



KeshetUK
Annual Review
September 2016 –
August 2017

A word from our trustees...



Allison Zionts

When people talk about Jewish attitudes to LGBT+ people, they often focus on the problems. Of course KeshetUK doesn't ignore these. But our tradition can also inspire us to pursue LGBT+ inclusion. The Torah calls out to us to create a fairer world – *Justice, justice you shall pursue*. These words stir us emotionally – but more than that, they are a call to action.



Alma Reisel

KeshetUK has directly worked with over 1,500 young people in Jewish schools this year, sharing ideas like these. Five youth organisations have worked with us this year, making sure their leaders are ready to create Jewish communities that are inclusive of LGBT+ people and their families. We continue to build links with synagogues and rabbis across UK Jewish communities, and this year KeshetUK supported dialogue between United Synagogue rabbis and parents of LGBT+ people. And while some of the work continues behind the scenes, many Jewish community organisations are proud to work with KeshetUK, sharing the vision that no one should ever have to choose between their LGBT+ and Jewish identity.



Benjamin Ellis



Caroline Beck



Dave Shaw

Jewish communities should be nurturing, warm and welcoming places. Places where we can respect, enjoy and shape our heritage.

Places where we can be ourselves, without shame. KeshetUK was proud of JW3, the Jewish community centre, for creating the first ever UK Jewish LGBT+ festival, GayW3, this year. We have heard shameful things said this year too, including some hostile reactions following Rabbi Joe Dweck's public lecture about Judaism and homosexuality. Once again, we saw there are those who would try to force people to choose between their Jewish and LGBT+ identity.

With your support, our work will continue to make this better. Demand continues to grow for our services. We have been successful in fundraising and employed our first executive director. In the year ahead our professional staff of two people, working with a wonderful group of volunteers, will deliver our largest ever programme. Together, we will work for Jewish communities that are fully inclusive of LGBT+ people and their families.

Allison, Alma, Benjamin, Caroline and Dave Trustees, KeshetUK

What does KeshetUK stand for?

KeshetUK's vision is of a world where no one has to choose between their LGBT+ and Jewish identity. Our mission is to achieve the full inclusion of LGBT+ people in all aspects of Jewish life.

KeshetUK engages schools, synagogues, university societies, youth movements and community organisations about the importance of LGBT+ inclusion. KeshetUK then enables these organisations to become more inclusive of LGBT+ people through education and training.

What has KeshetUK achieved in 2016/17?

Working with synagogues and rabbis

Synagogues are important centres of Jewish life and experience. Depending on their understanding of Biblical texts, some synagogues can be non-inclusive of LGBT+ people; at other times synagogues may want to be inclusive, but struggle to find ways to do this within their tradition.

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 2016/17, KeshetUK:

- Delivered inclusion training for rabbis and senior leadership at Muswell Hill United Synagogue
- Facilitated interactions between Orthodox rabbis and members of *Parents of Jewish Gays and Lesbians*, exploring the impact of LGBT+ inclusion on families of LGBT+ people
- Presented on LGBT+ inclusive programming at Alyth Gardens Reform Synagogue youth leadership course
- Ran a workshop at Kingston Liberal Youth Shabbat, exploring how bar/bat mitzvah class participants can make their synagogue more inclusive
- Presented about the experiences of LGBT+ people during the Holocaust, and participated in a panel discussion on contemporary global persecution of LGBT+ people, as part of the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony at Finchley Progressive Synagogue
- Met regularly with the Office of the Chief Rabbi to update on activities and explore areas of common interest

Working with schools

All young people in our community deserve the opportunity to achieve their potential free from bullying, discrimination and fear. 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.

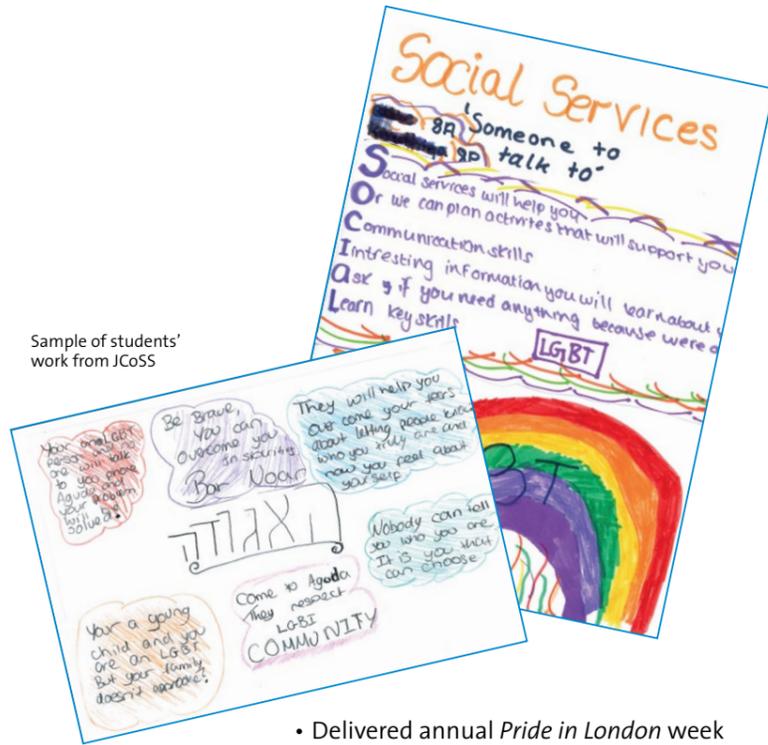
Through schools KeshetUK can reach a large proportion of the Jewish community to promote LGBT+ inclusion, at a time when young people are forming views about gender, sexuality and community. KeshetUK continues to deliver both staff training and programming directly for students and in 2016/17:

- Produced and delivered a programme of workshops and assemblies for LGBT+ History Month, reaching over 700 students at Kantor King Solomon High School
- Developed new LGBT+ themed Purim curriculum for Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS), delivered in partnership with RSY, LJY and Noam youth organisations to 180 Year 11 students



KeshetUK volunteer Ben Kaye inspires students at JCoSS

Sample of students' work from JCoSS



- Delivered annual *Pride in London* week programme at JCoSS, reaching around 800 Year 7–11 students
- Continued to support the JCoSS Rosh Chodesh programme, with 60 students exploring how power and privilege enable or prevent LGBT+ inclusion
- Piloted a drop-in advice surgery at JCoSS, visited by 20 teachers seeking advice and support for LGBT+ inclusion in their daily school activities

Working with youth organisations

Youth organisations are an important setting where many young Jewish people discover and explore their identity, where lifelong behaviours and future leaders are forged. The informal settings of activities, often without adult participation and away from home, may increase risk of bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

KeshetUK works with Jewish youth organisations to promote LGBT+ inclusion as an important value, supporting leaders to create nurturing communities for LGBT+ people and their families. In 2016/17, KeshetUK:

- Provided an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop for senior leadership of youth organisations including:
 - Tribe, the United Synagogue youth organisation
 - Federation of Zionist Youth (FZY)
 - Bnei Akiva (BA)

- Ran an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop for welfare officers at the Zionist Youth Council (ZYC)
- Delivered 'LGBT+ inclusion basics' seminars to summer camp leaders including:
 - 10 Israel-tour leaders from Bnei Akiva
 - 60 summer-camp leaders from Noam (Masorti Youth)
 - 10 summer-camp leaders from Liberal Jewish Youth (LJY)
- Enabled a KeshetUK volunteer to share their story of living as a bi person in the Jewish community at the LJY annual veida (conference) of 20 people
- Ran a seminar for B'nai B'rith Youth Organisation (BBYO) exploring LGBT+ activism, inclusive programming and creating brave spaces

Working with university students

Many young people find university a critical formative period, where they explore their sexual, gender and Jewish identity. For people living away from home for the first time, it is important that every campus Jewish Society (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 from previous years' work on campus, engaging with national student leadership and delivering training to Jewish Chaplaincy rabbis, in 2016/17 KeshetUK:

- Delivered an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop to Union of Jewish Students (UJS) head office team as part of annual induction
- Delivered an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop to 10 representatives from newly elected local J-Soc committees attending the annual UJS summit

"This was some of the most important and relevant training I've had in the Movement world."

FZY movement worker



Chanukah celebration 2016 in Parliament

Working within the wider Jewish and LGBT+ communities

In the UK, Jewish communities provide a wide range of services, support and facilities. Rather than see these duplicated for LGBT+ people, Jewish communities should ensure that their provision is inclusive of LGBT+ people and their families, and meets their needs.

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, while supporting Jewish presence in LGBT+ spaces more generally. In 2016/17, KeshetUK:

- Delivered an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop to 20 people at the Reshet *Healthy Relationships* conference, and facilitated a speaker talking about their experience being a young Jewish trans person
- Delivered an LGBT+ inclusion workshop at Redbridge Jewish Community Centre (JCC) to 25 youth worker staff at *Summerworld*, the JCC's four-week summer programme, attended by children and young people
- Delivered an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop for 8 Moishe House staff and house members, and spoke at a Moishe House Friday night dinner event
- Met with the leadership of the Jewish mental health organisation, JAMI, to discuss service provision for LGBT+ people and their families

"It has been a pleasure working with KeshetUK over the past year. They have been able to provide our Movement with relevant inclusivity training and to provide advice on how to make Bnei Akiva as safe a space as possible."

Joe Boxer, Mazkir, Bnei Akiva UK



Dominic Arnall and Sidonie Bertrand-Sheldon of Stonewall



Benjamin Ellis at Manchester Day Limmud

- Attended Limmud Manchester, hosting a stall, running an LGBT+ inclusion workshop and meeting with local Orthodox and Reform rabbis
- Coordinated participation of 200 people in the largest ever Jewish presence at Pride in London
- Participated in the 'Being an LGBT Person of Faith in the Workplace' panel at Stonewall's Workplace Conference
- Attended a reception at 10 Downing Street to celebrate the LGBT+ community, hosted by the Prime Minister
- Held the annual KeshetUK celebration in Parliament hosted by Mike Freer, MP, attended by 80 communal leaders and KeshetUK supporters



Pride in London, 2017



Right: Neil Levitan with KeshetUK volunteer coordinator Emma Grant preparing for Pride in London

Left: LGBT+ Jewish Narratives panelists at Limmud Conference 2016: Avner Bernheimer – screenwriter, Dave Shaw – KeshetUK, Dalia Fleming – KeshetUK, Keren David – Jewish Chronicle and Alison Walsh – Parents of Jewish Gays & Lesbians



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 2016/17 KeshetUK coordinated a full programme of LGBT+ activities at Limmud Conference with highlights including:

- Panel discussion on “Should Jewish Schools be forced to be inclusive” attended by 80 people, jointly hosted with Stonewall
- Film-based discussion “Behind the X-men: exploring gender and sexuality” attended by over 200 people, jointly led by Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum (Dean, London School of Jewish Studies) and Professor Nathan Abrahams (Film Studies, Bangor University), along with KeshetUK volunteers
- Panel presentation about LGBT+ Jewish narratives attended by 70 people
- Session on transgender Jewish voices attended by 40 people
- Session on LGBT+ education and activism, and creating an LGBT+ social space at Limmud

Beyond the United Kingdom

KeshetUK has become known and respected by Jewish communities overseas for its LGBT+ inclusion programmes. In 2016/17, KeshetUK has facilitated workshops for Jewish people based in mainland Europe, such as:

- Delivering a sponsored LGBT+ inclusion training workshop to 11 Jewish community leaders in Budapest, as part of their first ever community LGBT+ event, *Opening the gates*
- Running a seminar on gender and sexuality for 15 leaders from the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) London event: *Sex and the Community: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in the Jewish World*

Volunteer recruitment and 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 2016/17 KeshetUK:

- Held two full-day volunteer induction programmes for 13 new potential volunteers
- Trained 5 established volunteers to deliver our core curriculum, to ensure quality and consistency
- Initiated work-experience and internship schemes, and welcomed our first recruits for both
- Maintained a core of 15 volunteers who regularly deliver the programme and support administrative and fundraising activities
- Created a comprehensive volunteer development programme to support and nurture KeshetUK volunteers, with support of its first volunteer coordinator

Benjamin Ellis celebrates Pride in Budapest before delivering inclusion training for the Jewish community



Media and publicity

Print and broadcast media

Issues affecting Jewish LGBT+ people continue to be topical in 2016/17. In the UK a row broke out following a lecture about homosexuality and Judaism by Rabbi Joe Dweck, Senior Rabbi of S&P Sephardi Community. The Jewish Community Centre for London, JW3, ran its first LGBT+ cultural festival – GayW3 – to warm welcome, yet some vocal opposition. Internationally, Star of David-adorned Pride flags were banned at the Chicago Dyke March, while in the UK KeshetUK coordinated the largest ever Jewish presence at Pride in London. KeshetUK has maintained a strong voice in UK Jewish communities, including:

- A KeshetUK trustee reflects on the furore surrounding Rabbi Dweck following his public lecture on Judaism and homosexuality¹
- Coverage of opposition to the GayW3 festival, with comment from KeshetUK^{2 3}
- A KeshetUK trustee reports on the experience of joining the annual Jerusalem March for Pride and Tolerance⁴
- A KeshetUK trustee shares their thoughts about the banning of Jewish symbols at the Chicago Dyke March^{5 6}
- The UK Jewish press reports on the Jewish presence at Pride in London, coordinated by KeshetUK⁷
- A KeshetUK trustee shares their feelings about contemporary Jewish LGBT+ life in Jewish Views podcast⁸

1 <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-real-abomination-is-the-vitriol-directed-at-rabbi-dweck/>

2 <http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/lgbt-fury-after-orthodox-rabbis-call-for-jw3-boycott/>

3 http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2017/07/24/rabbis-call-for-boycott-of-centre-after-it-holds-forbidden-and-condemned-lgbt-event/?utm_source=PNT&utm_content=JJ

4 <https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/pride-was-quiet-tearful-and-under-armed-guard-1.442591>

5 <https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/pride-it-s-hard-to-feel-it-1.441842>

6 <http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/largest-ever-jewish-delegation-attends-london-pride-parade/>

7 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/more-than-200-jews-attend-london-pride-march-in-largest-ever-show-of-support-1.441257>

8 <https://soundcloud.com/thejewishviews/tjv14072017>

- A KeshetUK trustee reflects on how much more UK Jewish communities need to do, even 50 years after the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales⁹
- The press reports the OFSTED findings that some Jewish schools are failing to meet national guidelines on teaching about LGBT+ inclusion¹⁰
- A KeshetUK trustee makes some LGBT+ inclusion recommendations on a guest blog on the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) website¹¹
- KeshetUK’s director of programmes highlights the problems facing young LGBT+ Jews in a guest blog for Reshet¹²
- A KeshetUK trustee in conversation with a KeshetUK supporter in a programme entitled ‘Wrestling with God’, on the BBC World Service¹³

Website and social media

KeshetUK stays in touch with its supporters and reaches new audiences in the UK Jewish community and beyond through its website and social media presence. In 2016/17, KeshetUK has:

- Achieved a 14% growth in social networks with 1030 likes on Facebook and 959 Twitter followers
- Maintained stable website engagement with approximately 12,500 page views, 4800 users and 78% returning visitors

9 <https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/pride-keshet-lgbt-1.441097>

10 <http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/British-Jewish-school-risks-closure-for-refusal-to-teach-LGBT-issues-498177>

11 http://www.thejlc.org/dave_shaw_we_have_to_be_honest_about_the_homophobia_biphobia_and_transphobia_that_exists_in_some_parts_of_the_jewish_community

12 <https://reshetnet.com/no-silences/>

13 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04bfm49>

As a gay Jew, I'm hurt by rabbis' silence

FIRST PERSON



▶ WHETHER IT be for Pesach, Shabbat, or any other of our multitude of chagim, I am blessed to have options

when it comes to places to eat – with my parents' usually being top of the list. For many of our community this is not an unusual situation, but for me that's where many of the similarities end.

There is always a tough decision: do I spend the festivities with my family, enjoying the Mizrahi food and traditions I grew up with, or do I spend it with my Jewish partner of multiple years whose only fault in my parents' eyes is being the same gender as me?

When I share anecdotes of this sort with friends – of all faiths and none – the usual response I get is bewilderment, followed by pity, and some expletive asking me to check what year we are in.

However this is the reality for many gay Jews from Orthodox and traditional families around the world.

We are the people that Rabbi Joseph Dweck recently spoke up for. Those of us that want a place in the Orthodox Jewish world, but are continually pushed out. Those of us who face a decision every day – to love our partners or our religion.

Hearing Rabbi Dweck's talk on Torah perspectives on homosexuality was a spark of light in the otherwise quiet darkness. A darkness that continues to this day.

While Rabbi Dweck has been attacked by several right-wing rabbis, the silence from many many more rabbis cuts deeper; rabbis who on many occasions – whether publicly or privately – have spoken up in support of a more inclusive modern Orthodox Jewish world. These rabbis seek not to change halacha – and nor should they – but do what is possible to make gay Jews feel welcome in the communities we grew up in, and which we long to be a part. But these rabbis are now silent.

So why aren't they speaking out? Is it fear of being collateral damage? Or do they not think this is the fight they should put themselves out for? Or even more worryingly, is the reason homophobia?

The damage that the witchhunt of Rabbi Dweck on the back of his talk is not only attacking a good man, but is making it that much harder to be a part of this community any longer.

The author is gay member of an Orthodox congregation in London. He has asked to remain anonymous

KeshetUK facilitated this person's struggle to be shared in the JC

Organisational development and sustainability

Organisational structure



Neil at Pride in London

KeshetUK is now in the second year of its JHub residency, the Jewish social action hub in London providing desk space and development support. In 2016/17, KeshetUK's programming activities were led by our director of programmes Neil Levitan, appointed July 2016 working part time, accompanied by a trustee board of six providing interim executive support. Neil is supported by Emma Grant who volunteers as KeshetUK's volunteer coordinator.

In August 2017, KeshetUK appointed its first executive director, Dalia Fleming, who will lead on shaping and delivering KeshetUK's strategy and securing the resources for sustainable growth to meet the need and demand for our work.

Dalia Fleming



Dalia Fleming

Dalia is an experienced trainer, facilitator and programme manager. Previously having worked for Local Government in areas ranging from child poverty policy to IT programme management, she has simultaneously been volunteering with KeshetUK to develop the Education piece. She is passionate about ensuring the experiences of British LGBT+ Jews are heard, understood, and included.

Finances, fundraising and supporters

KeshetUK has been a registered charity since September 2015, and relies primarily on the generosity of individual and institutional donors to provide the funds needed to realise the vision of a world where no one has to choose between their Jewish and LGBT+ identity.

Building on a growing base of regular monthly donors, the trustees focused on creating relationships with charitable trusts and foundations, while requesting fee-for-service from institutions. In 2016/17 KeshetUK received approximately £62,000 of income:

- A mix of regular and one off donations from supporters amounting to £14,000 after Gift Aid
- Secured £28,500 from grants and trusts, with major gifts from:
 - Pears Foundation – £10,000
 - Kobler Trust – £10,000
 - Jewish Youth Fund – £4,000
 - Shoresh Charitable Trust – £3,000
 - Harbour Foundation – £1,000
 - David Pearl Charitable Foundation – £500
- Our first legacy, with a gift of £10,000 thanks to the kindness and generosity of Rabbi Lionel Blue z'l whom we proudly remember
- £5,000 from Finchley Reform Synagogue's Yom Kippur Appeal as part of a three-year partnership
- Income of £4,000 in fees for services delivered



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