



**BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS**

ADVOCACY | DEMOCRACY | COMMUNITY

2026 Revision

The

Employer's

Guide *to*

Jews and Judaism

A Practical Guide to Jews in the Workplace

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Who is this Guide for?

This guide is intended firstly for employers, HR professionals, and managers. It explains aspects of Jewish faith, identity and practice that may interact with working life; outlines the relevant legal frameworks; and offers practical guidance on supporting Jewish employees and addressing potential difficulties. It also provides a useful resource for Jews in the workplace seeking to explain their identity and understand their rights.

Jewish people work in every area of industry, trade and the professions, participating fully in working life while embracing Jewish practice and identity in ways that reflect the wide diversity of Jewish life in Britain.

Some Jewish practices may require additional thought on the part of both employers and employees; this guide is intended to explain the parts of the Jewish way of life that might interact with the workplace and to offer support for their navigation.

Disclaimer

This guide reflects the law and good practice as reviewed on 13th October 2026. It is intended as general guidance only and is not a substitute for legal advice on particular circumstances. Some provisions of the Employment Rights Act (2025) are being commenced in stages, so employers should check the current position before acting. Employers should obtain specific advice where necessary. The Board of Deputies cannot accept any liability for actions you take in reliance on this document.

WHAT DO JEWISH PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?



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Jewish people are recognised as both a religious and ethnic minority according to UK Law as they are protected from discrimination on both racial and religious grounds for the purposes of the Equality Act (2010).

1. Introduction

Employers should recognise Jewish identity as religious, ethnic and cultural, and should approach Jewish workplace needs through respectful individualised discussion rather than assumption.

Jewish identity as both an ethnicity and a religion

Jewish people are recognised as both a religious and ethnic minority according to UK Law as they are protected from discrimination on both racial and religious grounds for the purposes of the Equality Act (2010).¹

Jews identify themselves by varied and often multiple categories, including in terms of religion and ethnicity. Jewish people share common history, culture and communal traditions. People may also become Jewish through conversion. Some people born into Jewish families may not observe Jewish rituals or laws but still identify strongly as Jewish because of their heritage. Jewish identity is therefore thought of as an ethnicity as well as a religion, and Jews commonly refer to themselves collectively as a people.

There are approximately 300,000 Jews in the UK, and Jewish communities are found throughout the country. The majority live in London, and there are notable communities in Manchester, Leeds, and Glasgow. However, there are Jewish communities throughout the country so employers should not assume that Jewish employees will be concentrated only in certain regions.

It is important to recognise that Census data and other questionnaires collecting data for equality purposes may not fully capture everyone who identifies as Jewish. Jewish identity should always be seen and understood in the workplace, and by HR Directors across all sectors and organisations, as an ethnicity as well as a religion. Jewish employees should have the opportunity to record their ethnicity as “Jewish” whenever data on ethnicity is collected.

¹ For more information, see either [Antisemitism in the workplace](#) or [UK Law](#).

Jewish life in the UK is diverse

The Jewish community is diverse in practice, identity, culture, and beliefs and Jewish people vary widely in their level and style of religious observance. Jewish employees may observe all, some, or none of the practices outlined in this guide.

Synagogues in the UK are generally associated with one of several main denominational groups, including Charedi (Strictly Orthodox), Modern Orthodox, Progressive (encompassing Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism) and Masorti. Equally, some people may identify as ‘just’ Jewish, or as non-practicing, secular, or cultural Jews. Employers should therefore avoid assumptions and discuss each employee’s individual needs with them.

If you have any questions about a workplace issue related to Jewish life, or any other queries about Jewish life in the UK, please contact the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the national representative body of the Jewish community, which may be able to provide information or assistance.

“ In Jewish law, the sanctity of life overrides other obligations.

2. Jewish practices

Employers should make reasonable and proportionate arrangements so that Jewish employees can observe their faith without being disadvantaged at work.

Jewish practice in the UK is diverse and varies between and within denominational communities. For that reason, assumptions should not be made about Jewish colleagues' individual religious practice, rather a respectful conversation should be initiated to find the most suitable adaptations for all parties. This section discusses how employers can ensure that Jewish practices are accommodated in the workplace.

For observant Jews, Jewish law (*Halacha*) is a set of binding obligations that express a covenant with God. This means that an observant Jew cannot simply waive observance of the Sabbath or Jewish festivals. Even if a Jewish person is not strictly observant, they may still find it important to participate in Jewish festivals and may approach their employer to make this possible. In most cases, practical and proportionate steps by the employer will mean that there is no conflict between

being Jewish and being a fully contributing member of the workforce.

In Jewish law the sanctity of life overrides other obligations. Therefore, when life or health is at risk, Jewish law may permit or require conduct that would otherwise be restricted on the Sabbath or festivals.

Those working or learning in health or emergency settings should discuss these considerations with their employer or placement provider as early as possible. The organisation should consider any request individually, may distinguish essential clinical or emergency duties from ancillary tasks, and explore workable alternatives without assuming that a particular religious exemption does or does not apply. Employers should keep in mind that even for observant Jews, the application of Jewish law varies according to the circumstances and the individual's religious guidance.



Food

Many Jews observe the dietary laws of *kashrut*, and some eat only kosher certified food. The *halacha* governing kosher food is complex. A high-level understanding of *kashrut* can be explained using the following points: porcine (pig) and shellfish products are never kosher; kosher observant Jews will refrain from eating meat and dairy products in the same meal or in the same dish; some Jews will not eat any meat unless it is certified as having been slaughtered according to religious standards; and, furthermore, some observant Jews will not eat food unless its preparation has been supervised by a specifically trained Jewish individual.

As with all of the guidance here, you should always have

a conversation with a Jewish colleague about their dietary needs before assuming what is suitable for their level of observance.

An employee who observes these laws strictly may not regard food labelled vegetarian, vegan, or halal as suitable and may need sealed kosher meals, separate storage and/or heating arrangements. For catered meetings or events, suitable food can often be easily arranged in advance through an appropriate kosher supplier.

Sabbath

The Sabbath (*shabbat*) is the Jewish day of rest. It starts on Friday at sunset and lasts until nightfall the following day. As daylight hours vary, the beginning and ending times of the Sabbath also vary throughout the year.

Jewish law, for those who observe the Sabbath, requires Jews to refrain from various acts of *work* on the Sabbath. The concept of *work* in a Jewish religious context does not only cover what is typically regarded as employment but taking part in any acts of creation; it is therefore more restrictive than simply not being able to carry out work duties. The prohibited acts of *work* include travelling (other than by foot), writing, carrying (outside of specifically defined areas), switching on and off electronics, cooking, bathing, tearing, and any transactions of a commercial nature, including buying and selling.

Many jobs require set working hours. This can cause a clash with the Sabbath, particularly in winter months when observant Jews may need to leave work in sufficient time to arrive home before the beginning of the Sabbath to prepare for its observance. At its earliest, in midwinter, the Sabbath begins at around 3:30pm, but this varies depending on the exact location. An employee ought to be able to provide a calendar of times for their employer if necessary, and comprehensive guides to timings can be easily found online.

Flexible working patterns can enable observant Jewish employees to adjust their working hours on a Friday and compensate during the rest of the week, ensuring no loss to either the employer or the employee.

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Jewish festivals

Like the Sabbath, Jewish festivals (*Chag* singular, *Chagim* plural) begin at sunset on the preceding day. An employee may therefore need to leave work early to travel home and prepare. As the Jewish calendar is lunisolar, festival dates can vary by a few weeks from year to year and may fall on any day of the week. Employers should use an up-to-date calendar and invite employees to identify relevant dates as early as reasonably practicable.²

Many, though not all, Jewish festivals have laws governing work that are for these purposes almost indistinguishable from those concerning the Sabbath, and the same obligations apply.

Requests for time off for Jewish festivals can often be accommodated through annual leave, unpaid leave, adjusted hours, shift swaps or other agreed arrangements. Employers may control when annual leave is taken, but should consider religious observance

requests fairly and consistently, considering the risk of indirect discrimination.

Employees should give as much notice as reasonably possible for requests of leave to observe festivals. Employers may refuse particular dates but cannot prevent a worker from taking their statutory leave entitlement altogether. A refusal of dates needed for religious observance should be based on genuine operational reasons and considered alongside less discriminatory alternatives.

In some workplaces, an employee may be able to make up hours on another day, swap shifts, or offer availability during colleagues' holiday periods, including bank holidays. A refusal or inflexible rule may amount to indirect discrimination, unless it can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

2. A calendar for the period 2026-2030 can be found at the end of this guide.

Conversion

An employee may become more observant, convert to Judaism, or otherwise develop new religious requirements during employment. The employer should discuss any request made in light of this, understand their practical impact and consider proportionate options.

There is no freestanding reasonable adjustments duty for religion or belief equivalent to the disability duty, but an inflexible workplace rule may amount to

indirect discrimination unless objectively justified. Any agreed change should be recorded and reviewed in the appropriate manner

Adults converting to Judaism are usually required to attend a short ritual bath by appointment. These appointments can be oversubscribed and difficult to rearrange. It is therefore good practice to consider a leave request for this ceremony under similar arrangements.

Life-cycle events

Brit milah (sometimes called a *bris*) is the Jewish circumcision ceremony for a baby boy, usually held on the eighth day after birth where health permits. Its timing will often only be known at short notice, and the ceremony commonly takes place first thing in the morning. The ceremony will be used for new parents to announce their baby's name.

In some Jewish traditions, baby blessing ceremonies also occur at similar early stages in a baby's

life, regardless of the gender of the child. It is important to note that a baby blessing is not a medical procedure. An employee may therefore request part of a day or a day away from work to attend the ceremony of a close family member. The request should be considered under the employer's relevant annual leave, special leave or unpaid leave arrangements and handled consistently with comparable requests.



Bereavement

Jewish funerals take place as soon as reasonably possible after death, ideally within 24 hours, so an employee may need to attend at short notice. After the funeral, close family³ members may observe *shiva*, a seven-day mourning period during which they remain at home, receive visitors and do not work. Employers should respond compassionately and consult their compassionate, bereavement, annual, and unpaid leave policies.

Employees have a statutory right to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to take necessary action following the death of a dependant. This right is intended to address the immediate consequences of the death and does not automatically provide paid leave or cover the whole funeral and *shiva* period. As at the time of publication, there is no general statutory right to bereavement leave following **every** death, although separate statutory rights may apply, including parental bereavement leave and time off for dependants. *The Employment Rights Act (2025)* provides for a broader day-one

right to unpaid bereavement leave. On 22 September 2026, the Government announced their intention to introduce secondary legislation, that would switch on in April 2027, giving workers new rights to take time off work following the loss of a loved one or experiencing pregnancy loss. However, at the time of publication, the detailed regulations and commencement of that right has not yet been released. Therefore, readers should check the most up-to-date government guidance.

Colleagues who wish to offer condolences may also wish to attend the funeral or *shiva*, which is entirely appropriate. It is recommended that men and women's clothing covers knees and elbows, and that men cover their heads with a skullcap, which can usually be borrowed from the family. It is important to note that floral tributes are not part of Jewish bereavement traditions.

During the 30 days following a death, some men do not shave or cut their hair, in accordance with Jewish law, and some observant Jews may not wish to listen to music or attend social

events. Observant Jews may recite prayers for the deceased for a year following the death of a parent, and for 30 days following the death of a child, sibling or spouse.

During this time, an employee may wish to arrange their working hours to accommodate going to communal prayers (see *Prayer*, page 13), which occur in the morning, afternoon and evening. In most situations, an employee will be able to arrange to attend these prayers with little or no inconvenience to the employer. However, a good employer will exercise discretion in allowing an employee time at the very start or end of the working day, or during their lunch break, to attend prayers.

To ease the transition back to work for the mourner, employers or managers could consider, where possible, either recording meetings and/or sharing minutes/notes upon return from bereavement leave or similar absence.

The CIPD has useful guidance for workplaces in its bereavement support guide.

3. According to Jewish law, this amounts to parents, children, siblings, and spouses.



On a minor fast day , a manager might quietly agree to lighten the employee’s load, avoid unnecessary late-afternoon pressure, support them to take breaks as needed, or allow them to work flexibly.

Fasting

There are a small number of fast days in the Jewish calendar, and observance will vary between individuals. The two major fasts are Yom Kippur (which usually falls between mid-September and mid-October) and Tisha B’Av (which usually falls between mid-July and mid-August). Both fasts last for approximately 25 hours, from sunset to nightfall, and involve abstaining from both food and drink.

Yom Kippur is by far the most widely observed fast. Most Jews observing Yom Kippur are likely to not be working and would take annual leave if the festival falls on a working day. For those observing Tisha B’Av, work is generally avoided until noon. Minor fasts run from dawn until nightfall.⁴

Fasting can affect a person’s energy, concentration and physical capacity during the working day, particularly in the

afternoon or immediately after a major fast. Employers and managers should therefore take a practical, discreet and case-by-case approach, for example by avoiding scheduling a long or demanding meeting for someone working on a minor fast day where this can reasonably be arranged, or by moving a major client meeting away from the day after Yom Kippur.

On a minor fast day,⁵ a manager might quietly agree to lighten the employee’s load, avoid unnecessary late-afternoon pressure, support them to take breaks as needed, or allow them to work flexibly. These adjustments will often be straightforward and should be discussed sensitively with the employee rather than assumed.

4. Dates for these fasts for the period 2026-2030 can be found at the end of this guide.
5. Dates for minor vs major fasts can be found at the end of this guide.



Prayer

Observant Jews may pray three times a day: in the morning, afternoon and evening. Prayer services that fall during the working day typically take no more than 15 minutes.

There is no general statutory duty to provide a dedicated prayer room or additional paid breaks. However, employers should consider requests for time and a suitable space for prayer in a practical and even-handed way. Where possible, options might include using an available quiet room, adjusting the timing of an existing break, varying start or finish times, or allowing the employee to make up time. An inflexible refusal may amount to indirect discrimination unless it is objectively justified. Any shared facility should be made available without favouring one religion or belief over another. In most situations, a Jewish employee will be able to arrange to attend these prayers with little to no

inconvenience to the employer.

Some individuals, in particular observant Orthodox men, may wish to regularly attend prayers with a quorum (*minyan*) - ten adult men according to the Orthodox tradition or ten adults according to egalitarian and Progressive traditions. This is especially true if the individual is in a period of mourning (see *Bereavement*, page 11), where specific mourner’s prayers can only be recited when praying with a quorum. In practice this may mean that they attend a synagogue in the morning and evening, before and after the working day, and if a quorum is gathering in the area, they may go out to services around lunchtime. If an employee is not working standard working hours, i.e. 9-5, then the timings of the other prayer services may need to be taken into consideration.



There is no general statutory duty to provide a dedicated prayer room or additional paid breaks. However, employers should consider requests for time and a suitable space for prayer in a practical and even-handed way.



Clothing and modesty

Some observant Jewish employees may have particular requirements concerning dress or physical contact. Some Jewish men cover their heads with a skullcap, often called a *kippah*, *kappel* or *yarmulke*. Some Jews observe principles of modest dress (known as *tzniut/tznius*).

In practice, this may involve wearing clothing that covers the shoulders, elbows and knees, and, for some married women, covering their hair with a scarf, hat or wig. The level and style of observance varies between individuals and communities.

A dress-code rule that disadvantages Jewish

employees may amount to indirect discrimination unless the employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, such as a genuine health and safety requirement.

Employers should consider whether the aim can be achieved by a less restrictive alternative. Some observant Orthodox Jews may also avoid physical contact with a person of another sex, including handshakes. Employers and colleagues should avoid assumptions and ask respectfully where clarification is needed.⁶

“ A dress-code rule that disadvantages Jewish employees may amount to indirect discrimination unless the employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, such as a genuine health and safety requirement.

6. For more information, see EHRC’s Religion or belief: dress codes and religious symbols: www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/religion-or-belief-workplace/religion-or-belief-dress-codes-and-religious-symbols

3. Jewish culture

Employers should actively include Jewish culture in workplace inclusion activity and create opportunities to celebrate Jewish heritage alongside other communities.

Jewish identity carries strong ethnic, historical and cultural dimensions that exist independently of religious observance, and employees who wouldn’t necessarily call themselves observant can still strongly identify as Jewish.

In 2026, the Board of Deputies of British Jews launched Jewish Culture Month. The dates for Jewish Culture Month and ideas on how to celebrate Jewish Culture Month in the workplace can be found on the Jewish Culture Month website, and we recommend adding Jewish Culture Month to workplace EDI events calendars.

Celebrating diversity has become a cornerstone in many workplaces. Many Jewish employees feel proud and open to share their culture and religion with others and will welcome the opportunity to learn about and celebrate the cultures of their colleagues. Employers should feel welcome to offer Jewish employees opportunities to share about a holiday, food, or practice when appropriate, such as during Inter Faith Week⁷, in the lead up to a festival, or during Jewish Culture Month⁸.

One example of many ways to make your Jewish employees

feel included could be to include a *chanukiah* – the nine-branched candelabra lit during the Jewish festival of Chanukah – in a festive display during the December festive period. Chanukah falls during the month of December each year and is celebrated with public lightings of the *chanukiah* and the eating of oily foods including doughnuts, so is particularly fitting to celebrated in the workplace with non-Jewish colleagues. Employers should always endeavour to talk to their Jewish employees about what is appropriate.

7. National Inter Faith Week occurs in November.
8. Jewish Culture Month is a project of the Board of Deputies and should be celebrated in the workplace like Black History Month or LGBT+ History Month. See: jewishculturemonth.org.uk for more information.





4. Jewish Staff Networks

Employers should support Jewish staff networks as inclusive colleague-led forums that strengthen belonging, provide peer support, promote cultural exchange, and give Jewish employees a clear route to raise workplace concerns.

A good way to continually support Jewish employees is to establish a Jewish staff network. Jewish staff networks resemble other employee resource groups by functioning as colleague-led forums that offer a platform for people to come together to connect, build relationships and support each other, as well as to reach out to other groups by sharing their culture.

It is now common understanding in good HR practice that when staff feel secure in all facets of their identity in the workplace, they are able to perform better and may well stay longer in their role. A Jewish staff network

also provides a direct line of communications for Jewish employees to voice any concerns to management.

Endorsing the establishment of a Jewish staff network is a statement of solidarity from an employer which acknowledges that all faith and ethnicity issues are taken seriously and that any issues relating to antisemitism will be addressed properly.

As with the rest of this guide, it is important that any Jewish staff network is inclusive of all Jewish employees regardless of their denomination, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and political opinions.



Endorsing the establishment of a Jewish staff network is a statement of solidarity from an employer which acknowledges that all faith and ethnicity issues are taken seriously and that any issues relating to antisemitism will be addressed properly.

Five tips for creating a new Jewish Staff Network

1. Secure a sponsor

Identify a person in the leadership or HR department of your company (Jewish or non-Jewish) who will commit to supporting the network. This person may be referred to as an executive sponsor and who would preferably be someone familiar with the structure of the company and can help advise on how to make the network as successful as possible.

2. Create terms of reference

Initial leaders and members of the network should agree the overall objectives and purpose of the network with their executive sponsor. Ask your HR department if they have a standard Terms of Reference for similar networks.

Think about the following questions:

- What is the mission of the network?
- What will the network offer to fulfil this mission?
- How will this be measured?
- What kind of change does the network wish to implement within the company?
- Who is the leadership?
- How often will leadership be elected?
- How will the leadership communicate with its members?
- What are the best avenues to promoting the network and connecting with other Jewish employees?

3. Promote the network

Reach out to recruit more members. Awareness about the network can be raised through advertisements, posts in communication channels (intranets), mass emails, and word of mouth. Seek help from HR and other umbrella faith or cultural networks to advise on how best to spread the word about the network in your organisation.

4. Make your intentions clear about antisemitism with leadership

Jewish employees may request to participate in making sure the organisation's guidelines for antisemitism are set in place and suitable, including ensuring appropriate channels to report and address any incident. However, organisations should not expect their Jewish staff to be the sole deciders and port of call for issues relating to education about Jews and about antisemitism. Seek professional advice and training on antisemitism as well.

5. Offer a range of different events in the first round

Run a variety of events for the membership addressing workplace concerns, antisemitism training, career enhancing talks, guest speakers, and social events. Gather feedback to understand which types of events appeal most to your members and how they can be improved.

A Jewish staff network may not be relevant for smaller organisations without a dedicated HR function, or without the scale to run a Jewish staff network. However, even if you have only a few Jewish employees, recognising their identity in a small positive way will go far. Smaller organisations could consider adjusting policies to make them more inclusive or offering a listening ear to staff.

The Board of Deputies offers a range of advice and support for employers and employees as part of its BoD@Work programme. This includes a forum for the leadership of Jewish staff networks across a range of companies and organisations. For more information please email: bodatwork@bod.org.uk.



5. Types of employment

Employers should ensure that Jewish employees in all types of work are not disadvantaged.

Casual, Zero Hours, and Shift Workers

For those Jewish staff who work on contracts where hours are not fixed, employers must ensure that they are not indirectly discriminating against their Jewish staff.

Employers should not assume that a worker is inflexible or less committed because they can't work on the Sabbath, Jewish festival or other dates of religious significance. Decisions about allocating shifts, assignments, and work opportunities must be based on **genuine occupational requirements** and an individual's availability, rather than assumptions about Jewish observance.

Employers should be minded that a requirement that workers must always be available on particular days or at particular times **could** place an observant Jewish worker

at a particular disadvantage and should be considered carefully in light of equality or non-discrimination obligations.

Teachers

For teachers employed in schools, taking time off is not standard practice, as holiday dates are set by term time and there is no 'annual leave' to book. However, Jewish teachers may need to request days off for Jewish festivals when they fall on weekdays in term time. If they are observant, they may also need to leave a little early on Friday afternoons in the winter when the sabbath starts very early.

Teachers do not have an automatic statutory right to paid leave for religious observance. Schools should nevertheless consider requests carefully under the Equality Act (2010). A rule requiring attendance on every term-time weekday may put observant Jewish teachers at a particular

disadvantage and must be objectively justified. Schools should discuss each request individually, consider the educational and operational impact, and explore alternatives such as timetable adjustments, cover arrangements, unpaid leave or making up duties where practicable.

The Armed Forces

HM Armed Forces is an employer with specific support to Jewish service persons. Through the Armed Forces Jewish Community (AFJC) and the Jewish Chaplains, regular and reserve soldiers, sailors and aviators can get help with Kosher rations and food, uniform exemptions for religious reasons, time off for festivals and life cycle events, Jewish life when posted around the UK and abroad, and any other issues that may arise.

The Board of Deputies can help put you in touch with the AFJC if needed.

6. Antisemitic discrimination in the workplace

Employers should recognise antisemitism as a workplace issue, respond promptly to incidents and ensure Jewish employees are protected from discrimination, harassment and exclusion.

Employers should be aware that Jewish people are protected under the Equality Act (2010) both because of religion or belief and because of race, which includes ethnic origins. Jewish employees may also have other protected characteristics, and employers should consider whether other aspects of a person's identity may interact and contribute to disadvantage or discrimination.

Data from the Community Security Trust, which monitors antisemitism in the UK, shows that incidents in the UK increase during periods of escalated conflict involving Israel, as well as following widely reported instances of antisemitism. CST data also shows that antisemitic incidents have remained at historically high levels since 7 October 2023,⁹ and that incidents reported relating to the workplace have continued to rise in the same period.¹⁰

Antisemitic discrimination can occur in the workplace in several contexts. It is therefore good practice for employers to offer adequate training to their staff in understanding Jewish identity and antisemitism within wider EDI training, to limit the likelihood of such events occurring and to have in place effective procedures to deal with issues, should they arise.

What is antisemitism?

Antisemitism is the standard term for anti-Jewish hatred. The term itself, which has its origins in 19th Century Europe, can give

rise to the incorrect notion that it means hostility towards all speakers of Semitic languages (a linguistic group which includes Hebrew and Arabic), or towards Semitic peoples. In fact, the term since its inception has always referred to anti-Jewish hatred.¹¹

This guide uses the spellings **antisemitism** and **antisemitic**, rather than anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic, to reflect this. Other terms sometimes used include **Judeophobia** and **anti-Jewish hatred**. However, **antisemitism** is by far the most commonly used term.

*The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism*¹² has been adopted by the UK Government and should be used as an interpretive tool by employers when developing policies or considering whether conduct may be antisemitic. The Definition is non-legally binding and does not replace the Equality Act (2010) or a fair investigation.

The Definition should not be treated as a substitute for the legal definitions of discrimination and harassment or as an automatic disciplinary rule. Employers should consider the words or conduct complained of; the surrounding context; the impact on those affected; freedom of expression and any protected religion or philosophical belief; and should reach decisions through a fair and impartial process.

Employers should ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion arrangements can facilitate the

recognition of and appropriate response to antisemitism. Jewish employees should be included in relevant consultation and initiatives without assuming that all Jewish people share the same identity, experience or views.

There may be occasions where Jewish people do not feel welcome to participate in some EDI initiatives or ethnic minority spaces due to a perception of Jews being "too white" to experience racism. Although antisemitism may differ in some respects from other forms of racism, it is a misperception that Jews cannot experience race-based hatred. It is therefore **imperative** that EDI training for all staff should include antisemitism awareness.

Social media increasingly affects the workplace, particularly where colleagues connect online or use workplace communication platforms. Posts, endorsements or exchanges outside working hours may still have workplace consequences where they affect colleagues, damage working relationships or are associated with the employer. Employers should have a clear social media policy explaining the standards expected, how concerns will be addressed and the circumstances in which online conduct may become a workplace matter. Any response should be fair, proportionate and consistent, taking account of freedom of expression as well as the employer's duties to prevent discrimination and harassment.

9. *Antisemitic Incidents 2025*, CST.

10. Incident reports covering 2023, 2024, 2025, and the first six months of 2026 from CST.

11. See: *Everyday Hate – how antisemitism is built into our world and how you can change it* (Rich, 2024).

12. *The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism* can be found on page 24.



Training resources

Antisemitism training

The Board of Deputies can recommend a number of different training partners who deliver workplace antisemitism training including, but not limited to: CST, The Antisemitism Policy Trust, JHive, Palace Yard, L'Taken, The Union of Jewish Students.

Cultural competency training

Antisemitism should not be the sole lens through which Jewish life is understood at work. Workplaces may therefore wish to bring in organisations who can train staff about the Jewish way of life, sometimes known as cultural competency training. The Board of Deputies can recommend a number of different cultural competency

training partners including, but not limited to: Keshet UK – the Jewish LGBT+ charity, Shifrah UK – the Jewish midwives and birth workers association, JHive.

If you would like advice regarding an appropriate provider for your workplace environment, please reach out to bodatwork@bod.org.uk for a conversation.

The Jewish Living Experience Exhibition (JLEE)

The JLEE is an interactive travelling exhibition offered by the Board of Deputies which teaches about the Jewish way of life. Designed by educational experts and aimed primarily at school groups, but suitable for all audiences, the JLEE enables visitors to gain an insight into

Judaism as a living faith and culture. Through the JLEE, audiences can learn about Jewish life through 18 illustrated display panels and handling artefacts.

The exhibition can be used in workplaces to spark conversation about the Jewish experience as well as educate staff about Jewish colleagues or service users they may work with. For more details, or to book the JLEE, please go to: bod.org.uk/education

7. Issues relating to international conflict

Employers should ensure that international conflict does not create tension, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace.

Most British Jews¹³ feel emotional attachment to Israel, connected by social, familial, cultural or religious ties, just as many other people in Britain who are part of Diasporic communities have ties to another country.

During periods of escalated conflict and violence involving Israel, Jewish people are likely to be anxious about the situation and have immediate concerns for the welfare of friends and family in Israel. The concerns will be particularly acute for Israelis living and working in the UK, who may also find themselves unable to see loved ones when travel to and from Israel becomes difficult.

Reports¹⁴ by the Community Security Trust show that antisemitic incidents in the UK increase during periods of escalated conflict involving Israel, as well as following widely reported instances of antisemitism.¹⁵ Board of Deputies research indicates many British Jews experienced antisemitism in the workplace in the 18 months following the Hamas attacks on Israel of 7 October 2023.¹⁶

Employers should therefore recognise that events in the Middle East may affect Jewish employees personally and may also lead to workplace tensions, harassment or inappropriate comments being made about Jews in the workplace.

During periods of heightened global conflict, managers may sensitively remind all employees of available support and reporting

channels and - where appropriate - check in privately with affected staff, without making assumptions about their views or personal connections. Employers should remain alert to antisemitism and other forms of discrimination or harassment. The IHRA Working Definition is accepted by the UK government and may assist as an interpretative tool.¹⁷

The IHRA Working Definition states that “criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic”. Whether particular campaigning, language or conduct is antisemitic, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate in the workplace will depend on its content, context and impact. It may constitute antisemitism if it relies on antisemitic stereotypes, attributes collective responsibility to Jewish people, targets Jewish colleagues because of events abroad, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Jewish employees will hold a wide range of views about Israel and these issues, and they should not be assumed to support, oppose or feel responsible for any government, political movement or campaign.

In recent years, many Jewish employees and service users have reported the negative impact on them of: the introduction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the workplace; the taking of positions on the conflict by employers, unions or professional associations; or, the use of professional forums

to advance political positions in relation to the conflict.

The workplace is unlikely to be a conducive place to explore these complex issues, and managers and employers should be aware that the airing of these issues in the workplace, including in work meetings or on work communication platforms, may have a negative impact on cohesion among the workforce or on Jewish team members.

In times of heightened tension, visible political slogans or symbols may be misinterpreted or provoke strong reactions, and employers should manage these situations in a way that supports affected staff and maintains a respectful workplace. The key issue is not whether a symbol or slogan is political, but whether its use in the workplace environment is creating division, excluding colleagues, attributing collective responsibility, or contributing to a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment. Employers may consider setting reasonable and consistent expectations in relation to symbols or slogans in the workplace. Any decision should be proportionate, based on a legitimate workplace objective, applied consistently, supported by a fair assessment of the circumstances, and take into account freedom of religion and belief.

For further guidance see the CIPD's resource on *Supporting your workforce during the conflict in Israel and Gaza (October 2023)*.

13. Institute for Jewish Policy Research (Boyd, 2025) polling found that 75% of British Jews feel emotionally attached to Israel. The same survey data shows that 64% of British Jews identify as Zionist and around 80% agree with two foundational ideas underpinning Zionism: that Israel is the ancestral homeland of the Jewish People and that they support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State. Identifying with Zionism does not imply support for any government or policy and employers should not assume any individual's views.

14. *Antisemitic Incidents 2025*, CST.

15. *Antisemitic Incidents January – June 2026*, CST.

16. Board of Deputies, in partnership with the Jewish Leadership Council and Work Avenue (2025); this research is corroborated by the continuing levels of increased reports of antisemitism in the workplace as referenced in CST's incident reports covering 2023, 2024, 2025, and the first six months of 2026.

17. *The IHRA Working Definition on Antisemitism* is non-legally binding and does not replace the Equality Act (2010) or a fair investigation. See page 24 for the full definition.

8. UK Law

Employers should be aware that Jewish employees are protected under UK equality law on grounds of both religion or belief and race.

The Equality Act (2010) is the principal legislation governing discrimination in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has a separate statutory framework¹⁸, so employers operating there should obtain jurisdiction-specific guidance.

Religion or belief and *race* are two of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010). Race includes ethnic origins. Jewish people may therefore be protected because of their religion or belief and because of their Jewish ethnic origins. The Act prohibits direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment. The examples below should be read as applying, where relevant, to either or both of those protected characteristics.

Under the Equality Act (2010), the following forms of conduct are unlawful in employment:

Direct discrimination occurs where a person treats another person less favourably than they treat or would treat others because of a protected characteristic. In this context, the relevant characteristic may be religion or belief, race, or both. Protection can also apply where a person is perceived to have a protected characteristic, or is treated less favourably because of their association with someone who has it. Direct discrimination cannot generally be justified. A narrow occupational-requirement exception may apply only where the statutory conditions are met, including that the requirement is genuine, proportionate and applied to a particular role and context.

Indirect discrimination can be less obvious than direct discrimination; it occurs when a workplace rule applies, on the face of it, equally to everyone, but has a greater impact on a particular group. For example, requiring all staff to work on Saturdays may place observant Jewish employees at a particular disadvantage. Where the requirement also places an individual employee at that disadvantage, it may amount to indirect discrimination unless the employer can show that the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate business aim and that there is no less discriminatory way of achieving it.

Harassment occurs where a person engages in unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. In deciding whether conduct has that effect, the employee's perception, the other circumstances of the case, and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect are relevant. Harassment need not be directed at a particular individual and may include a workplace culture that tolerates antisemitic remarks, stereotypes or jokes.

Victimisation occurs where a person is subjected to a detriment because they have done, intend to do, or are believed to have done or intend to do a protected act. Protected acts include bringing proceedings under the Equality Act (2010), giving evidence or information in connection with such proceedings, making an allegation of discrimination or harassment, or supporting another person's complaint.

¹⁸. In Northern Ireland, religious discrimination is instead covered by the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, alongside separate race relations legislation.

9. Useful contacts and information

If further information or advice is required, you may wish to contact:

The Board of Deputies of British Jews can be contacted on 020 7543 5400, at bodatwork@bod.org.uk or www.bod.org.uk.

For urgent or immediate risks, contact the police on 999. CST's 24-hour National Emergency Number is 0800 032 3263.

Antisemitic incidents should be reported to the Community Security Trust (CST) at www.cst.org.uk or on 020 8457 9999. Employees should also use the employer's internal reporting procedure where appropriate. Non-emergency crimes or concerns may be reported to the police on 101. CST can provide confidential support and may liaise with the police or act as a third-party reporter.

In Scotland, contact The Jewish Council of Scotland (JCoS) on 0141 577 8200 or at communications@jewishscotland.org.

In Wales, contact South Wales Jewish Representative Council at swjewishrepCouncil@gmail.com.

In Northern Ireland, contact the Belfast Jewish Community at belfastjewishcommunity@gmail.com.

The Interlink Foundation (umbrella organisation for strictly orthodox/Charedi organisations) can be contacted at www.interlink-foundation.org.uk/contact-us/ or 020 8802 2469.

Masorti Judaism can be contacted on hello@masorti.org.uk or 020 8349 6650.

The Movement for Progressive Judaism (formerly known as Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism) can be reached at: hello@progressivejudaism.org or 020 8349 5640.

The S&P (Spanish and Portuguese) Sephardi Community can be contacted at www.sephardi.org.uk/contact/ or 020 7289 2573.

The United Synagogue (Modern Orthodox) can be reached at info@theus.org.uk or 020 8343 8989.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provide guidance on how to deal with workplace disputes as well as on religion and belief in the workplace in line with the latest equalities legislation and can be contacted via www.equalityhumanrights.com.

For equality and discrimination guidance in Northern Ireland, contact the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland at www.equalityni.org.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) assist in resolving workplace disputes and can provide advice based on a personal situation. Acas also has specific guidance on preventing religion or belief discrimination. Their latest guidance can be accessed via www.acas.org.uk.

Acas also has specific guidance on preventing religion or belief discrimination, as do the CIPD. These can be found by searching on the relevant websites. www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/employment-law/religion-belief-discrimination/.

10. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism

In 2015, the IHRA plenary approved a working definition of antisemitism, and in December 2016 the UK Government formally adopted it. The current government has reiterated that local authorities should adopt the working definition, which most councils have already done. The full text of the definition is as follows:

In the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration that states: “With humanity still scarred by ...antisemitism and xenophobia the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils” the committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial called the IHRA Plenary in Budapest 2015 to adopt the following working definition of antisemitism.

On 26 May 2016, the Plenary in Bucharest decided to:

Adopt the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism:

‘Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.’

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

- Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.
- Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for ‘why things go wrong.’ It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.
- Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:
 - Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
 - Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.



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- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an intergovernmental organisation with 35 Member Countries (including the UK), 1 Liaison Country, and 7 Observer Countries, founded in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. The IHRA unites governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide, working with partner organisations including the UN and the EU.

11. Jewish Festival Dates 2026–2030

How the calendar works: each festival day begins at sunset on the “Eve” date and ends at nightfall on the following civil date shown as “Day”, dates in square brackets fall in the preceding Gregorian year.

The Restrictions column reflects traditional Orthodox observance. Many Progressive communities observe a shorter festival pattern. Individual observance varies considerably, so for workplace planning please check with the person concerned.

■ High Holy Day		■ Major holiday		■ Minor holiday			
Festival	Period	Restrictions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Fast of 10 Tevet		Fasting	[30 Dec 2025]	[20 Dec 2026]	Sun 9 Jan	Sun 16 Dec	[16 Dec 2029]
Tu B'Shvat (New Year for Trees)			Mon 2 Feb	Sat 23 Jan	Sat 12 Feb	Wed 31 Jan	Sat 19 Jan
Fast of Esther		Fasting	Mon 2 Mar	Mon 22 Mar	Thu 9 Mar	Wed 28 Feb	Mon 18 Mar
Purim	Eve		Mon 2 Mar	Mon 22 Mar	Sat 11 Mar	Wed 28 Feb	Mon 18 Mar
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	Day		Tue 3 Mar	Tue 23 Mar	Sun 12 Mar	Thu 1 Mar	Tue 19 Mar
Ta'anit B'khorot		Fasting	Wed 1 Apr	Wed 21 Apr	Mon 10 Apr	Fri 30 Mar	Wed 17 Apr
Pesach (Passover)	Eve	Work Restrictions	Wed 1 Apr	Wed 21 Apr	Mon 10 Apr	Fri 30 Mar	Wed 17 Apr
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	1st Day	Work Restrictions	Thu 2 Apr	Thu 22 Apr	Tue 11 Apr	Sat 31 Mar	Thu 18 Apr
	2nd Day	Work Restrictions	Fri 3 Apr	Fri 23 Apr	Wed 12 Apr	Sun 1 Apr	Fri 19 Apr
	Intermediate days	Work Restrictions	Sat 4–Tue 7 Apr	Sat 24–Tue 27 Apr	Thu 13–Sun 16 Apr	Mon 2–Thu 5 Apr	Sat 20–Tue 23 Apr
	Eve	Work Restrictions	Tue 7 Apr	Tue 27 Apr	Sun 16 Apr	Thu 5 Apr	Tue 23 Apr
	7th Day	Work Restrictions	Wed 8 Apr	Wed 28 Apr	Mon 17 Apr	Fri 6 Apr	Wed 24 Apr
	8th Day	Work Restrictions	Thu 9 Apr	Thu 29 Apr	Tue 18 Apr	Sat 7 Apr	Thu 25 Apr
Yom Ha'Shoah	Eve–Day		Mon 13–Tue 14 Apr	Mon 3–Tue 4 May	Sun 23–Mon 24 Apr	Wed 11–Thu 12 Apr	Mon 29–Tue 30 Apr
Yom Ha'Zikaron	Eve–Day		Mon 20–Tue 21 Apr	Mon 10–Tue 11 May	Sun 30 Apr–Mon 1 May	Tue 17–Wed 18 Apr	Mon 6–Tue 7 May
Yom Ha'Atzmaut	Eve–Day		Tue 21–Wed 22 Apr	Tue 11–Wed 12 May	Mon 1–Tue 2 May	Wed 18–Thu 19 Apr	Tue 7–Wed 8 May
Lag B'Omer	Eve–Day		Mon 4–Tue 5 May	Mon 24–Tue 25 May	Sat 13–Sun 14 May	Wed 2–Thu 3 May	Mon 20–Tue 21 May
Yom Yerushalayim	Eve–Day		Thu 14–Fri 15 May	Thu 3–Fri 4 Jun	Tue 23–Wed 24 May	Sat 12–Sun 13 May	Thu 30–Fri 31 May
Shavuot (Pentecost)	Eve	Work Restrictions	Thu 21 May	Thu 10 Jun	Tue 30 May	Sat 19 May	Thu 6 Jun
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	1st Day	Work Restrictions	Fri 22 May	Fri 11 Jun	Wed 31 May	Sun 20 May	Fri 7 Jun
	2nd Day	Work Restrictions	Sat 23 May	Sat 12 Jun	Thu 1 Jun	Mon 21 May	Sat 8 Jun
Fast of 17 Tammuz		Fasting	Thu 2 Jul	Thu 22 Jul	Tue 11 Jul	Sun 1 Jul	Thu 18 Jul
Tish'a B'Av (Fast of 9 Av)		Fasting Morning work restrictions	Wed 22–Thu 23 Jul	Wed 11–Thu 12 Aug	Mon 31 Jul–Tue 1 Aug	Sat 21–Sun 22 Jul	Wed 7–Thu 8 Aug
MAJOR FAST							
Rosh Ha'Shana (New Year)	Eve	Work Restrictions	Fri 11 Sep	Fri 1 Oct	Wed 20 Sep	Sun 9 Sep	Fri 27 Sep
HIGH HOLY DAY							
	1st Day	Work Restrictions	Sat 12 Sep	Sat 2 Oct	Thu 21 Sep	Mon 10 Sep	Sat 28 Sep
	2nd Day	Work Restrictions	Sun 13 Sep	Sun 3 Oct	Fri 22 Sep	Tue 11 Sep	Sun 29 Sep
Tzom Gedaliah		Fasting	Mon 14 Sep	Mon 4 Oct	Sun 24 Sep	Wed 12 Sep	Mon 30 Sep
Yom Kippur	Eve	Fasting / Work Restrictions	Sun 20 Sep	Sun 10 Oct	Fri 29 Sep	Tue 18 Sep	Sun 6 Oct
HIGH HOLY DAY							
	Day	Fasting / Work Restrictions	Mon 21 Sep	Mon 11 Oct	Sat 30 Sep	Wed 19 Sep	Mon 7 Oct
Sukkot	Eve	Work Restrictions	Fri 25 Sep	Fri 15 Oct	Wed 4 Oct	Sun 23 Sep	Fri 11 Oct
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	1st Day	Work Restrictions	Sat 26 Sep	Sat 16 Oct	Thu 5 Oct	Mon 24 Sep	Sat 12 Oct
	2nd Day	Work Restrictions	Sun 27 Sep	Sun 17 Oct	Fri 6 Oct	Tue 25 Sep	Sun 13 Oct
	Intermediate days		Mon 28 Sep–Thu 1 Oct	Mon 18–Thu 21 Oct	Sat 7–Tue 10 Oct	Wed 26–Sat 29 Sep	Mon 14–Thu 17 Oct
	7th Day		Fri 2 Oct	Fri 22 Oct	Wed 11 Oct	Sun 30 Sep	Fri 18 Oct
Shemini Atzeret	Eve	Work Restrictions	Fri 2 Oct	Fri 22 Oct	Wed 11 Oct	Sun 30 Sep	Fri 18 Oct
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	Day	Work Restrictions	Sat 3 Oct	Sat 23 Oct	Thu 12 Oct	Mon 1 Oct	Sat 19 Oct
Simchat Torah	Eve	Work Restrictions	Sat 3 Oct	Sat 23 Oct	Thu 12 Oct	Mon 1 Oct	Sat 19 Oct
MAJOR HOLIDAY							
	Day	Work Restrictions	Sun 4 Oct	Sun 24 Oct	Fri 13 Oct	Tue 2 Oct	Sun 20 Oct
Sigd	Eve–Day		Sun 8–Mon 9 Nov	Sun 28–Mon 29 Nov	Wed 15–Thu 16 Nov	Tue 6–Wed 7 Nov	Sun 24–Mon 25 Nov
Chanukah	Eve–8th Day		Fri 4–Sat 12 Dec	Fri 24 Dec–Sat 1 Jan 2028	Tue 12–Wed 20 Dec	Sat 1–Sun 9 Dec	Fri 20–Sat 28 Dec
MAJOR HOLIDAY							

This guide reflects the law and good practice as reviewed on 13th October 2026. It is intended as general guidance only and is not a substitute for legal advice on particular circumstances. Some provisions of the Employment Rights Act (2025) are being commenced in stages, so employers should check the current position before acting. Employers should obtain specific advice where necessary and review this guide periodically to ensure that references to legislation, guidance, census data and external resources remain current. The Board of Deputies cannot accept liability for actions taken in reliance on this document.

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ABOUT THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES

The Board of Deputies is the democratic, cross-communal, representative organisation for the British Jewish community. For 265 years, we have advanced the interests of our diverse community.

The Board comprises 318 deputies representing nearly 200 member synagogues and organisations from across the religious and political spectrum and every part of the UK. We fight for the shared interests of our entire community, engaging with Government, Opposition, other authorities and the media, as well as faith and civil society organisations.

In a time of political uncertainty and historically high levels of antisemitism, the Board's voice is needed more than ever. Our credibility comes from our democracy, representing synagogues and organisations across the country.