplace.

Observant Jews, in particular, sometimes experience problems in being able to follow Jewish religious practice, particularly regarding Sabbaths and festivals. Students often find that exams are scheduled on Jewish festivals, when they are forbidden from writing or travelling. Sometimes, an employer refuses to allow a Jewish staff member to take (unpaid) time off work for festivals or Sabbath. Sometimes, the Jewish person can find themselves labelled as a troublemaker for asking.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews provides support to British Jews who suffer from discrimination, taking on case-work and reminding employers and others of their legal responsibilities to make reasonable adjustments for religious observance. This won't always be possible - some jobs will require a person to work on a Friday night, for example, and in this case a company would be within its rights to refuse a Jewish employee time off. But sometimes a company, university or school could easily accommodate the religious requirements but simply refuses. The Board of Deputies helps support people who are put into these situations.

Antisemitic incidents also still occur, and figures produced by the Community Security Trust show that they have become more common in the last few years. Antisemitic incidents range from abuse shouted at Jews in the street, to racist literature sent to Jewish organisations and companies, to vandalism of Jewish buildings and a smaller number of violent attacks against Jewish people. Additionally, the Jewish community is at a higher risk of terrorism.

CST provides support for victims of antisemitism, who can report antisemitic crimes to them directly which are then passed on as third-party reports to the police. It also provides volunteers who physically secure Jewish events against the threats of terrorism and antisemitic violence. CST also helps other ethnic communities set up similar support structures.

Volunteering and Giving

All of the services described above rely on the support of the wider Jewish community. This includes traditional charitable donation, but also other forms of support, such as goods-in-kind and volunteering. One of the major reasons that Jewish charities and civil society organisations have been so successful is that the wider Jewish public have been eager to support them through all these forms of giving. Jewish communal organisations harness the incredible energy and generosity of the Jewish public. Some of this energy is then reinvested into the Jewish community benefiting society as a whole, and some goes directly to wider society.

CHARITABLE GIVING

It is often said that charity is a Jewish value. But the word *Tzedaka*, normally translated as 'charity', is actually a form of the word *Tsedek*, meaning 'justice' or 'righteousness'. Jewish commentators note that *Tzedaka* is better rendered as 'social justice' than 'charity'.

In ancient times, Jews were required to give a tenth (called a *Ma'aser*, a tithe) of their produce to the poor, in addition to various other tithes for religious purposes. The practice of regularly donating a portion of one's income to charity is still a common practice amongst British Jews, both religious and secular.

Some of the largest Jewish charities in the UK are those that deal with education, caring for older and disabled people, and supporting the disadvantaged. Others provide aid and development to communities, both Jewish and not Jewish, in Israel, the Former Soviet Union, and worldwide. Some fund cultural projects, some protect the environment and some promote human rights.

Many, such as the UJIA, WIZO, World Jewish Relief and the JNF, function primarily as grant-giving organisations, supporting smaller charitable projects in the UK and overseas. This trickle-down effect means that smaller charities can get seed-funding from their larger colleagues, without having to devote too much resource to fundraising in their early development.

World Jewish Relief, in particular, joins with other major British charities in overseas development work in places like Rwanda and DR Congo, and is also a part of crisis relief efforts after major international disasters such as Cyclone Nargis and the Haiti earthquake.

VOLUNTEERING

The time, commitment and energy of volunteers are an essential resource for voluntary and community organisations. Jewish community organisations are no exception. They rely on volunteers to function and use them in a very wide variety of roles. Examples of how Jewish organisations use volunteers include:

TO PERFORM SOCIAL ACTION

Mitzvah Day is a charity that organises mass social action on one day a year. In 2010 Mitzvah Day was on the 21st of November. An estimated 20,000 British Jews, together with several thousand non-Jewish

members of the public, volunteered with approximately 800 different social action projects supporting over a 100 charities. Several Local Authorities, schools and other faith communities have joined in with Mitzvah Day, donating their time and labour for one day to give to the wider community. Hindu communities held their first National Sewa Day on the same day based on the Mitzvah Day model, also running several joint activities.

New North London Synagogue, a Masorti synagogue in Finchley, runs a drop-in centre for asylum seekers. It is staffed entirely by volunteers and helps about 150 asylum-seekers a month providing food, good quality clothing, medical advice, legal signposting, counselling, supermarket gift cards, travel expenses and a warm welcoming environment. Some of the clothing and toiletries come from volunteers at the Jewish Council for Racial Equality.

Many other youth organisations, campus Jewish societies and other charities organise regular social action events.

TO HELP MAKE EVENTS SAFE AND SECURE

CST has more than 3,000 volunteers who are trained to act as security officers at Jewish community events and help protect them from terrorism or opportunistic racist attacks. Many synagogues and some schools also use volunteers – congregants and parents respectively – to help provide security to their buildings.

TO ACT AS REPRESENTATIVES OF PARTS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Two hundred and forty eight Deputies, elected by the congregants of 175 synagogues and other organisations, come together as the Board of Deputies of British Jews and represent a diverse range of religious and political views. At the local level, Representative Councils run mainly by volunteers ensure that regional and provincial Jewish communities are represented to local Government. Many other voluntary organisations contain a representative element, including the Union of Jewish Students.

TO HELP CHARITIES CARE FOR PEOPLE

Many Jewish welfare and social care organisations rely on volunteers to visit elderly, sick and disabled people, to run activities in day-centres and generally help support their core work. These volunteers often add real value to the work of Jewish community organisations.

TO RUN MAJOR EVENTS

Limmud puts on an annual residential conference in late December every year, which has more than 2,000 participants. The educational and cultural event features several hundred sessions run almost exclusively by other participants who volunteer to present at the conference. These include Rabbis, professors, politicians, artists and many others. Limmud also runs a summer camping event and other one-day seminars inside local communities. All of these events are organised almost exclusively by volunteers, who do everything from arranging the catering to working in the bars to compiling the programmes.

Limmud events are now big enough to attract speakers and participants from well beyond the Jewish

community – including Christian and Muslim clerics – and the Limmud model and brand have been exported worldwide.

TO RUN YOUTH ACTIVITIES

The Jewish youth movements are run almost entirely by volunteers, either school or university students. They plan and run weekly or fortnightly educational activities, organise weekends away and other residential events, and even run summer tours.

TO HELP DEVELOP POOR COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

Tzedek sends Jewish volunteers to impoverished communities in developing countries to work on development projects, including teaching and helping these communities access grants from international bodies. Current projects are ongoing in Northern Ghana and West Bengal. World Jewish Relief collects gifts-in-kind from volunteers to support Jewish communities around the world and to help in international disaster relief efforts.

Many Jewish youth organisations send volunteers to the north of Israel as part of their pre-university Gap Year programmes. They work on UJIA-supported projects, helping both Jewish and Arab residents of the area, usually by teaching English and other key skills.

ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERISM

There are Jewish community organisations that exist mainly to promote and support volunteerism. The League of Jewish Women, for example, has hundreds of volunteers who work in hospices, hospitals and prisons as well as providing volunteers for some of the Jewish charities above.

To help match up volunteers with opportunities, the Jewish Volunteer Network acts as a one-stop shop for volunteers. Charities and community organisations can register their volunteer needs, and potential volunteers can give their availability and projects that interest them. The JVN then matches and places volunteers inside these organisations.

Taking a Broader View

There are many other examples of Jewish organisations that contribute towards building the Big Society. There is Maccabi, which runs Jewish sports clubs and leagues from local level all the way up to major international competitions. Organisations like the Jewish Association for Business Ethics and ResponseAbility promote ethical behaviour to Government, the corporate world and to broader civil society. There are cultural centres and community centres, art galleries and book and film festivals which attract international cultural figures. There are housing associations that provide affordable housing for families and support organisations for those who are ill. There are organisations for Jewish ex-Servicemen and former refugees. In every area of life, there is a Jewish organisation to act as a support or as an inspiration.

Many of the Jewish community organisations interact, cooperate and communicate with each other, sharing opportunities, learning from each other's successes and running collaborative projects. The Jewish Leadership Council acts as the umbrella body for the major organisations, and brings them together to discuss issues that affect the whole Jewish voluntary sector, as well as promoting cost-saving measures like shared purchasing. In the Strictly Orthodox community, the Interlink Foundation links hundreds of Jewish charities and community organisations together and provides them with training, help with accessing grants, and collective support and representation.

Recommendations to the Jewish Voluntary Sector

As this paper has shown, Jewish organisations are excellent examples of the Big Society in action. Beyond the immediate responsibilities of each organisation to fulfil its core aims, we encourage Jewish organisations to help contribute more generally to the Big Society:

SPREAD THE BENEFITS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY WORK

Many Jewish voluntary organisations are open to all and serve the whole of civil society. Some, though, provide religiously or culturally specific activities that would not be useful or appropriate if open to the general public. **Without compromising their missions or neglecting their core audience, organisations that serve the Jewish community should, where appropriate, find ways of ensuring that their benefits spread as widely as possible.** This could be through sharing best-practice (see below), partnerships with other communities' organisations, inter-faith projects, sharing the use of their premises and equipment, or in many other ways.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOP PROJECTS IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

Jewish organisations are repositories of creative ideas, successful projects and good practice. They have much to contribute to their counterparts in other communities, particularly to new projects and organisations. **Jewish organisations should help other communities develop new voluntary organisations, and work closely with these new community organisations, sharing ideas and best practice.** Some Jewish organisations already extensively support and help develop other communities' organisations.

IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO THE BIG SOCIETY AND ENCOURAGE THEIR REMOVAL

There will be technical and organisational barriers to building the Big Society. Some of these are identified in the next section, but it is community organisations themselves that are most aware of these barriers. The Government is committed to the Big Society agenda and is likely to listen to constructive suggestions on removing these barriers, as part of either the decentralisation of power or the reform of public services. **Jewish organisations should be alert to barriers to building the Big Society and should make suggestions to the Government on how to remove them.**

Recommendations to Government

Reflecting on the successes that Jewish community organisations have had in building the Big Society, and considering the challenges they are facing, we recommend the following steps that will help the Government develop the Big Society agenda more widely:

PROMOTE THE VALUES BEHIND THE BIG SOCIETY

The starting point of the Big Society must be values: the values that inspire people to set up powerful charities and voluntary organisations; the values that encourage communities to support these charities; and the values of charitable giving and volunteering. One of the reasons that the Jewish community has been so successful at building strong civil society organisations is that Jewish education, both religious and cultural, has tended to emphasise these values. Civil society organisations themselves tend to be good at promoting these values because they embody them. **Government should consider finding ways to promote the underlying values behind the Big Society by encouraging volunteering, charitable giving, and social entrepreneurship.**

RECOGNISE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Communities are not just geographical constructs defined by physical proximity alone. They are any group of people that come together and consider themselves to be linked to each other. **To best develop the Big Society, Government should encourage all sorts of communities to become active and deliver services: social clubs, professional associations, religious groups, and people with shared circumstances and interests.**

HARNESS ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST

Voluntary organisations rely on support from the public. It is this support that enables them to run public services that are cheaper and higher-quality than those delivered directly by the public sector or by private companies.

They get this support because people give to communities and causes they identify with. Donors to community organisations do so partly out of a sense of enlightened self-interest – they volunteer for causes that have helped their families and friends, they give to charities that one day may be supporting them and their community.

The voluntary organisations themselves will often have a wider focus; as noted above, many of the Jewish charities mentioned in this paper help people from all religions and backgrounds. However, their base and support continues to be drawn from the Jewish community.

Rather than trying to limit and constrain community and voluntary organisations from being able to serve their own communities, Government should understand that a major part of their success relies on this relationship.

The legislative and administrative environment makes it more difficult for charities from religious communities to work effectively. **Government should avoid creating more technical hurdles for religious-based charities and should consider whether the current framework, following the Equality Act 2010, may be hindering the delivery of Big Society goals.**

SHOWCASE BEST PRACTICE

There are many community and voluntary organisations that are excellent examples of the Big Society in action. This paper has chosen to showcase some Jewish community organisations, but of course there are good examples throughout civil society.

Through showcasing successful organisations and sharing of expertise and experience, voluntary and community organisations can become more effective and more cost-effective. The Jewish Leadership Council exists partly to promote this sort of sharing and engagement between Jewish community organisations, but it is equally important on a national level between similar organisations. **Government should find and promote showcase community organisations that can act as centres of excellence and best-practice for newer community organisations. Many Jewish community organisations would be perfect candidates for this.** This would be a low-cost high-impact way of promoting and bolstering the Big Society.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENT

As discussed above, part of the Big Society is the classic territory of civil society; places of worship, social clubs, community organisations and volunteer work.

Another part is more associated with the State: for example, schooling, elderly care and supporting people with disabilities. These sorts of services tend, today, to be the primary responsibility of local Government. Voluntary organisations of all types have been providing these services for many years on behalf of Local Authorities. The funding arrangements differ from service to service, and the paperwork for the same service can vary from Council to Council too.

All of these varying arrangements are put under strain by the cuts in public spending by Local Authorities. Community and voluntary organisations can add much value, delivering better public services bolstered by the support of the local community, but true public services still need to be publicly funded. While central Government tries to encourage community organisations to build the Big Society, Local Authority cuts may instead be damaging the ability of these same community organisations to deliver public services. **Government should encourage Local Authorities to ensure that community organisations are not disproportionately harmed by cuts to Council budgets. Where possible, Government should consider community organisations as an investment, supporting them through the fiscal contraction because they provide some of the best public services.**

Increased local democracy is positive, and provides new opportunities for community organisations of all types. However, it can put extra strain on those organisations that work across Local Authority lines, which often face increased bureaucracy caused by different types of application form for the same funding-streams. **Government should consider establishing standard forms and procedures for organisations and those people applying to provide public services on behalf of Local Authorities.** Standard procedures do not undermine the rights of Local Authorities to make their own decisions about funding of services, but they would reduce the costs and bureaucracy to community organisations which want to deliver these services.

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

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