

Safeguarding Review

Following various issues raised last year, notably a statement made during our voluntary participation in the government's IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) strand on faith-based organisations, and press coverage of a safeguarding concern, the Trustees of The Movement for Reform Judaism (MRJ) resolved to listen to any concerns from anyone who had experienced abuse of any kind within our Movement and had not felt comfortable to speak out. Additionally, the Board felt that it was essential for MRJ to take a holistic look at our safeguarding practices.

Therefore, we initiated the Safeguarding Review, to ensure we would have in place the highest possible standards throughout the Movement. The Board has always placed the safeguarding, wellbeing and protection of our communities and staff at the centre of our everyday life.

Accordingly, the Board appointed external professional advisors SAB Safeguarding, to carry out an independent appraisal to examine our procedures and make any recommendations.

SAB's investigation delivered a detailed and in-depth review and we committed to implementing their recommendations to the centrality of safeguarding within MRJ.

The review concluded that while we do function appropriately in terms of operational safeguarding there was a need for a greater 'culture of safeguarding' and for strengthened governance, particularly in MRJ's relationships with our constituent synagogues and other partner organisations.

We welcomed the results, and The Movement places on record our grateful thanks to everyone who took part in SAB's rigorous inquiry. This includes our staff, MRJ Trustees, Rabbis and Cantors, Reform Synagogue Chairs as well as other individual community members, RSY-Netzer members and our partner organisations.

Alongside the completion of the SAB Review, the Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors, in consultation with the Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors, is also finalising a Code of Ethics.

All members of these organisations are now required to comply with the professional and personal behavioural standards, set out in the Code. An Ethics committee is being established to provide a forum for investigating and resolving any issues that contravene these standards. The Code and the Ethics Committee will not replace any legal compliance and practices regarding safeguarding.

We are pleased to say that our work is well underway and that MRJ commits to becoming an exemplar in safeguarding, not only to lead the way and partner with our communities, but also to dedicate itself to inclusion, and the wellbeing of our Progressive Jewish values.

Robert Wiltshire, the outgoing Chair of MRJ, has pledged that four pivotal values will underpin the work of The Movement for Reform Judaism:

"Trust, Collaboration, Respect and Honesty."
