

The Chief Rabbi's Centre for Rabbinic Excellence (CRE) aims to transform houses of prayer into powerhouses of social, cultural, educational and religious excellence.

CRE helps communities offer innovative and fresh programming by providing advice, resources and funding, empowering them to engage with their members, build relationships and strengthen Jewish identity.

CRE began awarding grants in September 2014 and, during our first six months, we have supported over sixty projects across the UK.

In the pages that follow there are six examples of successful new programmes funded by CRE. The key to their success is that each programme was carefully constructed to reach untapped potential or re-energise parts of those communities.

Together, through CRE, we have the opportunity to engage with and inspire so many. It has been a wonderful first six months, and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Rachel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rachel Shababo

Director, CRE

The Chief Rabbi's Centre for Rabbinic Excellence.

Pinner United Synagogue

Event: THI Friday series

Objectives:

To attract young members to Shul on Friday night and create a new religious rhythm of going to Shul as a family at least once a month.

Evaluation from Rabbi Bergson:

THI Friday addresses an educational and spiritual need in Pinner and is already making a positive impact. Prior to THI Friday, there were almost no children and young families attending Kabbalat Shabbat. **We have now doubled the number attending a Kabbalat Shabbat style service.** We were delighted to see new faces and non-Shul members who live in the area.

Participant feedback:

- *I can now see the reality that Pinner could have a future with the younger generation.*
- *We do not normally attend on Friday night but as there was a family friendly service we decided to attend. It was a lovely service, and we will return again when the event is next on. Also the food was good - kids loved the sushi!*
- *It was good to show the kids, in a less formal atmosphere, the spiritual side of Shabbat.*
- *This is a way to get over 100 people in Shul on a Friday night who would not have been there otherwise.*



Birmingham Central Synagogue

Event: 'Jewish History in a Flash' Weekend

Objectives:

To improve the community's understanding of the history of the Jewish people and their heritage.

Evaluation from President, Geoffrey Clements:

Ronnie Halibard is a superb educator and over the weekend reached out to 130 people (including 30 students). His audio-visual presentation is absolutely brilliant and people came away with a much better perspective on Jewish history.

Participant feedback:

- *A very worthwhile experience with a wonderful speaker.*
- *It was exciting, interesting, stimulating and at times very funny.*
- *A great, informative and entertaining event.*
- *What more can you ask for on a Sunday morning!*



Northwood United Synagogue

Event: Melava Malka with comedian Ashley Blaker

Objectives:

To provide an entertaining, educational and social evening for the community.

Evaluation from Rabbi Freedman:

We wanted to move away from political speakers and make the event both fun and more directly related to Judaism. Ashley Blaker was the perfect speaker for this. He has a fascinating story and was extremely funny.

The atmosphere was fantastic and I managed to have a l'chaim with every table!

Participant feedback:

- *The Melava Malka was a great reminder of how good we are when we all get together.*
- *A very convivial and entertaining evening among friends, with an intriguing insight into the unlikely combination of an observant lifestyle with a career in TV.*
- *I now realise that we can get a large part of our community involved in Shul activities if we put on top quality events.*
- *The evening has been one of the best social evenings and people took away a 'feel good factor' that members have expressed to me since.*



Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation

Event: Shabbat with Rabbi Shalom Hammer

Objectives:

To create *achdut* within the community and engage people over Shabbat.

To create awareness and understanding of the role of an IDF army chaplain.

Evaluation from Rabbi Jesner:

This Shabbat brought people closer to Torah and an appreciation of how a Modern Orthodox Jew relates to Israel and Shabbat today. **It brought people into the community that otherwise would not have come.** Attendees were all impressed. It was wonderful that the youth came to the talk and stayed to eat and socialise.

Participant feedback:

- *It was interesting to hear from an Orthodox Rabbi living in Israel about his work educating secular members of society and reaching out.*
- *I gained perspective as to why I should support Israel.*
- *The speaker was inspirational and very interesting. I gained some fresh insight into Judaism and Israel.*
- *I have now experienced what our Shul can achieve with your support, so please keep it up!*
- *It is not always easy for our community to access these events and it is expensive. I am grateful for the support given to the small provincial communities from CRE.*



Luton United Synagogue

Event: Sunday lunch with Rabbi Aubrey Hersh

Objectives:

To have good quality programming in our Shul.

Evaluation from Chairman, Laurence Benjamin:

There was a warm, vibrant atmosphere in the Synagogue. Rabbi Hersh provided an interesting insight for members into some of the fundamental concepts of Judaism. **This event added to the sense that Luton is able to provide enjoyable and sociable programming for its members.**

Participant feedback:

- *A most interesting talk on what's important in life!*
- *This talk definitely gave me some food for thought.*
- *The talk was entertaining, as well as profound, amidst friendly and enjoyable company and good food.*
- *This was clearly a popular event and very well attended. It was excellent in every respect and an admirable tribute to our spiritual leaders and tireless workers at the Shul.*



Cardiff Synagogue

Event: Jewish Medical Ethics series with Rabbi Pink

Objectives:

To increase interest in Torah study, encourage attendance at shiurim and raise awareness of contemporary issues.

Evaluation from Rabbi Rose:

The classes were enlightening, especially for the medical professionals in the community. **It was the first time several people attended a shiur of any sort in my time in the Shul.**

Participant feedback:

- *I'm not as fearful of the issues that were discussed anymore.*
- *I have gained an understanding of how difficult it can be to make life or death decisions in Judaism.*
- *It is extremely important to have these events in order to keep us united.*



During our first six months, CRE has been delighted to support outstanding projects for the following communities:

Barnet

Belmont

Birmingham Central

Birmingham Singers Hill

Borehamwood & Elstree

Bournemouth

Brondesbury Park

Bushey

Cardiff

Central

Chigwell & Hainault

Clayhall

Enfield & Winchmore Hill

Hadley Wood

Hendon

Hampstead Garden Suburb

Highgate

Leicester

Luton

Muswell Hill

Newton Mearns

Northwood

Nottingham

Palmers Green & Southgate

Pinner

Reading

Ruislip

Sale and District

Sheffield

Solihull & District

South Hampstead

South London

St Albans

Staines & District

Stanmore & Canons Park

Newcastle

Whitefield

Testimonials

"Thank you to CRE for this opportunity. There is no question that the extra funding helps to stage the type of event that attracts families to keep coming back."

**Rabbi Bergson,
Pinner United Synagogue**

"Many thanks to CRE for awarding us a grant. Please extend our thanks to the Chief Rabbi on this wonderful initiative and for allowing Rabbis' and Rebbetzins' dreams for their communities to come true."

**Rebbetzin Jacobs,
Birmingham Hebrew
Congregation**

"Thank you for supporting this venture. It served to excite and energise our community and was an altogether first-class event. I can only hope we will have more events of this quality."

**Bournemouth Jewish
community member**

"Thank you so much CRE, we could not have done this without your financial assistance."

**Rabbi Freedman,
Northwood United Synagogue**

"I would like to thank all those involved at CRE for helping us fund these events, which helps us to get more Jewish people involved in our Shul. Thank you to the Chief Rabbi and his staff for this forward thinking approach."

**Clayhall United
Synagogue member**

"It's vitally important that provincial Shuls like Birmingham Central are supported by yourselves because our members have to work especially hard to ensure that we maintain a vibrant and enriching Orthodox Jewish life. Thank you for supporting this event!"

**Birmingham Jewish
community member**

"Birmingham Central Synagogue is very grateful to CRE not just for the funding but also for the advice when developing the programme."

**Geoffrey Clements, Birmingham
Central Synagogue President**

"The support from CRE is very much appreciated and was essential for the viability of this event."

**Laurence Benjamin,
Luton Synagogue Chairman**

**Dear Rabbis and Rebbetzins,
CRE was created and exists for you.**

**Have you used this amazing
opportunity yet?**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. Mirvis". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

