

THE IMPACT



CENTRE *for*
RABBINIC
EXCELLENCE

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

Dear Friends



I have always believed that the task of turning our communities into powerhouses of Jewish religious, educational, and cultural experience depends almost entirely on one thing: empowering the leadership of our communities to reach their potential.

Since September 2014, that has been the goal of the Centre for Rabbinic Excellence. Baruch Hashem, we could never have imagined that less than two years later, we would be able to look back proudly upon more than 200 incredible initiatives and programmes which have inspired over 20,000 people.

Our approach is very simple. No community should ever devise an event or programme which would strengthen and enthuse its members, only to find that a lack of funding makes the delivery of that programme impossible. In addition to funding, we provide advice and guidance to Rabbanim and lay leaders alike, as partners in making our shared dreams a reality in our communities.

I am more excited than ever about what the future holds for CRE and I look forward to working together with you on many more wonderful projects.

With warm wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ephraim Mirvis".

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

THE ETZ CHAIM PROJECT

The Etz Chaim project brings groups of Madrichim to communities for Shabbatot and Chagim.

Etz Chaim groups bring energy and Simcha to communities!

They can assist with Kriyat HaTorah, leading Tefillah, giving Divrei Torah, youth programming, running communal meals and generally helping to create a wonderful ruach (atmosphere).



Contact CRE to arrange an Etz Chaim team of Madrichim to visit your community:

0208 343 6309

cre@chiefrabbi.org



“The madrichim were fantastic and we had a wonderful Shabbat. When can they come again?”
Ashley Bernstein,
President of Childwall Synagogue,
Liverpool



CRE Featured programme:

SHABBAT LEEDS

Organised jointly by Etz Chaim, Beth Hamidrash Hagadol and United Hebrew Congregation Synagogues in Leeds

The three communities joined forces for the highly memorable 'Shabbat Leeds', which succeeded in recreating the excitement and unifying spirit that had defined their Shabbat UK events six months earlier. Many attendees had never experienced a Shabbat quite like it and after ruach-filled services, communal meals, a packed programme and a rousing Havdallah service, they left with a stronger sense of Jewish identity. The now well-known 'Travelling Chasidim' greatly enhanced the ruach as well.

What new Shabbat programme do you have in mind?

"Friday night dinner strengthened our Leeds community and marked the establishment of closer ties with the Chassidic community."
UHC member

"Shabbat Leeds drew the community together, regardless of Shul affiliation. The atmosphere was one of warmth, belonging and inclusiveness."
Rabbi Shalom Kupperman,
Shabbat Leeds co-ordinator

"Saturday night's Havdallah ceremony was so moving and beautiful that it made my 9 year old want to repeat it every week."
Etz Chaim member

THE IMPACT

- A wonderful sense of collaboration and unity between these communities.
- Recapturing the unique atmosphere of Shabbat UK.



CRE Featured programme:

THE WOMAN IN GOLD



Cockfosters and N Southgate United Synagogue

The cinema at JW3 was hired out especially for Cockfosters and N Southgate members for an enlightening evening of Jewish history, culture and dining. After a cocktail reception, a presentation on ‘The Nazi Plunder’ was given by Rebbetzen Ilana Epstein, putting into context the film which was then viewed, ‘Woman in Gold’.

THE IMPACT

- The use of a different venue made a real impression, connecting members to the wider Jewish community.
- The combination of educational, cultural and social aspects of the event really added to attendees’ sense of Jewish identity.



“This was an unforgettable event, yet still with that crucial Jewish thread to reinforce participants’ sense of identity. It shows how some creative thinking and astute leadership can reinvigorate communal life.”
Cockfosters and N
Southgate member

CRE Featured programme:

A TWINNED SHABBAT

Pinner United and Norwich Synagogues

A group of Pinner members were hosted by the Norwich community for a twinned Shabbat that featured a full programme including communal meals and speakers. Pinner member Dr Anthony Nicholls ran a session for the Norwich Chevra Kadisha.

“Meeting the congregation in Norwich helped me understand the problems facing smaller communities and how our support can help.”

Norwich Synagogue member

“Pinner wanted to continue to strengthen its relationship with Norwich, share challenges and forge a meaningful connection.”

Leonie Lewis, Pinner member

“The whole weekend has left me more enthusiastic than ever. I would like to thank all who made it happen, we had an excellent time.”

Norwich Synagogue member

THE IMPACT

- An excellent example of Community Twinning, whereby two communities were able to forge a meaningful relationship.
- A rare opportunity to share ideas and best practice, as well as provide tangible support.



CRE Featured programme:

KIDS @ LIVERPOOL LEARNING

Allerton and Childwall Synagogues



This long-term family learning project brought children together with their parents and grandparents for an hour of informal learning after Shabbatot in a relaxed atmosphere. Children were free to choose between study of the Chagim, Shabbat, Chumash, Hebrew and Jewish stories.

Get in touch for great ideas for children's events.



THE IMPACT

- Inter-generational Torah learning inspired both parents and their children alike.
- The graduation Melava Malka which featured a guest speaker and the Travelling Chasidim, generated a very special atmosphere.

“My children tried this out and demanded to continue!”
Childwall Synagogue member

“We are a small community in Liverpool. The learning was a great vehicle through which to achieve cohesion.”
Allerton Synagogue member

CRE Featured programme:

SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE

Alei Tzion United Synagogue

An unprecedented number of people attended Shul to hear leading Modern Orthodox scholar Rabbi Shalom Rosner, who impressed with his engaging presentation and Torah-inspired advice on such subjects as mitzvot, relationships and a host of other topics.

Call CRE for help with finding a great speaker.

THE IMPACT

- An exciting opportunity to hear Torah scholarship of the highest calibre from a Modern Orthodox, Zionist Rabbinic Leader.
- Met the needs of members who seek high-level and intellectually challenging education.



“It is certainly important to have inspiring weekends like these on a regular basis as it makes for ongoing chizuk.”
Alei Tzion member

CRE Featured programme:

PRE-PESACH TRIP TO LONDON

Solihull & District Hebrew Congregation

Members journeyed down to London for a memorable day spent learning about Pesach, reconnecting with former 'Silhillians', enjoying a talk over lunch and stocking up for the festival in North London's kosher shops.

How about a day trip to another UK Jewish community?

THE IMPACT

- Created a real sense of anticipation and excitement for Pesach.
- Delivered innovative educational content in a memorable setting.

"This was a truly meaningful day which left me with a better understanding of Pesach and a greater sense of Jewish belonging."
Solihull member

"Rabbi Odze's talk was very informative and interesting, while the chance to shop in Golders Green was a luxury, coming from a city where there are no such outlets. It was a wonderful and highly memorable day."
Solihull member



CRE Featured programme:

FAMILY PURIM SEUDAH WITH THE DRUM CAFÉ

Borehamwood and Elstree United Synagogue

A very well attended family Purim Seudah, with craft activities for children and a high-energy, interactive entertainment session with experts from the 'Drum Café'.

Bring the best entertainment to your members.

THE IMPACT

- The involvement of the Drum Café created a special and unifying atmosphere.
- Unprecedented attendance due to the creative programming.

"The food was great, the atmosphere electric, the drum cafe was really good fun and everyone had a great time. With CRE's assistance generally, our events always seem to surpass the expectations of our membership. I received loads of positive feedback with repeated calls for this to become an annual event."

Simon Mitchell, Warden at Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue



CRE Featured programme:

LADIES DRAMA GROUP

Whitefield Hebrew Congregation

“It was brilliant to meet people from right across North Manchester and the religious spectrum, with everybody respecting each other and working well. The explicitly cross-communal nature of the event was a delight to behold.”

Whitefield Synagogue member

This North Manchester Ladies Jewish Drama Group produced and staged an original play to a combined audience of over 500 women which engaged ladies from both within the Whitefield community and beyond.

THE IMPACT

- A high quality production that generated a great sense of pride and achievement for those involved.
- An empowering event for women of the community.

“Ladies who would never normally meet one another within a community setting were engaged on every level, from the actresses, to rehearsals, to painting sets. The electric atmosphere, packed room and diverse audience and cast members signaled real success.”

Rebbetzen Guttentag



CRE PERSPECTIVES



REBBETZEN SUFRIN
ENFIELD AND WINCHMORE HILL
UNITED SYNAGOGUE

“CRE has given communities an amazing opportunity to bring joy in our Jewish practices and increase participation in Shul events. One such example is the Enfield Tashlich Cruise. The cruise created an opportunity for members to be informed, educated, inspired and enjoy the mitzvah of Tashlich. To this day, I am often asked, even by members of other Shuls, when the next Tashlich Cruise is happening. All credit to CRE for giving us the wherewithal to invigorate and strengthen our communities through the funding and advice provided.”



TAMAR FRIEZE
EVENTS ORGANISER,
YESHURUN HEBREW CONGREGATION,
MANCHESTER

“CRE has been instrumental in supporting Yeshurun, especially with our Friday Night Live series. We wanted to up our game with engagement of young families and our youth. Rachel Shababo was a superb support in connecting us with talented educational speakers and other Shuls who provided useful insight from similar programmes they had run. The high volume of young families and youth was exactly what we had hoped to achieve – getting them engaged, inspired and into Shul on Friday nights!”





LISA GERSON
CHAIR, CARDIFF UNITED SYNAGOGUE

“We are very grateful to CRE for the wonderful programmes it has helped us facilitate, which have had such a positive impact on communal life for our members. These include a day trip to Oxford, Seder plates, Friday Night and Yom Tov events and the extremely popular ‘Jewish Course of Why’ run by Rabbi Rose. The funding and support from CRE has been crucial to the implementation and success of these programmes in a small community like Cardiff and we look forward to building on these foundations.”



RABBI FELDMAN
BELMONT UNITED SYNAGOGUE

“The Chief Rabbi’s commitment to inspire and facilitate excellence in what we Rabbanim offer our communities has helped Belmont go from strength to strength. I can honestly say that without CRE, our most recent greatest communal successes would not have been achievable. Thank you Chief Rabbi Mirvis and all at CRE for your generous support in helping our dreams become reality.”

CRE Featured programme:

TASHLICH CRUISE

“I was delighted to find a real sense of community spirit and cohesion. I now have a better understanding of Tashlich.”

Enfield member

Enfield and Winchmore Hill United Synagogue

Participants took to the London waterways for an educational and social barge trip, to explore and perform the New Year’s custom of Tashlich. Carried out in this instance after the festival. With lunch on board, energetic madrichim to lead singing and a guest speaker, this event certainly put Tashlich on the map.

THE IMPACT

- Reached members who would not otherwise have engaged with an educational event about Tashlich.
- Created a wonderful atmosphere which energised and inspired participants.



“It was a pleasure to both do a mitzvah and meet some lovely people.”

Enfield member

“To remedy a lack of interest with this historical custom, we staged the novel ‘Tashlich Cruise.’ This was a sell-out event with a waiting list and we had to get a bigger barge! Congregants hope for a similar event next year.”

Rebbetzen Sufrin

CRE Featured programme:

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' SHABBATON

South Hampstead, Western Marble Arch,
Hampstead and St Johns Wood United Synagogues

A special residential Shabbat for Young Professionals, with speakers running sessions on the theme of 'Mind, Body and Soul', which included workshops on mindfulness and nutrition, amongst others. The Shabbaton included communal meals, davening and a memorable Shabbat after-party.

Get in touch if you would like to run a Shabbaton for your members.

THE IMPACT

- An impressive collective effort to provide quality programming for young professionals.
- Cultivated meaningful relationships between young members and community leaders.

"The atmosphere created was laid back and relaxed, which meant that the relationship between the Rabbonim, family and participants was very friendly and not at all forced."

South Hampstead member



"This was my first Shabbaton, which I thoroughly enjoyed! When's the next one?"

Hampstead member

THE REACTION

“Your generous grants give us the impetus to keep on dreaming!”

Rabbi E. Levin, South Hampstead United Synagogue

“My personal thanks to CRE for all the guidance and immense help in making this Shabbat so wonderful for our members.”

Dawn Freedman,
Chair of Ealing United Synagogue

“We know CRE played a big part in funding the Shabbaton and we can assure you that it was well worth the investment!”

Brondesbury Park United Synagogue members

“To get 135 people together from such a dwindling community was magnificent and it was thanks to the funding from CRE.”

Stuart Joseph, President of Nottingham Hebrew Congregation

“The funding you award is crucial for us to put on successful events that are attractive and affordable for our members.”

Rabbi Garber, Shenley United Synagogue



“The seminar was excellent and without the vision and support of our Chief Rabbi and CRE the entire event would never have happened.”

Rabbi Golomb,
Sheffield United Synagogue

“Thank you for giving us ideas!”

David Lerner,
Chair of Belmont
United Synagogue

“Many thanks for your support. It is really appreciated and helps to keep a small community vibrant.”

David May,
Member of Leicester
Hebrew Congregation

“Thank you so much for enabling us to really raise the bar this Purim!!”

Rebbetzen Sturgess,
St Albans United
Synagogue

“With your help, our events seem to surpass the expectations of our demanding membership. If we are seen as innovators it is only thanks to your help.”

Simon Mitchell, Warden at
Borehamwood and Elstree United
Synagogue



INVESTING IN REBBETZENS



This is a landmark new learning series for UK Rebbetzens that gives them access to thought-provoking speakers, to opportunities for Torah study and, crucially to each other, so that they can improve their leadership skills, share expertise and, reinvest what they have gleaned in their own community. The initiative is being spearheaded by the Chief Rabbi's wife, Valerie Mirvis, who wanted to find ways to empower Rebbetzens to inspire their communities.

CRE empowers Rebbetzens so that:

- They are at the forefront of invigorating women in Orthodox Judaism.
- They feel appreciated, supported and inspired to assume a more active role in their communities.
- They are equipped to develop and run impactful initiatives in their communities.
- Communities in general are strengthened thanks to their Rebbetzen.

2016 has seen two thought provoking and stimulating seminars and a highly successful leadership trip to Gibraltar for Rebbetzens from across the Commonwealth.

We look forward to extending this programme in the coming year.



CRE REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Some years ago, before becoming Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Mirvis was mentoring a young, newly appointed community Rav, who bemoaned the fact that his Shul lacked the small amount of funding needed to stage a special Friday night dinner for members. It was that exchange that sowed the seeds for what would become CRE.

In the last two years, we have proved that even with a relatively small amount of money, great things can be achieved in communities, through high quality and innovative programming.

CRE has evolved into a hub for sharing ideas, each week receiving numerous requests for assistance in planning programmes and ways to inspire community members.

The greatest successes have been when CRE seed funding has resulted in a community subsequently allocating its own resources, to ensure that a particular, successful programme, becomes a regular fixture for its members.

This is just the beginning. Please make use of the wonderful resources and opportunities CRE offers your community.

Rachel Shababo, Director of CRE

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

Do you have other ideas?

We love ideas!

Please get in touch:

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