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Reform Judaism Safeguarding Review

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The Board of Reform Judaism strive to have in place the highest possible standards for safeguarding. Therefore, we are going to commission an independent review into Reform Judaism's safeguarding culture. This is in light of a recent statement made during the IICSA enquiry (The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse). Our participation in IICSA was as a voluntary participant into a strand that took a general look at safeguarding in religious organisations and settings. We are grateful for the conversation during that process, and will put those issues at the centre of our review.

We have also had some members of our community share their view that people may not have come forward to report safeguarding concerns. We thank the people who have spoken up publicly and privately to draw our attention to this, and acknowledge that this is not always easy to do.

We do not take a position on individual cases outside of our organisation's remit. We are restating our policy following media reports both in relation to the late Lord Janner, the father of our Senior Rabbi, and other matters relating to our wider community.

We take extremely seriously any suggestion that we may have fallen below the standard expected of us. We intend to respond by engaging independent experts, listening to and acting on the advice we are given. We will be as transparent as possible in this process.

Our safeguarding policy has not changed. We have been and continue to be committed to the highest standards of safeguarding. Our policy is to treat with the greatest seriousness safeguarding matters that are disclosed to us and to enact our processes, including, if appropriate, working with outside safeguarding, statutory and legal bodies. Our underlying position is that sexual or other non-sexual forms of abuse, such as harassment and discrimination, are abhorrent and inconsistent with our inclusive Reform Jewish values.

We realise that abuse in all its varieties and forms does occur and that the Reform Jewish community is not immune. Abuse is not limited to sexual abuse of children and young people but can occur at all levels and during all types of interaction with members of Reform Judaism and all those that relate to us and each other.

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Updated July 2019

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The staff at Reform Judaism have worked hard to put in place appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. We all recognise the importance of continuous improvement with regard to our safeguarding culture. Our response to criticism is not to ignore it but to address it. That is why we are going to work with an organisation with safeguarding expertise, that is wholly independent of Reform Judaism and our communities, to actively invite anyone with a safeguarding concern to come forward.

We will share details of the scope of this work as well as a full and transparent process for offering information and our plan. We will work with this organisation to communicate this, ensuring it is in line with best practice.

Although we cannot assign a precise timeframe for this work, as we want to shape the process in partnership with the independent body, we will publish timescales as soon as they are available.

We will work with our communities to share details as widely as possible so that we can all learn and improve and ask for your support in ensuring that anyone who wishes to come forward with a safeguarding concern across our whole movement feels able and safe to do so.

The Board of Trustees of Reform Judaism

Notes

1. Simon Myerson QC has proposed (Jewish Chronicle, 4th June 2020) seven principles of child protection, which is a vital part of the safeguarding matrix.
2. In addition to proposing the creation of a structure of Jewish cross-communal independent monitoring and education, Myerson's principles relate to the following areas:
 - Interests of children
 - Integrity
 - Objectivity
 - Accountability
 - Openness
 - Honesty
 - Leadership.
3. Reform Judaism's safeguarding review was initiated before Myerson's intervention.