



KeshetUK Annual Review

October 2015 –
September 2016

A word from our trustees...



Benjamin Ellis

People often ask us if the work KeshetUK does is difficult.

The answer is yes.

It's not because people don't want to meet with us to learn how to be more inclusive: they do. And it's not because of the long hours our passionate and committed volunteers give, month after month.



Alma Reisel

No. What's hard is the stories. Hearing from LGBT people how they have been hurt and felt excluded. Parents of LGBT people talking about the problems their families have faced. Teachers and youth leaders struggling to deal with bullying.



Dave Shaw

So KeshetUK goes on, working for a world where no one has to choose between their Jewish and LGBT identity.

Silence is the enemy of inclusion. One of the ways KeshetUK works is to help make sure the Jewish community can hear those voices that have often gone unheard. So a highlight was the Transgender Jewish Voices session we ran at Limmud Conference 2015. Attended by over 100 delegates, it was standing room only.

This year's highlights also included our workshop with Jewish Care, the Jewish community's largest care services provider. Older people deserve to feel included every bit as much as the young. We were moved by Jewish Care's commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of LGBT people.

Finally, it was with special pride that we marched as the biggest Jewish presence ever at Pride in London – around 160 of us, some joining after a special Pride Shabbat morning service at West London Synagogue.

A low moment for LGBT people was the massacre of LGBT people at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. As we all grasped for words that could express our horror and sadness, UK Jewish leaders were clear about the special role they must play in fighting homophobia:

“Religious people, especially clergy have a particular responsibility to safeguard LGBT people because I believe religious texts have been misused to justify homophobic and transphobic discrimination.”

Rabbi Laura Janner Klausner, Senior Rabbi to the Movement for Reform Judaism

“We must also be honest enough to recognise that there are places where the scourge of homophobia persists, even in our own communities, and that is totally unacceptable. Where that hate is religiously motivated, faith leaders and faith communities carry a particular responsibility to act.”

Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Next year KeshetUK will be even more ambitious. We have recruited a Director of Programmes to coordinate, support and lead our activities. This means we can increase the number and breadth of organisations we work with, expand our work beyond London and work more deeply with organisations to embed LGBT inclusion. We are actively recruiting and supporting more volunteers and expanding our Board of Trustees.

Thanks to your support, we know that this coming year fewer people will have to choose between their LGBT and Jewish identity. Let's make it none.

Benjamin, Alma and Dave Trustees, KeshetUK

What has KeshetUK achieved in 2015/16?

Working with synagogues and rabbis

Synagogues are important centres of Jewish life and experience. KeshetUK is committed to working with all Jewish communities and rabbis, both traditional and progressive, to support them to identify and reach their LGBT-inclusion goals.

In 2015/16, KeshetUK:

- Hosted an evening panel discussion about LGBT Jewish experiences at the largest synagogue in Europe, Edgware and District Reform Synagogue, attended by 50 members
- Co-produced an educational evening for 30 people with ConnectUS¹, an event supported by three major London United synagogues
- Hosted a discussion on LGBT inclusion with Muswell Hill United Synagogue board
- Agreed a three-year charity partnership with Finchley Reform Synagogue, supporting KeshetUK's inclusion work and celebrating diversity in the Reform Movement and beyond
- Co-ordinated the first-ever hosting of *Parents of Gays and Lesbians* group in the home of a United Synagogue rabbi
- Delivered a series of LGBT-inclusion workshops to:
 - A group of eight rabbis from the Assembly of Reform Rabbis
 - Senior teams from Western Marble Arch and New West End synagogues
 - Aish UK national leadership and campus rabbis

Working with schools

Jewish schools should be safe places where students are not subjected to homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying, where all

young people can thrive and learn to live in a diverse, inclusive world.

KeshetUK has continued to deliver both staff training and programming directly for students, has expanded its work to include new secondary schools, and for the first time has worked with a Jewish primary school. In 2015/16, KeshetUK has:

- Delivered educational programming at JCoSS – pluralist Jewish secondary school – including multiple sessions to around 1000 Year 7,8,9 and 10 students during *Pride in London 2016* week
- Run a session for over 200 Year 10 and 11 students on LGBT inclusion for King Solomon High School LGBT inclusion week
- Developed and delivered a novel, whole-staff, inset training programme for Akiva primary school
- Delivered CPD-accredited anti-bullying training to Jewish secondary and primary day school teachers, headteachers, and community educators in partnership with Stonewall
- Published a set of Jewish LGBT educational resources² for LGBT History Month³, including
 - Denominational perspectives on LGBT inclusion
 - Transgender Jewish voices
 - Life for LGBT people in Israel



¹ <http://www.connectuslondon.co.uk/>

² <http://www.keshetuk.org/free-resources.html/>

³ <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/>

“We at Akiva School have been proud partners with KeshetUK for over a year...I would recommend that all Jewish schools and organisations work with KeshetUK to help build a brighter and more inclusive environment for the Jewish community.”

Mark Garfield, Assistant Head/Inclusion Manager, Akiva School

Working with university students

For people living away from home for the first time, it is important that every campus J-Soc is able to provide a secure, supportive environment where every Jewish student, including those identifying as LGBT, can feel welcome and safe.

Following on with last year’s work with national and local student leadership, and delivering training to Jewish Chaplaincy rabbis, in 2015/16 KeshetUK:

- Delivered LGBT-inclusion training to seven new members of Union Jewish Students (UJS) core national team at start of their one-year tenure
- Delivered LGBT-inclusion training to 25 representatives from newly elected local Jewish Society committees attending annual UJS winter summit
- Assisted Leeds Jewish Society (JSoc) in becoming a more LGBT-inclusive place, delivering an introductory inclusion workshop attended by 20 students
- With Jewish Women’s Aid, co-produced *First Dates* healthy relationships session at Unifest pre-University event at JW3, attended by 10 participants

Collaborating with the wider Jewish community

KeshetUK works to ensure that Jewish organisations are fully inclusive of the whole community, so that their services and spaces meet the needs of LGBT people. In 2015/16, KeshetUK:

- Delivered LGBT-inclusion workshop for Raphael Jewish Counselling service, attended by 30 trustees, staff, counsellors and volunteers
- Delivered LGBT-inclusion workshop for Jewish Care, attended by around 30 people, mainly service managers

- Initiated a programme of work through the Leeds Jewish Representative Council, working with Orthodox and Reform Jewish communities, and cross-communal organisations
- Held a Chanukah celebration in Parliament hosted by Mike Freer, MP, attended by 80 communal leaders and KeshetUK supporters, featuring Baroness Featherstone as guest speaker⁴



Students and KeshetUK volunteers at King Solomon High School

“KeshetUK was an integral part of our LGBT week. The team helped facilitate mature discussions amongst our students which they valued tremendously. KeshetUK did a great job in explaining to students that you can be gay and still have a Jewish identity.”

Sam Walters, Deputy Headteacher at King Solomon High School

⁴ <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/12/10/lgbt-jewish-group-keshet-holds-annual-chanukah-celebration-in-parliament/>

“KeshetUK is a great example of how an LGBT group can exist within their community and accomplish great things. They understand that the key to progress is having conversations and meeting people where they are. They focus on discussions with key individuals, operating from within the community so LGBT people do not need to choose between their community and their faith. Since partnering with KeshetUK last year I have been consistently impressed with their professionalism and dedication in furthering LGBT rights within the Jewish community.”

Dominic Arnall, Head of Projects and Programmes, Stonewall

Limmud Conference programming

The annual Limmud Conference brings together over 2,500 people of all ages from across the globe, taking people one step further on their Jewish journeys. In 2015/16, KeshetUK delivered sessions including:

- *My Jewish Transgender Journey* – two volunteers talked about their experiences with around 100 delegates present
- *A man should not wear the apparel of a woman: Does the Torah ban cross dressing?* – text-based study session, around 50 delegates participated
- *Approaches to Leviticus* – text-based study session
- *What have we done: Reflections on the attacks at Jerusalem Pride* – panel discussion
- *A history of Jews in LGBT Liberation movements*
- *Queer Social Space* (two sessions), attended by over 20 people each night



Panel discussion at EDRS. L-R: Alma Reisel, Yael Shafritz, Gabriel Davis-Marks and Adam Cohen



Chanukah celebration 2015 in Parliament

Emerging as an integral part of the wider LGBT community

Stonewall, the LGBT rights charity, works so LGBT communities can continue to find ways to flourish, and individuals can reach their full potential. In 2015/16, KeshetUK became an accredited Stonewall Training Partner, and volunteers have spoken at Stonewall events:

- Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu, KeshetUK volunteer, spoke at Stonewall’s first-ever multi-faith seminar bringing together religious leaders to discuss how religious communities can tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
- Benjamin Ellis, KeshetUK Trustee, presented at Stonewall *Education for All* conference

Supporting Jewish LGBT inclusion overseas

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has funded KeshetUK to pilot delivery of LGBT inclusion programming across its flagship Eastern European projects. Many session participants had never thought about LGBT issues, or knowingly had contact with LGBT people, and were from countries with significant LGBT-phobia (and anti-Semitism). In 2015/16, Keshet UK sent volunteers overseas and:

- At Geshet conference in Greece, led panel discussing Jewish community LGBT-inclusion to 70 leaders and delivered LGBT inclusion training to 15 young adult leaders from around 30 countries
- At Camp Szarvas, Hungary, trained over 100 youth leaders from over 20 countries in Eastern Europe and India with indirect reach to over 1,800 young people who attend summer camps there each year

“KeshetUK demonstrates the best of bringing together Jewish values and a commitment to equality and diversity with training and talks that not only engage people with important messages on inclusion, but also offer practical and relevant tools and tips for turning words into action.”

David Brown, Executive Director, Union of Jewish Students



Pride in London, 2016

Jewish presence at Pride in London

Pride is an opportunity for LGBT Jews to come together and celebrate their combined LGBT and Jewish identity in this public celebration of London's diversity.

This year, KeshetUK coordinated the largest ever Jewish presence at Pride in London, with 160 people attending⁵. Alongside KeshetUK volunteers were representatives of other Jewish LGBT organisations including the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group, Gay Jews in London, Young Jewish Lesbians, Parents of Gays and Lesbians and Beit Klal Yisrael.



Jewish and Muslim activists enjoying Pride in London

⁵ <http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/in-pictures-largest-jewish-delegation-celebrates-london-pride/>

Volunteer development

At the heart of KeshetUK is a passionate and committed group of volunteers who support community engagement, programme development and delivery, fundraising and so much more. To support our volunteers, in 2015/16 KeshetUK:

- Held a full day volunteer induction for 10 new volunteers
- Trained 12 established volunteers to deliver our core curriculum, supporting quality and consistency of training
- Hosted a half-day fundraising training for eight volunteers to create a case for support

“As someone with a background in training, I was incredibly impressed by the content and structure of the [KeshetUK training] event. As a gay Jewish man, it was empowering in so many ways, and greatly contributed towards enabling conversations that mean I no longer choose or split my identity in the same way.”

David, Raphael training participant

Media and publicity

Media

In 2015/16, KeshetUK has increased its presence and media coverage in the main UK Jewish media outlets, including:

- Two KeshetUK volunteers published pieces in the JC following the massacre at the Pulse nightclub, *Orlando: I'm gay and I'm Jewish – please tell me you care*¹
- A KeshetUK trustee had an article published by Israeli news site Haaretz: *As a gay, Orthodox Jew, I always thought I was Passover's wicked son*²
- Coverage of KeshetUK's support for King Solomon High School's LGBT Week³
- Following a workshop with KeshetUK, Rabbi Yoni Birnbaum of Hadley Jewish Community, reflects on inclusive language: *Importance of being inclusive*⁴
- Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu, KeshetUK volunteer, reflects on the need to bring together Jewish and LGBT identities: *No one ought to feel they need to hide in the closet*⁵
- A KeshetUK trustee is interviewed on BBC Radio London programme, *Inspirit*⁶
- A KeshetUK volunteer tells her story: *My Jewish Transgender Journey*⁷
- A news feature on the ConnectUS panel including interviews with KeshetUK panelists⁸
- Cumulatively, KeshetUK's online pieces have had around 5,000 views, at least 2,500 of those unique

¹ <http://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/lifestyle-features/159423/im-gay-and-im-jewish-please-tell-me-you-care>

² <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/jewish-world-opinions/.premium-1.716713>

³ <http://www.thejc.com/campus/education-features/151109/flying-rainbow-flag-king-solomon-high>

⁴ <http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/comment/161296/importance-being-inclusive>

⁵ <http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/comment/153781/no-one-ought-feel-they-need-hide-closet>

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/poohgmtl>

⁷ <http://www.thejc.com/blogs/isabella-segal/my-jewish-transgender-journey>

⁸ <http://www.thejc.com/node/163661>

“Words have real power... The truth of this was brought home to me recently during a workshop with KeshetUK... No one should ever face dislike or prejudice within the Jewish community because of their sexuality.”

Rabbi Yoni Birnbaum, Hadley Wood Jewish Community
Jewish Chronicle, 28 July 2016

“Only last month I met a group of LGBT Jewish teenagers, of a variety of Jewish backgrounds, who didn't feel they would be welcome in their own synagogues.”

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu, Director of youth, educational and development at Finchley Reform Synagogue
Jewish Chronicle, 24 February 2016



Jewish Chronicle, 17/06/16

Website and social media

Through its website and social media presence, KeshetUK stays in touch with its supporters and reaches new audiences in the UK Jewish community and beyond. In 2015/16, KeshetUK has:

- Maintained a website with 5,508 unique users and 12,805 page views
- Reached fresh audiences with 83% of web visitors being new
- Attracted international interest with 31% of web traffic from overseas
- Increased social media following with 848 followers on Twitter and 904 Facebook likes

Fundraising, finances and organisational development

Organisational structure

In 2015/16, KeshetUK was run by its three founder trustees - who were also acting as the interim executive team as well as its first Director of Programmes, Neil Levitan.

The team was supported by a core of 15 volunteers who delivered KeshetUK's programming and helping with the running of the organisation.



Neil Levitan

Neil is an experienced community development professional with a passion for tackling violence and discrimination through building inclusive communities. In his most recent post, Neil led the inclusion and outreach team at the Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre and previously managed numerous projects at JCORE and JAT.

Finances, fundraising and supporters

KeshetUK has been a registered charity since September 2015, and relies on the generosity of donors to provide the funds needed to realise the vision of the full inclusion of LGBT people in all aspects of UK Jewish life.

In 2015/16, Keshet UK has:

- Attracted donations (including Gift Aid) to the value of over £11,000
- Received £10,000 seed funding from JHub
- Realised 90% of income from regular scheduled donations of net monthly value £905
- Broadened its donor base to nearly 75 different donors
- Secured £3,000 award from the Shores Charitable Trust
- Agreed three-year partnership with Finchley Reform Synagogue, supporting KeshetUK's inclusion work and celebrating diversity in the Reform Movement and beyond

To **get involved** in any of our projects, **start a conversation** with your organisation or **make a donation**, please get in touch.

"This year, KeshetUK supported Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians by coordinating meetings between our group and the rabbinic community. We have really valued their inspirational leadership which has motivated us to be activists for LGBT inclusion!"

Alison Walsh, Co-ordinator of Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians



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