



LONDON  
JEWISH  
FORUM  
THE VOICE OF JEWISH LONDONERS

**Guide** to  
**Jewish London**  
for **Councillors**

2026

*Practical Information to Support  
Jewish Life in a Diverse City*





# Foreword

**Jewish communities have been part of London's story for centuries and have thrived in its culture of openness, diversity and creativity. Today, more than half of British Jews live in the capital, with larger communities concentrated in North and North-West London, where community life is shaped in part by borough decisions.**

Local government decisions shape whether Jewish community life remains safe and sustainable. They shape everyday experience. Residents notice it in how safe they feel walking to school, how seriously antisemitic incidents are handled, whether social care reflects cultural needs, and whether civic spaces feel politically neutral and welcoming. Councillors cannot resolve international conflict, but they can influence how its effects are experienced locally.

The priorities set out here focus on practical areas where London borough councils can make a tangible difference and will inform our engagement with councils after the election. During the election period, we will publish a Candidate Engagement Tracker on our website to show which candidates have responded to this Guide. Its purpose is to support transparency and informed discussion.

The priorities reflect concerns raised through consultation with Jewish residents and community organisations across London. They form an ongoing agenda for engagement with councils over the coming council term.

It sits alongside the Board of Deputies of British Jews' Jewish Manifesto for Local Government, which sets out national priorities for Jewish communities across the UK. In London, this Guide focuses on how those priorities are experienced locally and the practical steps councils can take to support Jewish residents and community life.

We hope this Guide supports informed discussion, thoughtful leadership and constructive engagement with Jewish residents.

This Guide reflects issues raised through engagement with Jewish residents and community organisations across London. It sets out priorities for sustaining Jewish community life within borough structures and decision-making.

## Key Areas for Local Action



**Safety and Community Confidence**



**Education**



**Social Care and Health**



**Housing and Planning**



**Culture and Civic Life**



**Engaging with Jewish Residents**



# Key Priorities for Sustaining Jewish Community Life in London



## Safety and Community Confidence

**Addressing antisemitism clearly and consistently:** Councils should apply the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism consistently in decision-making and incident handling, recognising antisemitism as a form of racism, ensuring incidents are addressed with due seriousness.

**Responding rapidly to hate incidents in public spaces:** Councils should establish clear reporting routes and prompt removal procedures for antisemitic graffiti and related incidents. This supports confidence in public space management and community cohesion.

**Embedding antisemitism within council training and EDI frameworks:** Councils should explicitly include antisemitism and Jewish identity within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for councillors and officers.

**Ensuring Jewish representation in borough safety, faith and community forums:** Councils should ensure that Jewish communities, including smaller ones, have meaningful representation in borough forums, including Multifaith Forums, SACRE and Safer Neighbourhood Boards.

**Managing the local impact of international issues:** Councils should ensure that services and public spaces remain politically neutral and welcoming to all residents. Decisions linked to international issues, including procurement or twinning, should be grounded in legal duties such as the Public Sector Equality Duty and should take account of their impact on community cohesion and residents' confidence. This includes understanding the local impact of public demonstrations, particularly where they affect residential areas, schools, places of worship or around university campuses, and avoiding the importation of international conflict into local civic life.



### Education

**Treating antisemitism as a safeguarding issue:** Councils should ensure that antisemitic incidents in schools are recorded accurately as hate incidents and addressed at senior leadership and governance levels.

**Supporting Jewish schools:** Councils should engage with independent Jewish schools and support those moving into the voluntary aided sector. They should ensure sufficient culturally and religiously appropriate places for Jewish children in local authority-maintained schools.



### Social Care and Health

**Providing culturally competent social care:** Councils should ensure that Adult Social Care services take account of Jewish religious and cultural needs and maintain effective signposting to established community providers.

**Improving cross-borough coordination for vulnerable residents:** Boroughs should work together to minimise delays in funding and placement decisions for residents requiring specialist care provisions.



### Housing and Planning

**Supporting planning policies that sustain community life:** Councils should support the planning and development of community infrastructure, including schools, synagogues, care facilities and larger family-sized affordable housing in boroughs where Jewish communities are growing.

**Supporting larger families:** Councils should ensure that waste and recycling collection and street cleaning, reflects the needs of areas with larger-than-average household sizes.

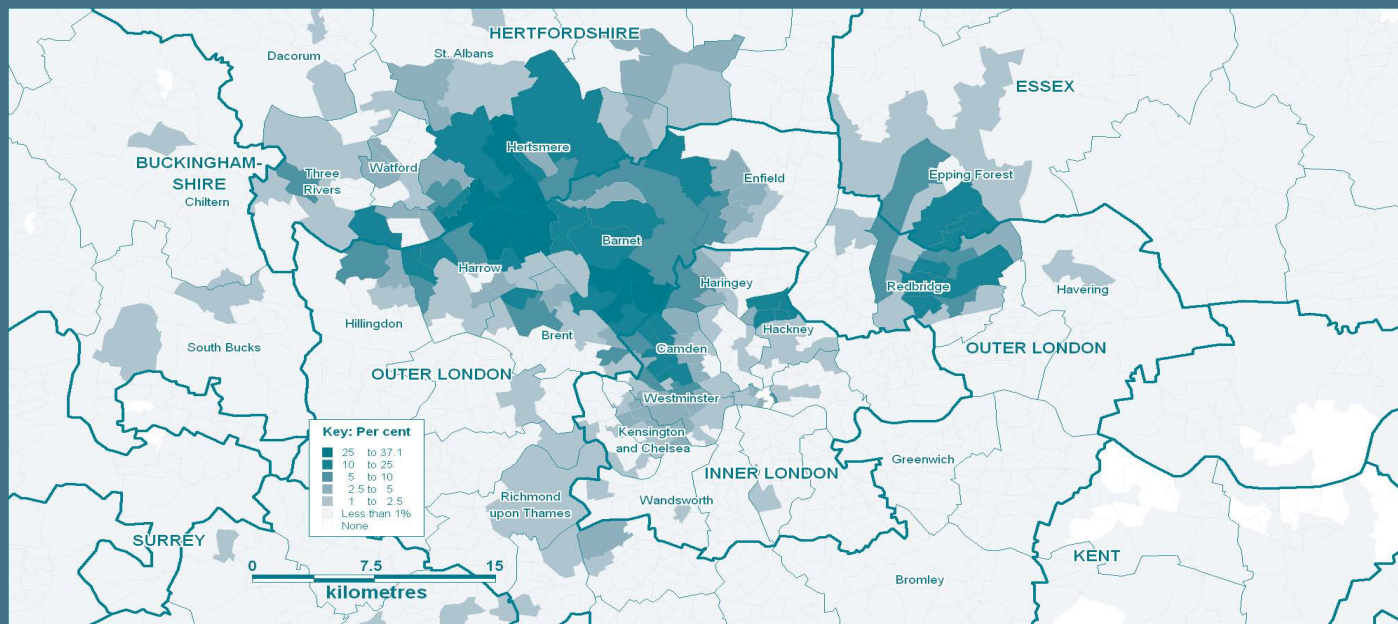


### Culture and Civic Life

**Recognising and celebrating Jewish life:** Councils should mark Jewish civic and cultural events such as Jewish Culture Month, Chanukah and Holocaust Memorial Day, helping foster a welcoming and inclusive borough environment.

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# Who are Jewish Londoners?



Jewish communities have been part of London for almost a thousand years. After the medieval expulsion in 1290, Jews were formally readmitted in the 1650s, and Jewish life in London has continued ever since.

Today, just over 145,000 Jews live in London: about 1.7 percent of the population. More than half of British Jews live in the capital. Jewish residents are concentrated in specific areas. Nearly 80 percent are in seven boroughs: Barnet, Hackney, Haringey, Camden, Redbridge, Harrow and Westminster. Barnet alone has over a third of London's Jewish residents, with the population growing by 20 percent since 2001. Most live around Finchley, Golders Green, Hendon, Hampstead Garden Suburb, and Edgware. Around Stamford Hill in Hackney and Haringey, home to the strictly Orthodox (Charedi) community, the Jewish population has grown by over 60 percent in recent decades, reaching over 17,000 and 9,000 respectively. Other boroughs have seen numbers drop as families move north or out of London.

Age varies widely by borough. Jewish Londoners have a median age of 41, against 36 for London as a whole. In Hackney and Haringey, almost half of Jewish residents are under 16. In Barnet, more than one in five is over 65. In these boroughs and others, these differences directly influence the sustainability of school places, housing and social care.

Jewish Londoners are not a homogenous community. About a quarter are Charedi, around 40 percent belong to central Orthodox synagogues, and roughly a quarter are Progressive, with others identifying as secular or culturally Jewish. Community life is organised across Orthodox, Masorti and Progressive traditions, including Reform and Liberal synagogues within

the Movement for Progressive Judaism. These differences play out locally, particularly around education, housing and community facilities.

Infrastructure is extensive, including schools, synagogues, welfare organisations and community centres serving the community throughout the capital. Security remains a visible and ongoing concern and a practical consideration in planning and funding decisions. Jewish schools and buildings receive enhanced protection through the Home Office Protective Security Grant, administered by the Community Security Trust (CST). Continued funding for this grant is essential to maintaining the security and confidence of Jewish Londoners.

Most Jewish Londoners have Ashkenazi (European) heritage, alongside Sephardi (Spanish and Portuguese) and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern and African) communities. Educational attainment is high — 62 percent have a degree or higher qualification, compared with 34 percent across England and Wales. Volunteering and charitable giving also exceed national averages.

Jewish Londoners live across the city, but their ability to remain embedded in particular neighbourhoods depends on how local policy interacts with community infrastructure. Jewish communal life in London takes different forms across traditions, with some communities concentrated in specific neighbourhoods and others more dispersed, connected through synagogues, movements and wider community networks across boroughs.

*This Guide deals with standard borough issues: public safety, school standards, housing policy, social care and civic leadership.*

# Safety and Community Confidence

**Antisemitism is not abstract for Jewish Londoners. It is experienced in neighbourhoods, schools, high streets and on public transport.**

Over the past year, residents have described a steady erosion of confidence. Graffiti left in place and online abuse spilling into local spaces have led children to ask whether it is safe to wear a school badge. In 2025, 1,884 antisemitic incidents were recorded in London.<sup>1</sup>

Almost half took place in Barnet. Westminster, Hackney, Camden and Harrow also recorded some of the highest levels of anti-Jewish hate nationally. Recent Home Office data shows that Jewish people are at least eight times more likely to be victims of hate crimes than any other religious group.<sup>2</sup> Visibly Jewish residents, including those wearing traditional Charedi dress, can face disproportionate street-level antisemitism. Local safety planning needs to take this into account, particularly around schools, synagogues and busy neighbourhood routes.

Public demonstrations can have a direct effect on local confidence, particularly where routes pass through residential areas or near schools and places of worship. Councils should work closely with police to understand cumulative impact over time and ensure that decisions about routes, timing and conditions support community cohesion and reflect the needs of all communities.

Safety underpins a sustainable and cohesive community. Without confidence in local protection, people are less likely to take part in civic life.

All London boroughs have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism. The key issue is consistent application. When incidents arise, they should be assessed against that definition. Antisemitism must be recognised clearly as racism and addressed.

This aligns with the Government's 'Protecting What Matters' white paper, which highlights the role of local authorities in promoting cohesion and addressing extremist activity and its local impact.

Understanding also matters. Jewish identity does not fit neatly into a single category of religion or ethnicity. It is both. Councils should reflect this in data collection, with options that allow residents to identify as Jewish for the purposes of service delivery and equality monitoring. Without proper training,

antisemitism can be overlooked or misunderstood. Including it explicitly within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for councillors and senior officers helps prevent that gap.

Visible incidents often have a disproportionate impact. When reporting routes are unclear, offensive graffiti or posters can remain for days. Where systems work well, removal is quicker and communication with residents is straightforward. In some boroughs, children passed offensive graffiti on their way to school for several days before removal, undermining confidence in reporting systems and causing distress.

Some areas use local online 'Concerns Groups' linking council officers, police and Jewish community leaders through direct messaging. When incidents occur, information is shared immediately and action follows. In boroughs where these groups operate, response times are noticeably shorter. Where they do not exist, delays are common and frustration grows.

Local authorities set the civic tone in their boroughs. For many Jewish residents, international issues are not abstract. Decisions or messaging linked to them can affect whether they feel comfortable and included in local civic spaces. Council buildings and services should feel neutral and welcoming. Maintaining that neutrality, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and good governance, is a core responsibility. National guidance, including the LGA and Belong Network's 'Common Ground: Building Cohesive Communities' (January 2026), reinforces the importance of managing the local impact of international issues and preventing them from inflaming community tensions. The aim is not to limit legitimate debate but to ensure that council institutions remain trusted by all residents and are not seen as aligned with specific positions on international issues.

Councils should ensure that procurement and investment decisions, the use of symbols, and public statements on international issues are grounded in their legal duties and assessed for their impact on community cohesion and residents' confidence in local services. Council employees and commissioned providers should avoid displaying political symbols when engaging



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with residents in a professional capacity. Councils should be alert to the local consequences of decisions or campaigns that may single out particular communities or create a perception of unequal treatment.

Councils should prioritise efforts that bring communities together, including social action, interfaith activity, and sharing best practice to counter hate, such as CST's Security Advice for Everyone (SAFE) programme.<sup>3</sup>

Engagement should be consistent. Jewish residents, including those in smaller communities, need representation in borough safety, community and faith forums. Regular contact makes it easier to address problems early.

Councils cannot control international events. They can support community cohesion and ensure that Jewish residents feel protected in their own neighbourhoods. Clear standards and timely action are more effective than long statements. Councils should avoid importing international conflict into their local communities, maintaining cohesion and constructive relationships between communities.

**Further detail is available in the accompanying Briefing: Security & Community Confidence.**

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1. CST Incidents Report 2025  
2. Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025 (Table 2.2) - GOV.UK  
3. SAFE: Security Advice for Everyone – CST

# Education

**For many Jewish families, concerns about antisemitism often surface at school, where ordinary moments can quickly feel personal.**

A passing comment or a change in tone during a lesson can leave a pupil feeling exposed. Since October 2023, over one in five children in non-Jewish schools has experienced antisemitism.<sup>4</sup> Many parents say they would feel safer if their child attended a Jewish school, reflecting in the rise in demand for school places. In 2025, CST recorded 204 schools-related antisemitic incidents in the UK<sup>5</sup>, up from 94 in 2022.<sup>6</sup> Parents describe children becoming hesitant about wearing a school badge or mentioning a synagogue visit. For many families, confidence in local schools influences community life and perceptions of local leadership.

In March 2026, the Government launched a review of antisemitism in schools, with recommendations expected later in the year to strengthen how schools and colleges prevent, identify and respond to incidents.

When antisemitism occurs in school, it needs to be recorded accurately. Too often it is absorbed into general bullying statistics. Antisemitism should be recognised as a safeguarding issue. Antisemitism is a hate incident and should be recorded and addressed consistently with other forms of racism. It requires clear recognition, consistent handling and senior leadership attention.

Staff do not always feel confident navigating these situations. The line between legitimate political discussion and antisemitic language is not always obvious in the moment. Confidence improves when staff have appropriate context and guidance, including understanding that Jewish identity can be religious, cultural and ethnic. In schools where headteachers have introduced targeted antisemitism training, staff report greater confidence in handling sensitive classroom discussions. Some schools have also organised anti-discrimination workshops for pupils. For example, *Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination*<sup>7</sup>, funded by the Mayor of London's Shared Endeavour Fund, offers free sessions to schools across London.

Schools are not insulated from events beyond the borough. International developments quickly find their way into playground conversations. This is

part of modern school life. The key issue is how adults respond. Schools should maintain political neutrality in assemblies, displays, educational materials and classroom discussions. Neutrality is not about avoiding difficult topics, but it is about handling them carefully and fairly.

To illustrate, one school display about extremism presented the Israeli Defence Forces as an example of 'extremism in Judaism'. This was factually inaccurate and caused deep offence, given that the majority of British Jews have family or personal connections to Israel. By implication, the display risked labelling Jewish students and their families as 'extremists'. The school later apologised.

Jewish pupils attend a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish schools. Two-thirds of Jewish children in London, around 29,500 pupils, attend a Jewish school. There are 85 Jewish schools in London, including both Charedi and mainstream Orthodox, spanning nine local authorities. Experiences vary sharply by borough. In Hackney, Haringey and Barnet, demand for places in Jewish schools has risen rapidly. In other boroughs, Jewish pupils may be one of only a handful in a year group. These different contexts create distinct challenges for schools and councils.

Changes to the charitable status of private schools have prompted some independent Jewish schools to move into the voluntary-aided sector. This transition requires constructive engagement with councils. Sector bodies such as Partnerships for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) and Chinuch UK play an important role in supporting schools and liaising with local authorities. Mainstream guidance on areas such as SEND, school absence and pupil wellbeing often benefits from adaptation to reflect the context of Jewish schools.

For many families, how schools respond to antisemitism is the clearest test of local leadership. This will remain part of our ongoing engagement with Council education leads.

**Operational standards and system responsibilities are set out in the Briefing: Education.**

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4. JPR: Antisemitism in schools

5. CST Incidents Report 2025

6. CST Incidents Report 2022

7. StandUp! Education Against Discrimination, [standupeducation.org](http://standupeducation.org)

# Social Care and Health

**Demographics vary sharply across boroughs. In some boroughs the Jewish population is young and growing. In others, particularly Barnet, a significant proportion of residents are over 65. In those boroughs, adult social care is not a peripheral issue. It is central to a stable and comfortable community life.**

Whether or not residents live close to Jewish care facilities, access to culturally competent adult social care is central to their wellbeing and helps to create a familiar atmosphere.

Provision of kosher meals, awareness of religious observance and sensitivity around end-of-life care are not specialist demands. They are part of ordinary, competent provision.

Councils work with a wide range of care providers delivering strong services, even though not all are familiar with Jewish religious practice or family patterns. Small gaps in cultural understanding can quickly create problems. Where staff understand faith observance and family expectations, residents report greater confidence in care. Organisations such as Jewish Care and Kisharon Langdon, both of which work extensively with non-Jewish staff, show that this understanding can be built effectively in practice.

Signposting can be just as important as direct provision. London has established Jewish welfare organisations with expertise in dementia support, mental health support, disability services and family assistance, including Chai Cancer Care, Camp Simcha, Jami and Jewish Blind & Disabled. Families often move between statutory and voluntary support. When communication is unclear, people fall through gaps. Where faith-competent support is available, residents need to be able to find it easily and understand how statutory and community-based services connect.

When it comes to culturally-competent specialist care, some issues cross borough boundaries. A child with complex needs may require a specialist setting outside their home authority. A disabled older resident may need a placement that is not available locally. Families have reported their relatives with complex needs being kept in hospitals unnecessarily long, and transfers into residential care being delayed due to funding disputes and appeals, with a clear effect on

physical and mental health. Families also report concerns about the transition from children's to adult care services, highlighting a sharp 'cliff edge' and the need for earlier engagement and support by the council.

These challenges underline the need for consistency and fairness across boroughs, both in determining funding responsibility and in working with the community-based culturally-competent service providers. Charities such as Norwood and Kisharon Langdon play an important role in delivering specialist support that complements statutory care and SEND provision and is relied on by many families. These providers should receive the same rates as private providers for their services.

Public health engagement follows a similar pattern. Language, trust and familiarity influence whether messages are heard. Working through recognised community networks, particularly in the Charedi community, can improve take-up of screening and vaccination programmes. The London Jewish Health Partnership, Interlink and other organisations have an important role in helping public health teams shape messaging that is culturally appropriate and accessible.

These issues are not unique to Jewish residents. Many communities rely on cultural understanding to access services with confidence. Regular engagement with Jewish organisations working across health, care and housing helps councils understand emerging pressures and respond more effectively.

Local authorities cannot remove every difficulty, but they can reduce avoidable ones. That is often what residents remember. These structural issues will remain part of our engagement with social care and public health teams.

**Further information is available in the accompanying Briefing: Social Care and Health.**

# Housing and Planning

Where people live shapes how daily life works in practice. For many Jewish families, distance matters.

Where people live shapes how daily life works in practice. For many Jewish families, distance matters. Being able to walk to synagogue, to school, to a kosher shop is part of daily life for many Jewish residents, particularly those in Orthodox communities who observe the Sabbath. Extended families and tight-knit neighbourhood networks provide informal childcare, support older relatives and strengthen intergenerational resilience. Recognising these patterns helps sustain community life and supports planning of community infrastructure, including new facilities and the expansion of existing ones, in areas where Jewish communities are growing.

It is important for local authorities to recognise the enhanced security needs of Jewish buildings and work with synagogues, schools and CST and support protective measures including hostile vehicle mitigation, higher perimeter security and CCTV.

In parts of North and North-West London, demand for larger family houses continues to rise. This is particularly relevant to the Charedi families, which often have five to eight children. These larger-than-average households have direct implications on local services, including waste collection, recycling capacity and street cleaning.

Building more social and affordable family-size housing remains a priority. In some boroughs, families are moving further out as prices rise or suitable homes are unavailable. That shift affects school rolls, transport use and local service demand. The change is gradual but noticeable.

Small housing adjustments, such as extensions or loft conversions, can make a meaningful difference for larger families. Taken together, these decisions influence whether neighbourhoods remain viable for communities that rely on walking distance to schools and places of worship. Planning committees do not always see that cumulative impact. A case-by-case approach to planning decisions can help balance neighbourhood character with evolving family needs.

Specialist Jewish housing providers, including Industrial Dwellings Society, jLiving, Agudas Israel Housing Association and Jewish Blind & Disabled, support older residents and those requiring



*Specialist Jewish housing providers like Jewish Blind & Disabled, support older residents and those requiring supported accommodation. © JBD*

supported accommodation. Demand for culturally competent provision has increased in recent years. Where councils maintain regular dialogue with these providers who are delivering vital services to Jewish residents, coordination tends to improve and issues are resolved more quickly.

Planning decisions rarely attract attention unless they are controversial. Over time they shape whether people can continue living near the schools, synagogues and community networks they rely on. For many families, that question is not theoretical. It is about whether staying in the neighbourhood remains possible.

**Further details are available in the accompanying Briefing: Housing and Planning.**

# Culture and Civic Life

**Councils regularly make decisions about public events, cultural funding and use of civic space that affect Jewish community life.**

Councils regularly make decisions about public events, cultural funding and use of civic space that affect Jewish community life. Jewish culture is expressed through institutions and initiatives such as the JW3 Jewish Community Centre, UK Jewish Film Festival, the Jewish Literary Foundation's Book Week and Chanukah in the Square.

Jewish life is visible across boroughs in schools, care homes and at local events. Synagogues and community organisations across different traditions play an active role in borough life, including social action, interfaith work and local community initiatives. Routine recognition and consistent engagement influence whether Jewish civic life feels embedded within borough structures.

Councils encounter this through their everyday civic decisions, such as road closures for community events, the use of civic space and recognition of religious festivals. None of these are unusual. Yet how they are handled shapes whether residents feel that their presence is understood as ordinary, or marginal and exceptional.

Chanukah and Holocaust Memorial Day are among the most significant public occasions in the Jewish calendar and provide opportunities for engagement with local Jewish communities. Recognition does not need to be elaborate. What matters more is consistency. In boroughs where these acknowledgements happen as part of the ordinary civic calendar, they rarely generate controversy, but where they do not, the absence is noticed. Equally, local synagogues and charities appreciate Councils' help in facilitating straightforward planning and security arrangements in preparation for these events.

Many Councils do excellent work in celebrating London's diversity and recognising different communities' contributions, for example, by supporting initiatives such as Black History Month and Pride Month. Jewish Culture Month, launched by the Board of Deputies in 2026, offers a similar opportunity. Running in May and June, it provides a structured way for Councils to engage with local Jewish history and recognise contemporary cultural contributions in partnership with local organisations.

Jewish organisations are active in social action and welfare provision across London. Much of this work aligns with borough priorities, for example, around reducing poverty and supporting older people. Borough volunteering schemes can work with the Jewish Volunteering Network to expand participation. Initiatives such as Mitzvah Day, an annual day of social action bringing together Jewish communities, other faith groups, schools and local authorities, provide practical opportunities for collaboration.

Where councils maintain relationships with local Jewish organisations, engagement tends to remain constructive, including during periods of tension. Jewish civic life depends on borough structures in routine ways that support an inclusive and cohesive city.

# JEWISH CULTURE MONTH

16 May – 16 June 2026

[jewishculturemonth.org.uk](http://jewishculturemonth.org.uk)

@jewishculturemonth

**A celebration of  
British Jewish  
culture, community,  
and creativity. All  
are welcome!**



A project of the Board of Deputies of British Jews  
[bod.org.uk](http://bod.org.uk)

# Engage with Jewish Londoners

During the election period, candidates will have opportunities to meet Jewish residents directly, including through hustings, roundtables and smaller borough-based meetings.

We encourage candidates to take part where possible. These discussions provide an opportunity to explore how local decisions affect community life and to clarify Jewish residents' priorities. Information about forthcoming events will be shared through our website and local networks.

The priorities in this Guide extend beyond the election period. They are intended to provide a practical framework for engagement and action after the election, over the coming council term.

## About the London Jewish Forum

London Jewish Forum connects Jewish communities with civic leaders across London. Much of our work takes place borough by borough, in conversations with councillors, council officers and other public bodies about issues that affect local residents.

Jewish Londoners hold a wide range of views shaped by different traditions, experiences and neighbourhood contexts. Our role is to provide context where needed and to clarify how council decisions are experienced locally.

The election period brings these issues into sharper focus, but they do not begin or end with a campaign. The priorities are intended to shape engagement once councils are in place. If further background or introductions would be helpful, we are able to assist.

## Contact & Further Information

### London Jewish Forum

info@londonjewishforum.org.uk  
londonjewishforum.org.uk  
@JewishLondon

### Board of Deputies of British Jews

info@bod.org.uk  
bod.org.uk  
@boardofdeputies

### Jewish Culture Month

jewishculturemonth.org.uk  
@jewishculturemonth



## Candidate Engagement Tracker

A Candidate Engagement Tracker will be available on our website during the election period. It will show which candidates have read this Guide and considered the issues it raises.

Candidates who have read the Guide may choose to confirm this publicly. The Tracker helps residents see who has taken the time to engage and supports more informed conversations.

The purpose is transparency rather than endorsement, and to support continued dialogue once councils are formed.

Further details are available online at:

[londonjewishforum.org.uk/london-local-election-2026](https://londonjewishforum.org.uk/london-local-election-2026)

