

Jewish ←
→ Community
Manifesto →→ for
Leeds and ←
the ▀ Yorkshire
Region ←





FOREWORD

The Leeds Jewish Representative Council (LJRC) is a not-for-profit organisation established more than 150 years ago with the objective of supporting and representing Jewish communities in Leeds and across the Yorkshire region. Our goals encompass fostering unity, advocating for community needs, and enhancing quality of life for community members through the coordination of a diverse programme of activities.

The LJRC is an inclusive umbrella organisation supporting more than 50 partner organisations (affiliates) across sectors including social welfare, housing, primary and high school education, faith, youth, and culture. Several of our larger affiliates provide services in the wider Yorkshire region. The support the LJRC provides is intentionally designed to be accessible to everyone whilst alleviating pressure on public sector provision.

As part of several international Jewish-centred projects, the LJRC has worked with communities in other European cities, including Athens, Berlin, Copenhagen, Finland, Madrid, and Milan. This continuing engagement has helped us develop more focused programming, such as working with younger members of the community so they develop into responsible adults who contribute to the community through, for example, volunteering their time, resources, and skills.

At the LJRC, we place a strong emphasis on interfaith work as a means of fostering deeper connections and supporting other faith communities and leaders.

Recent challenges and demands on our work have included the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the increase in antisemitism incidents since October 7th 2023. These challenges bring to the fore the need for resources to support and strengthen our community.

Many from across the community are nervous, disheartened, and frightened because of the increase in antisemitism, particularly those in the higher education sectors across the region. The LJRC continues to support the work of the Community Security Trust (CST) and its close relationship with the region's police forces to ensure Leeds and Yorkshire remain safe for our community members.

The last three decennial Censuses for England and Wales have included a voluntary question about religious affiliation. The data collected provides insights into the nation's Jewish population, including size, geographic distribution, age distribution, health status, socioeconomic factors, and identity within the Jewish community. Thanks to the detailed analysis of the Census results by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), we are able to gain a deeper understanding of significant demographic trends, enabling us to strategise and plan effectively for our future work.

The core UK Jewish population was estimated by the JPR to be approximately 292,000 in 2011, adjusted for those who did not answer the religion question and the small fraction who identified by ethnicity rather than religion. A 2% rise would put the Jewish community now at nearly 298,000.

The 2021 Census results show that Jewish people live in every local authority in England and Wales. The Jewish population remains at around 0.5% of the population in England, which has become increasingly secular. Jon Wroth-Smith of the Office of National Statistics said, "The results show that there are fewer people who have a religious identity. More than 22 million people – an increase of 8 million since 2011 – said they had 'No religion'."

Leeds is the home for the third largest Jewish community in the UK. There has been a slight decline in its number, with 6,627 individuals self-identifying as Jewish in the 2021 Census. Small increases were noted in surrounding districts, though, such as York and Harrogate.

I am immensely proud of the work accomplished by the LJRC and, together with my dedicated Board of Directors and staff, am committed to continuing our advocacy and representation on behalf of the community. We will collaborate closely with partners such as the JLC and CST to engage with local politicians, senior leaders at Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and other faith leaders.

Our aim is to ensure the welfare of our community members and effectively address their needs, both externally through advocacy efforts and internally through comprehensive measures.

Simon Myerson KC
Chair
Leeds Jewish Representative Council

CONTENTS

03 West Yorkshire Jewish Community

04 Community Security and Antisemitism

06 Interfaith

07 Education and Young People

08 Housing and Planning

09 Health and Social Care

10 Culture, Heritage, and Social Action

WEST YORKSHIRE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Leeds is one of the fastest-growing cities in the UK. It is a hub for financial, legal, IT, and professional services, the centre of European health technology development, and seen as an attractive and affordable place to live.

More than 6,600 Jewish people currently live in Leeds, according to the 2021 Census. There is a wide range of services and activities, including:

- synagogues for different denominations of Judaism;
- Jewish schools;
- a youth campus;
- welfare support;
- social housing;
- provision of kosher food;
- a vibrant culture scene.

Other than the services for the university students, Leeds' Jewish community services are based in North Leeds (LS17 and LS8), where many within the community live.

Our community is diverse and includes people:

- with various levels of religiosity or none;
- who align with different denominations, such as traditional and modern Orthodox, Reform, Liberal, Masorti, Chabad Lubavitch, and none;
- who have Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi heritage or a mixture;
- from all age groups;
- with differing sexual orientations;
- with differing interests;
- from varying nationalities and first languages;
- with varying levels of abilities and disabilities;
- living in severe poverty and those from extremely wealthy backgrounds;
- born in Leeds and carrying their ancestral heritage, as well as newcomers.

There are Jewish people living and working in each of the council areas that comprise the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, with an active synagogue in Bradford and with Jewish societies operating on the university campus. Those who choose to live away from West Yorkshire's Jewish community centre in Leeds still receive support and engage with activities that take place in Leeds.



More than 6,600 Jewish people currently live in Leeds, according to the 2021 Census.

COMMUNITY SECURITY AND ANTISEMITISM

The Jewish community is deeply embedded in the history of Leeds. Community organisations and individuals are seen as an integral part of city life and are committed to supporting the city whilst retaining its unique traditions and heritage. The community has always valued and appreciated the support offered by other faith and ethnic communities, senior leaders at Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Evidence shows that whenever there is a conflict in the Middle East, often referred to as a ‘trigger incident’, the Jewish community experiences a surge in antisemitic and hate crimes.

Since October 2023 and the terrorist atrocities committed by Hamas, the scale and frequency of these attacks have reached unprecedented levels. CST has documented the highest number of reported incidents in the UK since the Holocaust.

The heightened tensions have left the Leeds Jewish community members feeling anxious and fearful. Some are choosing to avoid displaying their Jewish identity in public. Others are avoiding going to the city centre on weekends owing to frequent pro-Palestinian marches, banners, flags, chants, and antisemitic graffiti.

As in Jewish communities worldwide, there are heightened concerns about the threats of attacks on Jewish property or gatherings. Jewish communities have been targeted on several occasions. There are continuing threats from the Far Right, Al Qaeda, and ISIS-inspired terrorists. Evidence of these include the deadly attacks in Toulouse (March 2012), Brussels (May 2014), Paris (January 2015), Copenhagen (February 2015), Pittsburgh (October 2018), Poway (March 2019), Halle (October 2019), Texas (January 2022), and Djerba (May 2023).

Since 2010, all Jewish community buildings have put in place enhanced security measures. To help with the costs of these going forward, it was announced at the CST Annual Dinner that national funding is to be increased to £18 million per annum, a decision that the Leeds Jewish community welcomes.

The rise in hate crime is deeply felt in Leeds. It is often worsened by extreme anti-Israel campaigns, such as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). The activity does nothing to promote community cohesion across Leeds and frequently leads to hateful rhetoric on the streets. It targets the Jewish community negatively, even leading to vandalism in kosher sections of supermarkets and hostile environments for Jewish students on university campuses. We are therefore fully supportive of government legislation seeking to outlaw the BDS movement, together with the condemnation and prosecution of those who fly flags and display sympathies with internationally proscribed terrorist organisations, including Hamas and Hezbollah.

We cooperated with Lord Mann’s report, which aimed to address antisemitism on campuses, and fully endorse the report and support all its recommendations. We are strong advocates of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. It is crucial that this definition is used to identify contemporary antisemitism.

The continuing increase in hate crime targeting the Jewish community online remains a constant concern. We are grateful for the significant efforts made to help address this.

Online incidents are some of the most frequent forms of antisemitism recorded by CST. It is too easy to access and share inciteful and violent material. There is also an increase in Holocaust denial and distortion on mainstream platforms, which is concerning, especially when mixed with overtly antisemitic conspiracy theories. We will continue to support CST and the JLC who work with the government on the Online Safety Act, and will champion any measures that will make the online space safer for users.



PLEDGES

Owing to the heightened threat level facing the Jewish community, we must prioritise efforts to combat antisemitism and hate crimes across Leeds and the Yorkshire region. These include maintaining a strong focus on terrorist prevention, community resilience, and supporting the work of organisations like CST which provide essential services for victims of antisemitic hate crimes.

We commit to:

- Maintaining a strong focus on terrorist prevention, community resilience, and supporting the work of organisations such as the CST, which provide essential services for victims of antisemitic hate crimes.
- Upholding and putting into action the IHRA definition of antisemitism.
- Ensuring protests and marches are monitored so that individuals displaying antisemitic banners and flags are promptly identified, arrested, and prosecuted.
- Supporting the Online Safety Act 2023 and urging social media companies to take swift action in removing harmful antisemitic and racist content from their platforms.
- Publicly opposing any efforts to create a hostile environment for the Jewish community, whether it be on university campuses, in the workplace, or through demonstrations supporting antisemitic and terrorist organisations.
- Standing behind the recommendations outlined in Lord Mann’s report on Combatting Antisemitism in Higher Education.
- Engaging in interfaith dialogue across Leeds and the surrounding districts.
- Supporting the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which aims to prevent the BDS campaign from abusing public bodies.
- Offering our support to CST, Maccabi GB, and the Stand Up! programme in their efforts to combat antisemitism and promote understanding and tolerance.

INTERFAITH



Leeds and the Yorkshire region have a diverse mix of faiths, beliefs, cultural practices, and ethnicities. These communities have historically coexisted peacefully.

Across the region, Jewish communities have always embraced interfaith connections to foster cultural exchange and learning.

Across the region, Jewish communities have always embraced interfaith connections to foster cultural exchange and learning. Recognising the importance of such engagement, we prioritise participating in different religious festivals, hosting interfaith activities, and being part of various forums promoting tolerance and understanding.

Historically, interfaith dialogue has steered clear of contentious issues, aiming to find common ground amongst people of faith without delving into potentially divisive topics.

However, the terrorist attacks of October 7th 2023 have adversely impacted existing interfaith networks, causing some longstanding relations to be tested. Rather than shying away from difficult conversations, there is a call to address contentious issues openly and constructively.

PLEDGES

By working together across different faiths and making peace a priority, we want to improve interfaith activities. This will make Leeds and the region a more welcoming place for everyone, including the Jewish community, as we stand together against hatred and unfair treatment and seek to build a community where respect, empathy, understanding, and support are valued by all.

We commit to:

- Supporting initiatives and events fostering collaboration amongst different faith groups in Leeds and the region.
- Participating in communication between leaders of the many faith communities.
- Proactively developing a strategy for broader interfaith dialogue, inclusive of grassroots perspectives from diverse communities.
- Fostering genuine dialogue and understanding so that Leeds and Yorkshire are both seen as welcoming and inclusive places where everyone can freely practise their faith and beliefs with respect and support.

EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE



In all branches of Judaism, continuous Jewish learning is seen as a lifelong journey of discovery, introspection, and spiritual growth that binds individuals to their heritage and community. It brings together people from diverse backgrounds to learn, worship, and celebrate.

Youth education and support are important for the Leeds Jewish community. Located on the Henry Cohen campus are nursery, primary, and high schools, The Zone youth centre, and after-school provision. These all offer a secure environment for Jewish children from all backgrounds to thrive academically and socially in spaces that are welcoming, helping them to forge friendships and study together without fear of discrimination or bullying.

Integrated into the Leeds Jewish community are several youth groups which offer leadership development programmes and service as valuable resources for young individuals navigating their identities and responsibilities within their communities. It is therefore important for local authorities to continue providing support to ensure the ongoing success and impact of these initiatives.

Efforts to educate children about social media, peer pressure, knife crime, and other contemporary challenges are essential for their wellbeing. It is seen as essential to invest in programmes that equip youth with the necessary skills to navigate these issues effectively.

Many of our community's children attend its Jewish schools, which offer a blend of the national curriculum, Jewish teachings, and British values. The government has recognised the success of Jewish faith schools, as evidenced by their consistent high rankings in school performance tables.

Despite ongoing economic challenges, it is essential to ensure that children who are entitled to free school meals receive kosher food. To reduce the adverse impact on budgets of the cost of these meals, the Department for Education needs to be lobbied to increase funding for kosher food in schools.

Holocaust education should remain a curriculum priority in Jewish schools. We are fortunate to have in West Yorkshire the Holocaust Centre North, which is a unique education facility and museum housed on the campus of the University of Huddersfield.

In addition, collaborative efforts with organisations like the Northern Holocaust Education Group and the Anne Frank Trust continue to play a crucial role in educating students about the Holocaust and promoting tolerance and anti-prejudice values. It is essential to ensure that all students can engage in the Holocaust education initiatives, including participating in Holocaust Memorial Day. Championed by the previous Lord Mayor of Leeds, live online tours for schools of the Auschwitz death camp were recently piloted in Leeds to provide interactive insights into the atrocities of the Holocaust.

PLEDGES

Jewish education is essential for preserving heritage, imparting moral values, fostering spiritual growth and tolerance, and promoting community cohesion.

We commit to:

- Advocating for Jewish schools and planning for their future growth.
- Lobbying for increased funding for kosher school meals.
- Encouraging participation in Holocaust education initiatives.
- Sustaining funding for Jewish youth organisations.

HOUSING AND PLANNING

Housing remains a challenge for the Jewish community in Leeds. Despite the provision of social housing by the Leeds Jewish Housing Association (LJHA), for many people, finding a suitable and affordable home remains difficult owing to the high cost of properties and rents in wards where essential amenities for Jewish life, such as kosher shops, synagogues, and Jewish schools, are located. This has resulted in the community expanding beyond its traditional boundaries.

Efforts to increase housing supply, to reform rental sectors to provide long-term security for tenants, and to offer flexible homeownership schemes are necessary.

Those households with children or multi-generational needs face additional challenges owing to a lack of appropriate housing stock. Working with the local planning authorities is crucial to tackling these issues. Efforts to increase housing supply, to reform rental sectors to provide long-term security for tenants, and to offer flexible homeownership schemes are necessary. The LJHA plays a vital role in securing funding and developing housing plans tailored to community needs.

Recently, an eruv, a physical boundary delineating an area of the city in which certain actions otherwise prohibited on the Sabbath can be carried out, was established with the help of the Leeds City Council and other partners. For those who follow the laws of the Sabbath, the eruv has allowed them to attend synagogue services and other communal events.

Maintaining connections with other Jewish communities in England facilitates the sharing of ideas and best practices to ensure the provision of high-quality housing options.

Ultimately, housing policy must recognise the social value of community housing and allocate resources effectively to address housing needs. By working collaboratively with various stakeholders, including planners, grant-givers, and policy makers, the community can strive to ensure that everyone has access to suitable and affordable housing options.



PLEDGES

To address the specific housing needs of the Jewish community whilst considering the needs of our non-Jewish neighbours.

We commit to:

- Advocating for new affordable housing projects near Jewish communal facilities.
- Encouraging investment in affordable housing initiatives for purchase and rent located near Jewish communal facilities.
- Ensuring that housing remains accessible to and appropriate for all members of the Jewish community.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Jewish community is renowned as one of the most vibrant and well-established faith groups in Leeds. However, it faces a new demographic challenge. More than 40% of its members are aged over 50, a figure significantly higher than the city's average.

Many elderly members of the Jewish community prefer to remain in their own homes and to access support services principally through the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board (LJWB) and its domiciliary care provider, Moorcare.

The closure of nursing care home adds to the challenges. New housing initiatives must be culturally sensitive and inclusive to prevent prejudice. Promoting single-link housing can enhance community health. As the community ages, ensuring suitable housing options for older individuals becomes increasingly important.

In addition to its work with the elderly, the LJWB has developed a comprehensive one-stop shop for care services for all ages, including mental health support, tailored to religious and cultural sensitivities.

Many organisations within the Leeds Jewish community play a crucial role in promoting preventive health measures, addressing loneliness, tackling mental health issues, and providing advice, support, and care. Support for those under 18 is also provided by The Zone youth centre.

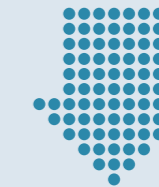
Continued investment in these organisations is essential to ensure the sustained delivery of valuable services. Most rely on volunteers to support the delivery of their services. Adequate training and empowerment of volunteers are essential to meet the increasing demands on these organisations.

Jewish care providers advocate for fair wages and conditions in line with standards such as the real Living Wage.

The provision of health and social care services relies heavily on a skilled, well-trained, and fairly compensated workforce. Jewish care providers advocate for fair wages and conditions in line with standards such as the real Living Wage. Securing fair funding is crucial to bridge the gap between the actual cost of care and available resources, especially for culturally and religiously sensitive services and end-of-life care.

Given the critical importance of mental health services, effective collaboration and funding from statutory partners are essential to meet the growing demand, particularly amongst younger members of the community. Culturally and religiously sensitive services are key to improving the uptake of support and enhancing health and wellbeing outcomes.

Ensuring the safeguarding of individuals is a top priority for all communal organisations. They are committed to upholding the highest standards through robust training, policies, and adherence to local and national guidelines.



PLEDGES

To ensure the Leeds Jewish community has adequate social welfare provision.

We commit to:

- Recognising the increased costs of specialist Jewish social care provision and ensuring they are accounted for in state funding.
- Ensuring provision is made for residential care that recognises and meets the religious needs of Jewish residents.
- Advocating for adequate provision for mental health services.
- Requesting further support from government funding for the LJWB as the provision contributes to savings for the local councils.

CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND SOCIAL ACTION

There have been Jews living in Leeds and Yorkshire for many centuries. Jewish people and their communal organisations continue to play an important role in the diverse fabric of Leeds and the region. They are dedicated to engaging with and supporting the broader society whilst maintaining their distinctive traditions and heritage.

We understand that our culture and heritage have greatly influenced who we are and what we value. We are dedicated to preserving and celebrating our festivals, cultural traditions, rituals, and customs. We believe that building a strong sense of identity is vital for the health and unity of our community.

The community is committed to making our cultural heritage accessible to all, regardless of background or affiliation.

We prioritise education and awareness programmes to ensure that future generations continue to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. This includes supporting educational initiatives in schools, universities, and community centres, as well as promoting dialogue and understanding with non-Jewish communities. The community is committed to making our cultural heritage accessible to all, regardless of background or affiliation. This includes providing resources and support for individuals with disabilities, as well as reaching out to and working with marginalised groups.

The Jewish community in Leeds and Yorkshire continues to thrive, enriching the lives of both its members and the wider community. We believe in the importance of fostering connections between people of different faiths and backgrounds, and public events and festivals serve as valuable opportunities for engagement and mutual understanding. We celebrate the diversity of our community and support public events and festivals that promote engagement between people of different faiths. The iconic annual Menorah lighting on the steps of Leeds Town Hall, often surrounded by the Christmas market, is a testament to this and a symbol of our commitment to celebrating Jewish culture whilst fostering unity and inclusivity.

Social action is a core value of our faith. Volunteering holds significant importance in Jewish culture, and in 2018 the LJRC received a grant of £193,000 to establish initiatives aimed at coordinating volunteering and engagement. Volunteers serve as the backbone of our organisations, acting as lay leaders and providing essential services. They play a central role in our community, offering their time and expertise freely to support various initiatives and endeavours for individuals to give back and make a positive impact on society.

We embrace the principle of Tikkun Olam, or “repairing the world”, as a guiding principle for our social action initiatives.

We recognise the potential of volunteering to bridge divides and promote understanding amongst different faith communities. Therefore, we adopt a larger focus on the idea of a shared volunteer community, where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to serve and enrich communal culture. We embrace the principle of Tikkun Olam, or “repairing the world”, as a guiding principle for our social action initiatives. We will strive to address social injustices, promote environmental sustainability, and support those in need, both within our community and beyond.

There is a rich and diverse cultural and social scene for Jewish people in Leeds. The community is outward and positive. The annual “A time to say thank you” project and other Mitzvah Day activities are exemplars of positive citizenship.

We understand that responding to complex social issues requires collaboration and partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders. We will actively seek out opportunities to collaborate with national and local government agencies, non-profit organisations, and other community groups to maximise our impact and effectiveness.



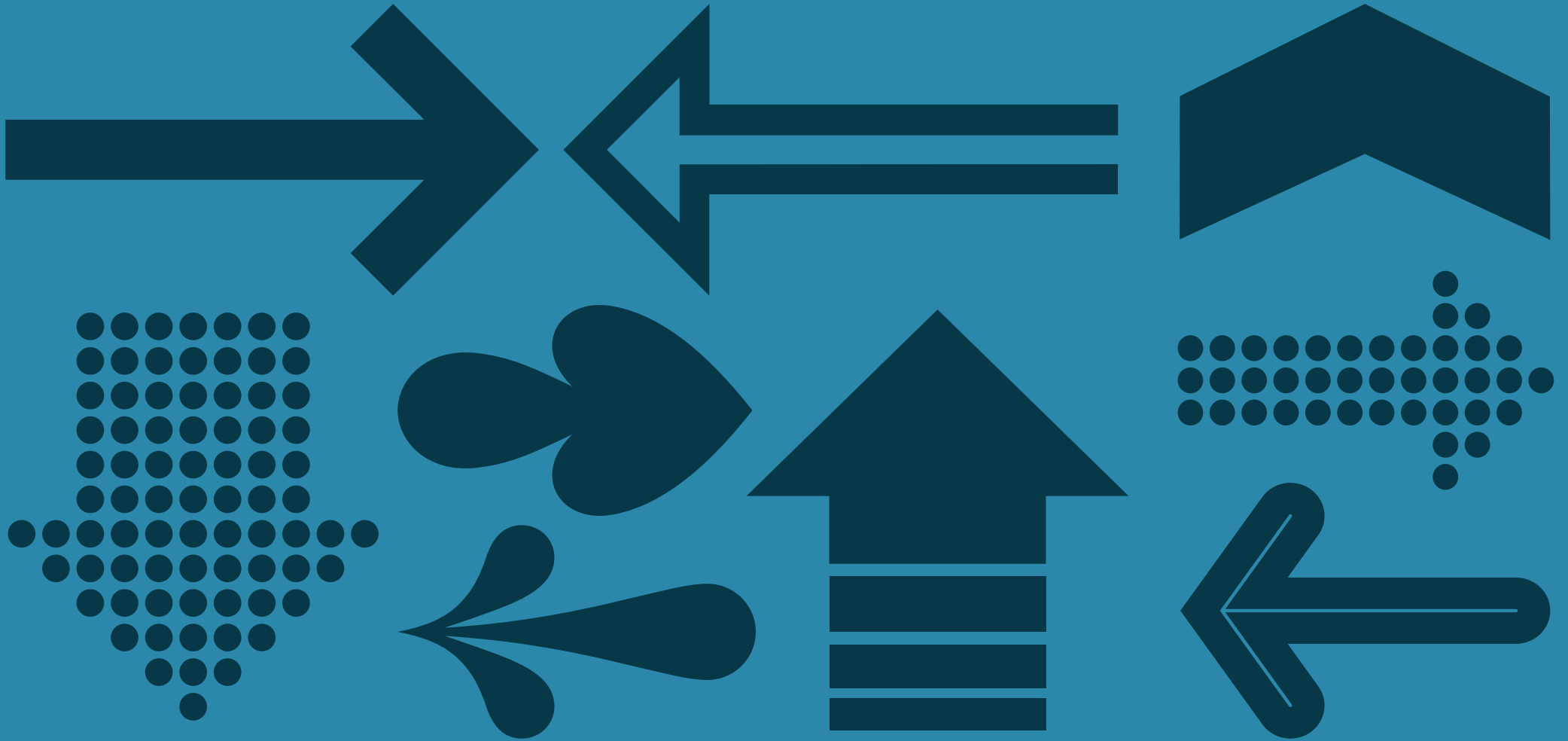
PLEDGES

Our commitment to culture, heritage, and social action is a testament to the values that define us as a community by preserving our cultural heritage, engaging in social action, and working together to build a better future.

We commit to:

- Fully supporting faith-based events that celebrate Jewish culture and history in Leeds and Yorkshire, including the public Menorah lightings, ensuring their continued success and prominence in our region.
- Endorsing, encouraging, and supporting Jewish charities engaged in promoting intercommunity, interfaith relationships and social action within the region, and advocating for their recognition and support by local government and other agencies to further their impactful work in fostering understanding and cooperation.
- Advocating for the inclusion of the Jewish community and its history within the Culture Strategy for West Yorkshire, ensuring that our heritage and contributions are recognised and celebrated alongside other cultural communities in the region.





Leeds Jewish Representative Council

Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Community
Centre, 311 Stonegate Road,
Leeds LS17 6AZ

Email: info@ljrc.org
www.ljrc.org

Jewish Leadership Council

Shield House, Harmony Way,
London, NW4 2BZ

Email: info@thejlc.org
www.thejlc.org