



# Supporting Jewish students through a year of isolation

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Annual Review 2020/21



THE VOICE  
OF JEWISH  
STUDENTS

“

***I am proud of my ongoing connection with UJS. We have so many amazing students participating in Jewish life on campus and then taking on significant roles in community leadership. We have produced some of the most talented young people I have had the privilege of meeting and it is so gratifying to realise that UJS has been a part of encouraging their community involvement”.***

**Sir Victor Blank,  
Honorary Life President**

Front cover image: Ezra receives a Shabbat Pack from Kate and Daniella at Southampton J-Soc

## Dear Friend...

There is no easy way to simply review the 2020-21 academic year. It was full of challenges, deteriorating mental and physical health, isolation, loneliness, and learning a whole new way of life. We learnt new words and phrases like “the new normal”, “zoomed out”, “social-distancing” getting “pinged” and of course there is always “your microphone is still on mute”.

But with all of the challenges this past year has presented, there have been more silver linings than I can count. There was the amazing resilience of Jewish students, the innovation they showed in their digital events and activities, the exceptional empathy they showed to their fellow students, and the amazing creativity that Jewish society leaders showed in finding any way possible to bring their students together – digitally or in-person, and in many cases both.

I was unbelievably moved to hear the stories of success from the digital Purim event led by Queen Mary J-Soc, to the thousands of Shabbat Packs delivered by Birmingham J-Soc, to the 6 person tours that Leeds J-Soc ran for their new students at the start of the year – I could name multiple examples for every single Jewish Society of moments of remarkable and game-changing activity, keeping the Jewish student movement alive and well.

You will see, as we review the year, that UJS was absolutely central and vital to the success of these activities and societies in this past year. I am proud to be able to showcase just a small part of our work in this review, and to be able to show you just some of the highlights of a year that, whilst being so fraught with challenges, was nevertheless a year where we at UJS were proudly leading, defending and enriching Jewish student life.

Wishing you all a healthy and happy year ahead, as we look towards a year of rebuilding our phenomenal offering of in-person events and programming, with each of us playing our role in creating the Jewish leaders of tomorrow, today.

Yours,



**Arie Miller**  
Chief Executive, Union of Jewish Students of the UK and Ireland

# Looking back...



Over a year on, and the pandemic still looms. Not only despite the pandemic, but also because of it, Jewish students are more vocal, passionate, and creative than ever before about their advocacy and engagement with their Judaism. Jewish students in the last year have shown how Jewish life on campus is not simply surviving, but thriving.

UJS has taken, and continues to take, an active role in nurturing the next (and current) leaders of our community, who continue to bravely stand up to defend the rights and religious freedoms of Jewish students at universities across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Our students have been pioneering bold new campaigns from Israel advocacy and engagement to social action and liberation.

This past year has shown that our students need UJS to be a guiding force for good on campus: A Union of Jewish Students, and a Union FOR Jewish Students.

**James Harris**  
UJS President 2020-2021



# Looking forward...



This year at UJS will be like no other. We are faced with the incredible opportunity of reconnecting with thousands of students in a new, exciting way. The past year has left a vacuum of loneliness and anxiety that we are uniquely able to fill. As the representative voice of Jewish students, we can help them find their feet in this ever-changing world and provide the tailored support that they need.

Taking forward the lessons we have learnt from the pandemic, we will be looking at a hybrid model that combines our strong online presence with the quality of in-person events. This will allow us to engage more students than ever before, with the potential for both national events and localised community action. It is so important that we maximise all of resources in order to reach as many students as possible.

I am so honoured to be leading UJS into its next year of work and to have the opportunity to enrich the lives of Jewish students. My Jewish student experience was so heavily shaped by my involvement with UJS and this is something I hope to pass on to the next generation of students. The coming year will focus on reintroducing the in-person community that we have all been missing in our year of isolation. As well as Friday Night Dinners and social events (the bread and butter of J-Soc life) we will bring a vivid range of programmes and campaigns that hope to inspire and excite our students. The greatest things are yet to come!

**Nina Freedman**  
UJS President 2021-2022





# Our Mission



We are the voice of over 8,500 Jewish students, spanning more than 60 Jewish Societies (J-Socs) on campuses across the UK and Ireland. We are traditional, progressive, politically diverse, cultural and spiritual; we are unified, not uniform, and advocate the unity of our one Jewish people.

Guided by our core values, the priorities of our elected President and policy passed at UJS Conference, we create and deliver powerful campaigns: fighting prejudice that targets Jewish people and other minorities; advancing the inclusion of Jewish people within wider society and of marginalised groups within our Jewish community; and inspiring education and action on the issues that matter to us.

Locally, nationally and internationally, we run diverse and dynamic programmes; facilitate access to kosher food and accommodation; offer career networking opportunities; proudly and passionately engage with Israel; initiate inspiring interfaith projects; and spearhead and support social action (tikkun olam).

For over 100 years, we've been leading, defending and enriching Jewish student life across the UK and Ireland, inspiring generations of future leaders of the Jewish community, and we're proud to be the voice of Jewish students.

# Our Core Values



## Cross-Communalism

UJS and J-Soc activities are open to all Jewish students regardless of political or religious affiliation or denomination. We strive to continually improve how we celebrate the diversity of Jewish students.

## Israel Engagement

We passionately and proudly connect our students with over 3000 years of Jewish and Hebrew culture, offering opportunities to strengthen, celebrate and explore a personal relationship with Israel as part of an evolving expression of Jewish identity.

## Peer-leadership

We are empowered and equipped to lead and direct our programming and campaigning with and for our peers.

## Representation

As the voice of Jewish students we ensure Jewish students' voices and views are heard locally and nationally. J-Soc committees and the UJS President are elected roles which consider the views of their members and represent these and our democratically decided policy to the student movement, the wider Jewish community, politicians and policy makers.

# Our Year in Numbers

**£560K**

Raised to directly support Jewish students

**2,000+**

Minutes of video hosted by UJS

**3 million+**

Digital reach across UJS' social media platforms

**250+**

Live and digital events held in one of our most challenging years ever

**110**

Universities adopted the IHRA definition of Antisemitism

**10,500**

Shabbat Packs hand packed and delivered to student's doors

**4,000**

Students participated in Israel engagement programmes from celebrating Sigd, to Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Ha'zikaron events online, to sessions run by the UJS Shlichim

**52**

Student led Divrei Torah, marking every weekly Torah portion with a student voice, thoughts and opinion

**1,100**

New Jewish students signed up to their J-Soc and UJS

**1,000+**

Students' Union and university staff received antisemitism awareness training from UJS

# UJS' Digital Life Unpacked

As the world shut down, UJS' digital engagement booted up! UJS was proud to drive the digital lives and enrichment of Jewish students. From campaigns, to videos, to podcasts and even more – UJS were at the forefront of what it meant to be a digital Jewish student, leading the way for the next generation.



@UJS\_UK is now verified! Proud to have received this important recognition for the work we do on behalf of Jewish students [#FollowUs!](#)



@UJS\_UK



With our Instagram following steadily increasing, we prioritised this platform for educating our students and engaging them on a number of different levels, from our regular facts about Israel, to our weekly spotlight on an exceptional Jewish student, UJS celebrated all that it meant to be a Jewish student.



@UJS\_UK



**This year was an exceptional year for UJS digitally.**

We not only grew our following by more than 1,000 individuals, but delivered engaging and enriching content to each and every one of those followers, from videos, to live events, to key facts information. UJS is proud to have slid smoothly into digital delivery, leading the way for Jewish students and in many cases the Jewish community.



Launched the UJS TikTok account! [@ujs\\_uk](#)



[www.ujs.org.uk](http://www.ujs.org.uk)

Over 10,000 visitors each month

Launch of the Digital Israel Portal

COVID Survey of Needs

Student-led articles and blogs

# Areas of Work

## Leadership development as the voice of Jewish students

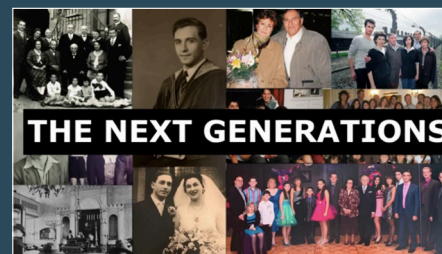
- Aim** To give Jewish students a representative and powerful voice at the heart of university, communal and national leadership, and train them in leadership development and opportunities.
- Action** UJS met regularly with senior university leadership, with local and national political leadership, training university staff in antisemitism awareness, and advocating for Jewish student issues to the heart of those who can make changes. We ran digital development and training for over 300 Jewish students and supported 450 student volunteers in leading their Jewish societies and activities on their campuses.
- Result** The UJS team trained more than 1,000 university staff and leadership as part of our antisemitism awareness training, and successfully received significant grants from local government and central government for combatting antisemitism. UJS had a direct impact on the leadership development of our volunteers, bringing together digitally and in person more than 300 Jewish students across a variety of activities and events.

## Combatting Antisemitism

- Aim** To support Jewish students and stand up against anti-Jewish hatred on campus.
- Action** UJS provided antisemitism awareness training and ran a relentless campaign to encourage Universities to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism as well as standing up vocally and in a meaningful way against universities and lecturers who have been accused of or committed acts of antisemitism.
- Result** Over 1,000 participants on counter antisemitism training, more than 110 institutions adopting the IHRA definition, and more than 100 antisemitic incidents dealt with in collaboration with our partners including CST, the police and others.

## Holocaust Education

- Aim** To enable Jewish Students to mark Holocaust Memorial Day regardless of the challenges of the pandemic.
- Action** UJS produced and published multiple digital resources including a video showcasing the testimony of grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors, a Survivors Testimony and the testimony of “The Boys” of Windemere.
- Result** Over 10,000 views on Holocaust educational material from campuses across the UK and Ireland, and a first for Jewish students to hear from their peers about their grandparents’ experiences.



*Jewish students ran digital events to mark Holocaust Memorial day.*

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Aim** To raise awareness of mental health issues faced by students and to signpost students who may need it to the relevant resources.
- Action** During the past year students have faced hardship, isolation, and mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression. UJS was at the forefront of supporting students, signposting them with a newly formed Health and Wellbeing page on our website, as well as as well as engaging two Mental Health professionals to provide clinical support for the UJS staff and safeguarding team when facing medium to major concerns.
- Result** More than 100 students supported directly through our Covid support “survey of needs” with requests such as Kosher food requirements, medication collection, clothes washing and more. UJS had thousands of visitors to our mental health resources, and ran live sessions on supporting ourselves and each other during these challenging and strenuous times.

## Jewish Enrichment and Engagement and Cross-communalism

- Aim** To engage Jewish students in their Judaism, however they choose to practice.
- Action** UJS once again produced unique and engaging festival booklets to support Jewish students celebrating all of the Jewish festivals. We also proudly produced a full year of Divrei Torah, showcasing student voices and opinions from all streams and spectrums of Judaism, as well as from a huge variety of different campuses. Furthermore, for the first time ever we appointed a sabbatical officer to lead the Jewish Enrichment and Engagement of UJS into the 2021-22 academic year.
- Result** UJS had more than 55,000 views on our digital Jewish content, as well as engaging 52 different student voices in our D’var Torah series.



*Jewish students led online learning and education from multiple perspectives and more than 50 different student voices.*

## Israel Engagement

- Aim** Inspiring Jewish students to make an enduring commitment to their Jewish identity, Israel, and the community.
- Action** This year UJS launched an exciting and innovative new Digital Israel Portal – the first of its kind in the world. This portal was made possible thanks to the UJIA and the Benson Black Memorial Trust. The portal contains everything anyone would need or want to know about Israel, from culture to politics to video series to the latest news. This is an exceptionally exciting opportunity for Jewish students.
- Result** Over 1,000 visits a month in normal times, spiking to more than 7,000 in 8 days during the latest conflict with Gaza.

## Social Action

- Aim** Engage Jewish students in “G’milut Chasadim” - acts of Loving kindness, and “Tikkun Olam” - working to make the world a better place.
- Action** Through our network of volunteers, activists and members, UJS supported initiatives such as collections for Period Poverty, awareness raising for the Uyghur Muslim crisis, and profile raising of social and care organisations within the Jewish community.
- Result** Strong partnerships built with organisations such as Renee Casin and Period Poverty, as well as increasing our working relationship with organisations such as Jewish Volunteering Network and Mitzvah Day.

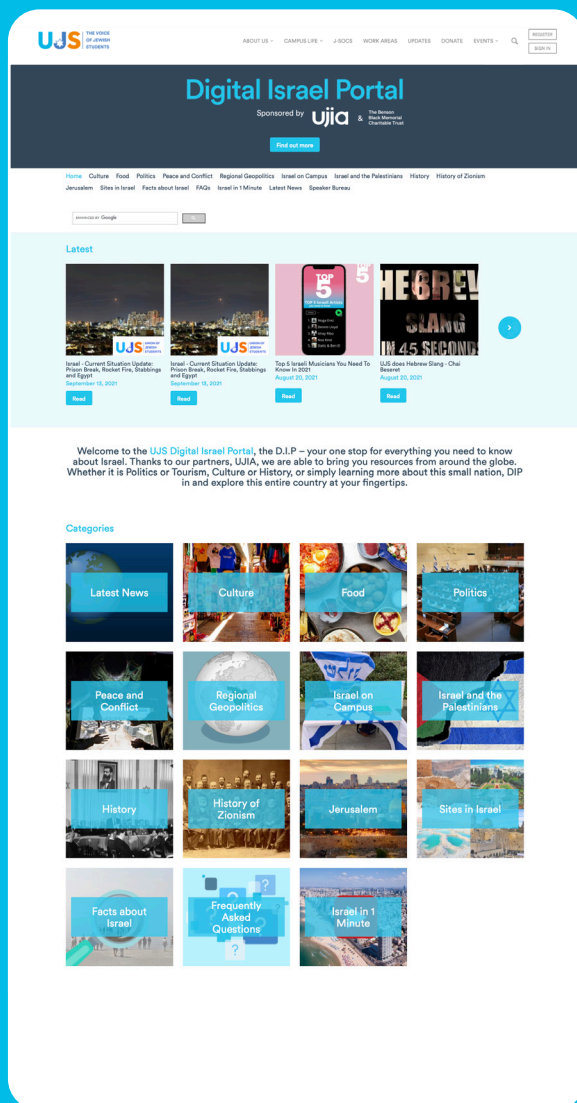


# Spotlight on the Digital Israel Portal

Over the past year UJS launched the world first Digital Israel Portal, a one-stop digital resource, with the aim of providing Jewish students and the wider student community with a rich, impressive and all-encompassing understanding of Israel.

Through this portal students can learn about Israeli food and culture, Israel's history, current affairs and geopolitics, as well as discovering engaging video, audio and written content on a huge variety of topics. Moving into the new year the portal is ever-growing with new content being uploaded every week by both UJS staff and Jewish students.

*More than 7,000 visitors during the 8 days of the latest conflict between Israel and Gaza, with users utilising these resources to better equip themselves with the facts.*



# Spotlight on Antisemitism Training

In the last academic year of 2020-21, we delivered 57 antisemitism awareness training sessions, to both student unions and universities. The aim of the session is to educate and raise awareness of the rising antisemitism on campus, to equip the participants with the knowledge to call out antisemitism and for them understand what Jewish life on campus is like and how they can be more inclusive for their Jewish students. Given campus was physically closed, we moved the training to online and were able to engage with a wider array of universities and student unions who we previously had not connected with. Looking forward, we have already delivered over 40 sessions, and are continuing to expand the training to a wider audience.

*"As a Jewish member of staff, I also want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you are doing to support and represent Jewish students. It has been especially difficult over the last few weeks and your support has been exemplary. Seeing some of the comments on some SU's social media channels shows how far we have to go but I know students appreciate knowing you are there."*

**- SU Staff Member**





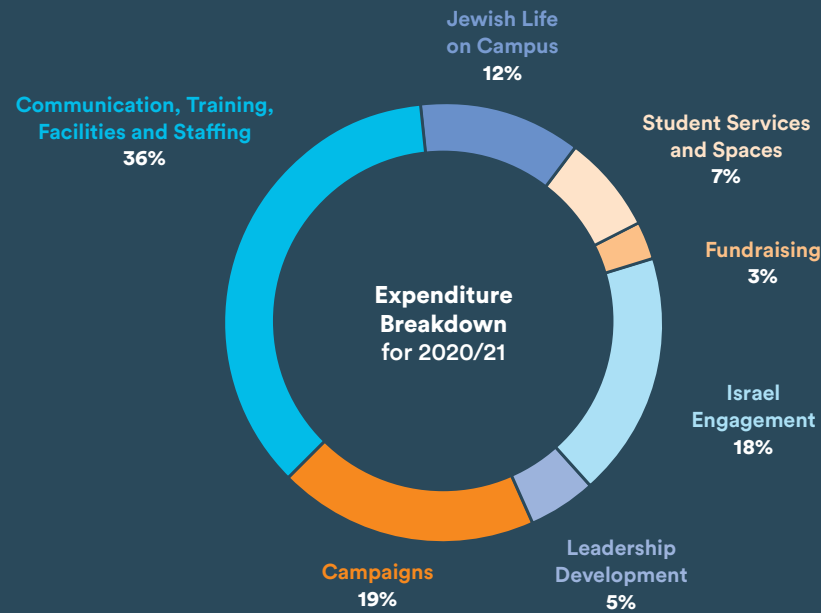
# Financial Review

## Investing in the future of Jewish leadership

At the start of this financial year, UJS were projecting a significant drop in income of just under 48% due to the economic impacts of the Pandemic. These impacts included personal direct financial impacts to some of our donors, or needing to support other charities facing equally tough times. In addition there were major and exceptional communal efforts to support the care sector within the community, which of course impacted on other areas.

However, thanks to hard work from trustees and fundraising focussed staff, as well as successful applications with a Government grant and a grant from the Mayor of London, UJS was able to surpass our fundraising projections by more than £130,000.

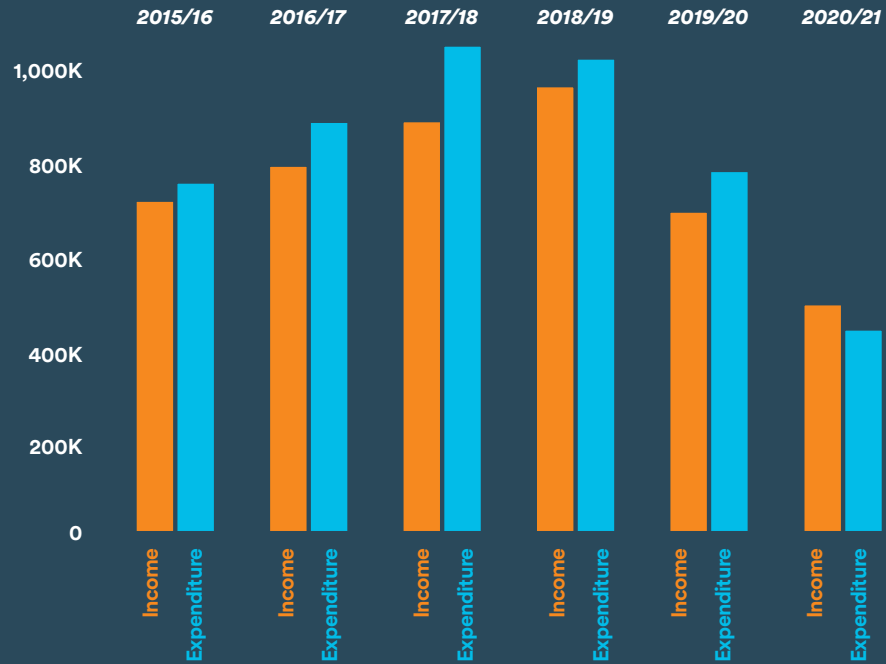
Due to the digitisation of most of our provision, the core programming expenses were able to be significantly reduced, without removing any of the quality, length and breadth of our work. In fact, our engagement and provision was able to increase, whilst the cost did not.



UJS is committed to ensuring our donations are spent as they are intended – supporting Jewish students. That is why almost 80% of our income is spent directly supporting Jewish students, with the remaining 20% spent on indirect support such as Fundraising costs and Head Office costs.

Without the support of our donors, we would not be able to do this. We are looking ahead to creating a break-even budget within the next 3 years, to ensure we continue to proudly be an organisation our donors can trust in and an organisation that spends those donations exactly where and how they are intended.

The bar graph below shows our income and expenditure from 2015/16 to 2020/21.



# Thank You

## Guardians and Patrons

Ed Barnett, Bill Benjamin, Ruth Berkotwiz, Keith Black, Sir Victor and Lady Blank, Leon and Cara Blitz, The Bloom Foundation, Richard Bolchover and Jo Rosenfelder, Paul and Peggy Brett, The Catherine Lewis Foundation, David and Nili Chinn, Sir Trevor and Lady Chinn, Simon Corney, Sir Mick Davis, Peter Dubens, Graham Edwards, The Exilarch's Foundation, Robert Gibber, David Goldberg QC, Jonny Goldstein, Marc Gordon and Caroline Marcus, Maurice and Danielle Helfgott, Alan and Louise Jacobs, Nick Leslau, Lord Jon and Nicola Mendelsohn, The Rachel Charitable Trust, Harry Rich, The Rosemarie Nathanson Charitable Trust, Joshua and Mrs Michelle Rowe, Nina and Roy Sandle, Sir Harry and Lady Solomon, Hilda Worth.

## Friends of UJS

Mark Astaire, Mark Barnett, Sandra Blackman, Carolyn Bogush and Gideon Smith, Sue Charles, Dr Vivienne Cohen, David Uri Memorial Trust, The Craps Charitable Trust, Simon Fine, Ann Goldstein, Antony Grossman, Richard Goldstein, Ronnie Goldstein, Richard and Eliana Green, Francis and Anne Greibach, Henry Grunwald OBE, Robin Hilton, Inge Hyman, Mandy and Tim Isaacs, JE Posnansky Charitable Trust, Jewish Memorial Council, Joe and Rosa Frenkel Charitable Trust, John Black Memorial Trust, Jusaca Charitable Trust, Lord Kalms, Daniel Kay, Isaac Kaye, Paul Koopman, David Lewis, Stephen and Sharon Lewis, Steven Lewis, Steven and Alicia Lewis, Anthony Loftus, Alison Mendel, David Menton, Leo Noe, Marc

Nohr, Nicholas Posnansky, Shelley Robinson, Stephen Rubin, Ruth Berkowitz Charitable Trust, Fiona Sharpe, Alison Sonn, Paul Summerfield, Sybil Shine Memorial Trust, Ron and Julie Tabbouche, Mr D Winter, Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale.

## UJS Advisory Council

UJS Honorary Life President Sir Victor Blank (Chair), Baroness Ros Altman, Luciana Berger MP, Tony Bloom, David Dangoor, Sir Mick Davis, Baroness Ruth Deech, Sir Lloyd Dorfman, Jonathan Goldstein, Henry Grunwald OBE, Lord Daniel Finklestein, Sir Brian Leveson, Laura Marks OBE, Lord Jon Mendelsohn, Sir Trevor Pears, Lady Elaine Sacks, Hilda Worth.

## Communal Supporters & Partners

Shoresh Charitable Trust, Pears Foundation, Rothschild Foundation.



## UJS Team 2020/2021

Arieh Miller, Natacha Woodcock, Emma Senitt, Marcus Mendleson, Dovi Weider, Amanda Sefton, James Harris, Gil Rubin, Bradley Langer, Shiri Wolff, Carine Levy, Hansha Khetani, Melanie Wolfson.

## UJS Trustees 2020/2021

Paul Summerfield (Chair), Mark Barnett, Carolyn Bogush, Spencer Debson, Paul Koopman, Adam Rose, Hannah Rose, Judith Flacks, Elana Dwek, Louise Goldberg, Jodie Franks, Mitchell Simmons.



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