



Sukkat Shalom
Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Annual Report 2026

Collated for the Annual General Meeting of 22nd February 2026.

Scottish Charity Number: SC035678
www.eljc.org/agm

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Chair Report

Andrea Torres

This report reflects my year as Chair of Sukkat Shalom, with a focus on governance, external representation, cross-communal work, and preparation for future leadership.

A significant change this year has seen the creation of the new Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ). We held a virtual session for our members who were interested in learning more about this outcome ahead of Council voting on the merger. Our Council then considered the community input and the majority voted in favour of the creation of the new movement in May 2025. Through the rest of the year 2025, MPJ has been working on formalising the merger through the creation of the new charity. The majority of 2026 will continue to see the development of new parts to this merger with further guidance coming to our communities regarding financial and administrative implications.

Alongside this work, I prioritised strengthening relationships with allied organisations. From May onwards, I met with representatives from Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation (EHC), Jewish Council of Scotland (JCoS), and Liberal Judaism, including fundraising, human resources and community development staff. These conversations focused on identifying opportunities for collaboration, shared programming, and improved coordination across Scotland.

Throughout the summer, I undertook a range of networking and representational activities. These included meetings with the Chair of EHC, with the intention of establishing regular quarterly meetings; ongoing engagement with the new JCoS leadership; attendance at the Liberal Judaism offices in London, including participation in the vote on the faith accords (more on this in the interfaith section); and participation in meetings with the Northern Network of progressive communities, which offered opportunities to share best practice with other communities.

I also attended Civic Day at EHC as a representative of the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, engaging with local and Scottish government representatives and other faith leaders. I will explore ways for additional Council members to attend future civic events as formal community representatives.

Our yearly planned visit to Glasgow aimed to strengthen ties with Glasgow Reform Synagogue (GRS) and to explore joint activity, particularly in the context of the Progressive merger and shared geographic challenges. I met with members of GRS Council and discussed potential initiatives, and was introduced to the West End Project, which seeks to engage younger adults during Shabbat. This project has attracted our members living in the west another opportunity to build community.

Interfaith and civic engagement has been a consistent element of my role. I represented Sukkat Shalom at events including Remembrance Sunday at EHC, Police Scotland interfaith training sessions, the Edinburgh Riding of the Marches, Chanukah lightings at the City Chambers and Scottish Parliament, and meetings of the Council of Christians and Jews. I have also contributed

a written piece to the *Edinburgh Star*, focused on the importance of developing young Jewish leadership.

Finally, I have participated in planning for future communal events, including the Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre Burns Supper in January 2026, where Sukkat Shalom will be represented both organisationally and on the programme.

This year, we also saw the return from Rabbi Mark from his sabbatical in July. As I prepare to hand over leadership, my focus has been on ensuring continuity, and strong external connections, alongside collective decision-making within Council. I am grateful to Council members, Rabbi Mark, and our wider membership for their support throughout this year.

Religious Affairs

Nick Silk and Maurice Naftalin

For the first time for many years, we're starting this report slightly differently, since while we did, as ever, hold services on pretty much every Shabbat and celebrate all the major festivals, in the first half of 2025 this was done without the help of Rabbi Mark, who was enjoying a well-earned sabbatical. During the first six months of the year, most of the services, both in-person and on-line, were led by community members, although we were pleased to welcome a number of visiting Rabbis too; Robyn Ashworth-Steyn, Elisheva Salamo and Hannah Altorf, as well as our longstanding friend Rabbi Pete Tobias who led our communal seder. The visiting rabbis gave us a welcome variety of new perspectives and styles of service leadership. It is a great testament to our lay leaders that the services went so well, and much as we missed Rabbi Mark, we were able to continue to worship without his input.

In the second half of the year, when we welcomed Rabbi Mark back, our service schedule took on a more familiar feel, in particular with a few more online services, led by Rabbi Mark both from his home and as hybrid services from Leicester.

During the year we celebrated many lifecycle events – baby blessings, b'nei mitzvot, weddings and admission ceremonies – and all the major festivals. Some particular highlights included:

- Our Tu Bi-Sh'vat seder which we celebrated as an interfaith event and to which many visitors came. This was led by Rabbi Robyn, who in her d'var torah the following day gave us an inspiring insight on how to read difficult passages in our texts, foregrounding the “subalterns”—the oppressed and marginal figures, particularly women.
- Our Purim party, which was once again extremely well attended
- Our communal seder which, as noted above, was led by Rabbi Pete
- Our shabbat services in May, led by Rabbi Elisheva, were also a chance for some members of the York community to visit us for the weekend
- In July, on Rabbi Mark's first visit to us after his sabbatical, we held a shabbat morning service in Newstead
- We visited Glasgow Reform Synagogue in August for a service led by Rabbis Mark & Pete
- We were delighted to welcome Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah to Edinburgh once again, this time to lead our Yom Kippur services. Our members enjoy the variation in style between Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah services
- We held a meditative service, lay-led, in December

As always, we'd like to conclude by thanking everyone who has helped with the services; our lay leaders, our wardens and everyone who has helped set up, tidy up, welcome visitors, book venues. A big thanks once again to Rabbi Mark for all his work after his sabbatical was over, not just leading services but all the “behind the scenes” work that is involved.

And lastly, we are always looking for help with our services so, if you would like to volunteer, just let us know. Leading doesn't have to be a huge commitment; you can take part by leading just one prayer or song, if that feels right for you. And if you have any feedback on the types of service, their format, or any other aspects of our services please tell us about that too.

Cheder

Gila Holliman and Mor Kandlik Eltanani

In the 2025/26 academic year, cheder continued to meet on Saturday mornings, roughly twice a month on dates planned around Jewish holidays and Edinburgh School breaks. As per our feedback last year, this has included Hebrew learning within the sessions and we continue to meet from 10:30-1pm. When cheder is planned on a day where there is an in person service, the children spend some time in the service as well.

The sessions each have a theme of various Jewish holidays, traditions and values and include stories, games, crafts, songs and discussions alongside Hebrew letters and writing options as part of the crafts and games. Mor works with children individually or in small groups to progress their Hebrew learning during the craft and activity time. The students can therefore work within their level and progress on an individual basis. Students who have already been learning Hebrew all have workbooks to continue their learning at home.

This year, Cheder registered 18 children between the ages of 3 and 12 and there are 3 new members who are in the process of registering. There is an active WhatsApp group for parents which has given another opportunity for parents to develop relationships with other Jewish families. Attendance can vary as many members have quite a distance to travel, but we typically have 10-15 children attending each session, with more attending the parties.

The cheder continues to be co-led by Mor and Gila, with Mor, Lizzie and Katy teaching the sessions. The sessions are typically held all together but there are times that the group might split into age groups and the students are taught separately in Hebrew based on level as opposed to age.

The community and cheder families collaborated for a very well-attended Chanukah party, and there are plans for a joint Purim party in March this year. Developing stronger connections between the community and the cheder has been a huge benefit of being co-located, and the cheder hopes this can continue to be prioritised in the coming years.

Communications

What's On Email

Rob Westwood

Each week, a *What's On* email was sent to members of our mailing list. Its main purpose was to communicate the dates, times and venues of services, but it also took the opportunity to highlight Jewish cultural events in Scotland.

The email is compiled and sent by our Administrator, after receiving feedback on a weekly draft from our 5-person comms/newsletter team.

The email is scheduled for 3pm on Thursdays, the idea being that it will give people time to plan to attend the following day's (and/or the weekend's) service.

The final email of 2025 was received by 562 people, up from 534 at the end of 2024 despite recent efforts to remove inactive members or addresses from the mailing list.

We have an open rate of 62-65%, slightly up from 60-65%.

(Email open rates are a good indicator of engagement. The average email open rate across all industries is 21.33%. Ours is very high.)

Etrog

Sue Bard

We are now just into the second year of our new look quarterly newsletter, *Etrog*. We are a community newsletter, written and produced largely by our own members about the events and people in our own community, but also about the wider Scottish, Jewish and Israeli/Palestinian world in which we live.

The improved, professional production values especially evident in the print version have been widely appreciated and we have our administrator Rob Westwood to thank for this. While our newsletter is read mainly online, we also circulate between 30 and 40 print copies of each issue and are happy to provide print copies not only to members who can't access the online version, but also for members who strongly prefer them. We have an email open rate of 63% (up from last year's open rate of 59%), indicating a digital readership of approximately 362 people.

Website

Rob Westwood

Our website is live at <https://eljic.org>.

The blog is updated weekly with content based on *What's On*. The services and events calendar is updated two months in advance.

Qualitative evidence from email monitoring suggests that Sukkat Shalom people and visitors are finding the website useful. Many conversion enquiries now come from people who have clearly consulted those pages on the website. Likewise, most enquiries about service attendance concern specific dated events, suggesting that they have consulted the calendar. Sometimes, feedback is included in emails about our “excellent” or “informative” website or similar.

Social Media

Han Smith and Jen Andreacchi

We (Jen and Han) have been running the Instagram and Facebook pages since February 2025, implementing a consistent posting style. We use simple graphics and clearly report on when services and special events are taking place each week. We are mindful not to include exact locations or Zoom links, but to encourage followers to check the What's On newsletter for this information. Occasionally, we will share posts we are tagged in or cross promote events which are hosted by other organisations, such as the Burns Supper event with the Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Center.

Instagram

Since February 2025:

As of 6 Feb 2026, the page has a total of 56 posts and 200 followers.

An increase of 23 posts and 49 followers from last year.

We have seen a steady increase in followers with some engagement on each post, however it is likely that most people interested in attending services are finding that information from the What's On newsletter and the website, rather than from social media. We can explore in the coming year posting some more varied content, rather than just reporting on service information.

Facebook

As of 6 Feb 2026, this page has 567 Followers (a decrease of 1 since last year). The decrease is likely due to a general decline in Facebook usership across the board, as diminishing engagement on this social media platform is fairly consistent across industries at present.

However, as we have had this page longer and some users are still active on it, we post the same content there each week to ensure we are reaching our members. We can have a broader conversation at some point about whether it makes sense to continue using Facebook, as it is not a platform where we are growing. Perhaps, we can use it more sparingly, just to highlight special events or share high level important information with the community.

Membership

Gillian Raab

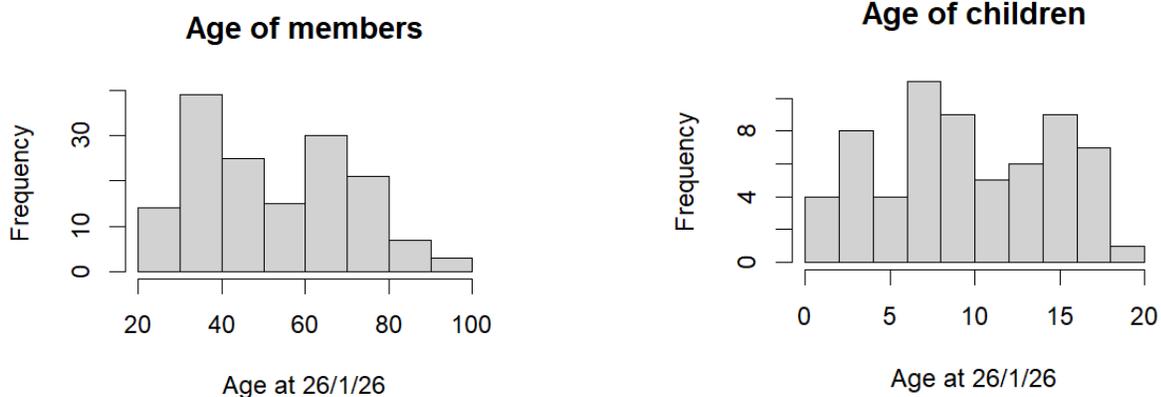
The table below gives our membership figures as of 26/1/2026 compared to those reported to the 2023 and 2024 AGMs at similar times of year.

Membership numbers are showing a small increase from last year. But this stability disguises some changes. Happily none of our members passed away during the year. We had a total of 15 new members during 2025. The majority were new or fairly new to Edinburgh, but 2 had become members after being accepted as Jewish by the LJ Beth Din. but these were balanced by 11 who have resigned either because they have moved away (7) or for other reasons. The number of children aged 19 and under has increased, mainly due to new new members' children.

AGM year	2026	2025	2024	2023
Adult members	163	159*	143	127
Children of members (age 0-19)	69	57	56	Not reported
Associate members	25	22	26	22

- Mistake of 1 person overcounted in last years's report

The 25 associate members are mainly those on a path to conversion, but also include 6 people who are not Jewish but wish to be associated with Sukkat Shalom; some are partners of members.



These histograms show the ages of our members and of the children of our members or associate members.

Adult Education

Exploring Judaism

Rob Westwood

2025 saw 4 EJ students graduate and attend admission ceremonies.

2025 ended with 32 students on the course (up from 26 at the end of 2024).

Exploring Judaism (EJ) classes were held on most Sundays through 2025. Some students attended in person in Edinburgh and Leicester, and the class was consistently accessible via Zoom.

Under the tuition of Rabbi Mark Solomon, students progressed through a syllabus taking in the three modules of Jewish Time and Worship, Cycle of a Jewish Life, and Jewish Belief and History.

In addition to classes, students were encouraged to study independently with the help of a recommended reading list.

Students working towards conversion were required to submit two essays (one titled “what does Judaism mean to me?” and a subject of the student’s choice) or one essay and an oral test held by the Beit Din.

A “buddy scheme” was organised in 2024 to help support students during Rabbi Mark’s 2025 sabbatical. Students were matched with Sukkat Shalom members for the purposes of practical and moral support pertaining to Judaism and conversion. Here is some positive feedback from ‘junior’ buddies who actively participated:

From Student F:

I had my buddy meeting with Nick a few months ago before my trip to Israel. I have been offshore since I came back from Israel in a 28 days hitch but will text him to arrange a time for our second catch up meeting next month.

From Student H:

The buddy thing is going great - I’ve exchanged a couple of emails with my buddy and had a zoom meeting. She gave me a lot of information about Orthodox feminism which was really interesting, and told me what to do on Purim, which I missed this year because I didn’t know what I should do.

From Student S:

I have met with my buddy online a few times now. We have discussed my essays, community, online options, and general life impacts. The relationship has been very supportive, especially since I'm in another country. I appreciate all the time and effort that has been put into this.

Feedback from 'senior' buddies, however, revealed occasional feelings of redundancy (e.g. "they seem self-reliant") and challenges with getting students to meet (usually citing other commitments or geographical constraints) and sometimes to reply to messages. One senior buddy suggested a more formal structure were we to run a buddy scheme in future years:

I kind of have the feeling that neither of us quite knows what sort of structure (if any) is expected, and in the absence of that, we haven't really managed to create one ourselves. If you were doing this more regularly, this is the sort of thing that could be agreed more formally by participants at the beginning, and maybe there could be suggestions based on what you've found works well. Given that this is new, it might be helpful to have some sort of structure to meet/catch up/share learning among the people doing the buddying.

Some buddies said they might be interested in maintaining their support relationship after the Rabbi's sabbatical, but this was not generally observed.

Overall, those who participated in the scheme found it useful and positive.

Weekly Torah Study Group

Daniel Power

This group meets online to discuss the upcoming parshah of the week. Participant numbers are usually between **5-10** people. Participants include members and associate members of Sukkat Shalom based in Scotland, as well associates (but non-members) of Sukkat Shalom based in the United States. Whilst there are no strict age-limits, participant ages range from mid-twenties and up. Additionally the backgrounds and professions of participants are diverse which provides much interesting discussion as everyone brings their own knowledge and perspectives.

We have continued to follow and develop a methodological approach to our discussions with a reading of and a primary focus on a selection of verses from the [Liberal Judaism Lectionary](#). This also provides participants with an opportunity to practice our Hebrew reading (although this is not mandatory and participants are welcome to read only in English if they prefer).

We have an online database of resources but this is in need of more maintenance.

Monthly *Nevi'im* Study Group

Ellen Galford and Daniel Power

We hold a class in support of our studies of the Books of the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) approximately monthly. The book we're studying and the date of the class is announced each week in *What's On*. Participant numbers usually range from **2 to 4**. Participants include members and associate members of Sukkat Shalom based in Scotland, as well associates (but not members) of Sukkat Shalom based in Scotland and the United States of America. So far we have read through the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Discussions so far have been open-ended but we are considering how to provide more structure to our *Nevi'im* studies. Additionally a whole book from the Biblical canon can be a lot to read each month.

Rabbinic Study Groups

Rob Westwood

Rabbi Mark's study group since October 2025 has alternated between the study of the life of Spinoza and that of Midrash Bereshit Rabbah. Approximately 20 people attend the former and approximately 15 attend the latter.

Biblical Hebrew with The Ark Synagogue

Sue Bard

A number of our members participate in the excellent weekly Biblical Hebrew classes run by The Ark Synagogue in Northwood, London and taught by their two senior rabbis, Rabbi Aaron Goldstein and Rabbi Lea Muhlstein. These classes are free – donations from students are welcomed. The classes operate at three levels: Learning to Read Hebrew; Improve your reading and understanding of Biblical Hebrew; Translating the Hebrew Bible.

Interfaith

Nick Silk

As was the case in previous years, in 2025, we took part in various interfaith activities, many of them organised through the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA). We participated in interfaith services, Andrea signed the “Edinburgh 900 City Council & Faith & Belief Community Accords” together with many other faith leaders, I attended the Edinburgh Religious Leaders meeting and we were really pleased to welcome many guests from other faith communities to our tu b’sivat seder, which was led by Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen. I continue to be a member of the West Lothian Faith Group and was once again invited to say prayers at their Holocaust Memorial Day event.

Additionally, Andrea and I attended individual sessions of the interfaith roadshow done in collaboration with Police Scotland. This session brought members of different faiths together to present to training officers about faith life in Edinburgh.

Burials

Samara Leibner

As the new burials officer, I have sought to update the information we previously held for burials and funerals. I have obtained a current price list for the Dean Cemetery and the current burial forms used across Scotland. I have also consulted the superintendent of Dean Cemetery to learn that we currently have 6 burial plots remaining available in our section. Unfortunately, there is no room for expansion, so we will need to look at other options for the future.

I am currently attending Doing Death Jewishly classes offered online by Progressive Judaism to improve my knowledge of the customs and practices specific to PJ, and to learn about available resources. PJ intends for an output of this course to be a new information booklet that communities can share so that people know what's customary, what some of their options are, and as a glossary of terms. I also believe that with this new booklet, and with a few small changes to the information and resources already available in the Funerals section of our Life Cycle webpage, we can make it easier for our community and for their loved ones to access useful and relevant information around a difficult topic, no matter if or how they choose to formally involve us in their funeral arrangements and future planning.

Sadly, we are currently in the process of arranging Wendy Crane's funeral.

At Rabbi Mark's request, I am also currently organising the interment of the ashes of three members of the Furnberg family at Dean Cemetery. The Furnbergs were not members, but the son was an Edinburgh resident who died in 2011. This burial and graveside service will likely be at the end of March at the request of the organising family members.

Care and Support

Han Smith

Care at Sukkat Shalom has remained broadly consistent in the 2025-2026 year. Meditative services with a particular focus on mental health care have been run by both Rabbi Mark and Han Smith. Additionally, the ELJC Care & Support WhatsApp group has frequently been active. Within this group, members share personal updates, ask for help and information, as well as share community/Jewish reminders.

Support continues to be offered to individuals and families in need.

Members have had the opportunity to consult the Weekly Reminders emails to learn about care-related organisations and events. As always, Jami UK continues to be an intrinsic part of mental health care for Jewish people across the UK.

Prior to Rabbi Mark's sabbatical, he created a buddy scheme for members of the Exploring Judaism class to be paired up with existing ELJC members.

As we look toward the 2026-2027 year, various forms of care, such as those mentioned above, will continue to be made available. Additionally, we hope to put on further meditative services and mental health-related events. We encourage any members who would like to contribute to care at ELJC to get in touch with Han Smith (hansmith@eljc.org) or Sue Bard (suebard@eljc.org).

Social Action

Sue Bard

Kol Nidre Charities 5786 2025/6 This year we selected a UK Jewish charity, a Scottish non-Jewish charity, an Israeli charity and a jointly run Palestinian/Israeli charity. Donations of over £4,000 are going to all of our selected charities.

HIAS +JCORE <https://hiasjcore.org>

HIAS+JCORE is a fairly newly formed registered charity. The acronym stands for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the world's oldest refugee agency, and JCORE for the Jewish Council for Racial Equality. The two organizations joined together in 2023 creating HIAS+JCORE supporting and advocating for refugees and asylum seekers. The organization provides a Jewish voice on refugee and asylum issues, offering direct support, advocacy, and opportunities for community engagement within the UK.

Citizens Advice Edinburgh <https://www.citizensadviceedinburgh.org.uk>

Sukkat Shalom member Wendy Crane recommended Citizens Advice Edinburgh saying: I found them approachable and helpful. The volunteer I spoke to was very careful to acquaint herself with the problems I was having and to help me solve them. Citizens Advice Edinburgh provides free, confidential and independent advice on many matters including welfare rights (benefits), debt, budgeting, housing, energy, immigration, employment, consumer rights, health and legal rights and also campaigns for change where it's needed. Citizens Advice is now the only body offering advice on many of these topics and is increasingly in demand. A small paid staff manages 120 highly trained volunteers.

Outbrave Relief <https://outbraverelief.org>

Sukkat Shalom member Jana Gibson has recommended this new charity with which she's made personal contact saying: This charity is close to my heart as I work with premature babies in Glasgow and I'm hoping to volunteer with it in Israel in the future. Outbrave Relief is a women-led, nonpartisan organisation that provides postpartum care for mothers and newborns affected by the war - both in Gaza and in Israel's hardest-hit communities. The staff team is predominantly Israeli/Jewish but also includes Muslim-Palestinian and Christian women. They say: when mothers thrive, babies thrive. And when we care for mothers in the first weeks after birth, we protect not only their lives - but the lifelong well-being of the next generation.

The Parents' Circle Families Forum/ UK Friends of the Parents' Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) <https://www.familiesforum.co.uk/the-parents-forum>

PCFF operates from Israeli and Palestinian offices and is made up of more than 1,000 bereaved families, all of whom have lost a close family member to the conflict. Members believe that reconciliation is an essential first step towards a lasting peace. PCFF put their belief in reconciliation into practice. The Parallel Narrative Experience (PNE) brings groups of Palestinians and Israelis together in workshops, one to one meetings and site visits to explore each other's personal, historical and national narratives. Dialogue Meetings are held in high

schools, and youth groups with teenagers and young adults. The Joint Memorial Day Ceremony has brought Palestinians and Israelis together in shared grief and hope for many years. Since October 7 increased numbers of Palestinian and Israeli families have joined the forum despite the periodic banning of their educational activities by the Israeli Government.

We are pleased to be developing a more long-term relationship with Outbrave Relief, both through Sukkat Shalom member Janti Gibson who suggested this charity and who maintains her own contact them and also through the community's own efforts. Their President and Executive Director, Mirjam van de Giessen, has already written two moving and interesting articles about the work of the charity for our community newsletter Etrog.

Our Social Action WhatsApp group, established in November 2023, has had no traffic for over a year, and may be described as defunct.

Appendix A: Supporting Statements for Members Standing for Council

Jen Andreacchi

Jennifer Andreacchi (she/they) has served as a Sukkat Shalom Council Member since 2024. Originally from New Jersey in the US, she moved to Scotland to attend a masters programme at the University of St Andrews and has been a member of Sukkat Shalom since 2021. She now lives in Edinburgh and works in marketing for Birlinn, a local book publisher. Jen is passionate about the arts, Jewish history, and ensuring that Sukkat Shalom is an inclusive and welcoming space for Jews of all backgrounds.

Sue Bard

I've been a member of Sukkat Shalom for ten years, a council member for nine years and a co-chair for the last five of them. I'm standing again for council this year as I'd like to draw on the experience I've had to give non-intrusive support to the council in the coming year. I think my work and personal background in the charity, voluntary and public sectors has been relevant and helpful to some of the things I've done as a council member. But most of all, I feel a deep commitment to Sukkat Shalom and to Progressive Judaism for showing me a way back into Judaism and an empathy with members that may be on long, difficult or unusual paths to Judaism and I value the opportunities that being a council member offers to contribute in a practical and creative way to our community.

Jonathan Broadie

I confirm that I've read the expectations we have of council members, our values and our Code of Conduct.

I am honoured to be an existing member of council. I have experience in the specific areas of treasurer, burials and security in which I have held Sukkat Shalom roles, but also across a whole range of religious and communal activities. It has been a privilege to do this. As a chartered accountant, I can continue to offer a financial perspective.

Our community is a very precious thing. There are few options for progressive Jews in Scotland, but we have been able to create a haven for our community which is unique, and which I cherish. I would continue to support it and protect it to the best of my ability.

Marjory Broadie

I care passionately about Sukkat Shalom and its future. So I would like to stand again for election to Sukkat Shalom Council.

I confirm that I have reread 'Our Purpose and Values' and the 'Information for Existing or Prospective Council Members'. As an existing member it's been a pleasure and privilege to serve on the Council.

For many years I was in charge of, and organised all aspects of security for Sukkat Shalom Services and Social Events. I also have experience in burials, and have helped perform the ritual of Taharah.

There have been a number of other events/roles where I've contributed to the running or the organisation e.g. Our Tenth Anniversary Celebration.

As a member of Sukkat Shalom Council I would contribute, as well as I can, to the continuing growth and development of our very special and unique Community.

Oliver Davidson-Richards

I am running for Council again to continue my support for our congregation. I have now been involved with Council for a few years now, first as an associate member and then as a full member following the completion of my conversion process. Through this have gained insight into the work that goes into sustaining our community. I work as a solicitor so also bring my legal experience to Council.

Helen Ford

I have been a part of the Sukkat Shalom community since joining the choosing judaism class in 2006 and a member since converting in 2007.

I believe what I can offer the community is knowledge of accessibility issues, I am both an ambulant wheelchair user and an Assistance Dog Handler. I also believe this experience could help in making decisions and making events more accessible. In addition to that I am also autistic and can help make events less overwhelming by using my experiences.

Leo Kaminski

I would like to join Sukkat Shalom's council as a way to get more involved with this community that I value so much.

As well as the important spiritual role it fills, Sukkat Shalom really feels like a hub for wider Jewish communal and cultural life in Edinburgh; a place to find out about what's on and to meet people with such a great range of interests. I'm enthusiastic to help Sukkat Shalom continue to be a place where people can make connections and share their skills. I would especially like to use my involvement with an informal but growing Jewish network of young(ish) people in Glasgow to enrich both communities.

I bring to the table a decade of experience with community organising -- including union work and running events for a student LGBT+ society -- which I would love to keep building on. I'm also one of those people who's genuinely excited by admin work and spreadsheets!

Samara Leibner

Throughout my life, I've met many Jews who have been made to feel alone or unwelcome by a limited idea of what Jews are or should be. I recognise Sukkat Shalom as a place where those Jews (including myself) can be, and I want to support it and help it grow as a member of Council.

I am relatively new to Sukkat Shalom, but I bring broad experience. I grew up Orthodox and benefited from a full-time Hebrew education in Montreal, a city with a large and diverse Jewish community. Although there was a lot about Orthodoxy that wasn't for me, I remain grateful for the robust, fearless, and joyful attitude toward Jewish practice, culture, texts, and ways of being it taught me. At the same time, I grew up as a queer person in an interfaith and multilingual family, as my mother converted to Judaism, and I've experienced the UK's and Canada's hostile immigration processes firsthand, so I bring those experiences to my perspective as well. I appreciate a variety of viewpoints on Jewish and other issues, and I believe it's important to work productively with people even if we don't agree on everything.

As one of Sukkat Shalom's many members living outside of Edinburgh, I also believe it's important to reflect that part of our community's experience on Council.

In my professional life, I spent many years working in funeral care in Glasgow, where I was often called upon to practice empathy, diplomacy, and patience. I've now moved into working in the third sector, for a small but active Scottish death education charity based in Edinburgh. I share my relevant professional experience as Sukkat Shalom's current burials officer.

Barrie Levine

From Glasgow, and living there, I have been a member of Sukkat Shalom since 2018 and was previously a member of Council from 2021 to 2024, and latterly over the past year. Distance and health issues have precluded regular council attendance and participation in the community, though if re-elected I will endeavour to contribute where possible.

My religious background and education was in the orthodox community in Glasgow, although I was for many years not a member of any Shul before joining Sukkat Shalom, attracted by the values, openness and welcoming nature of the community. Professionally, my background was in various social work settings, followed by teaching at university. I also have extensive committee experience in the third sector overseeing and developing services in the legal and homelessness sectors. In my earlier period as a council member I contributed to the development of our administrator post. My experience will hopefully be of benefit to the community and I look forward to contributing to the continued development of Sukkat Shalom.

Maurice Naftalin

I would like to be on Council so that I can continue passing on the experience of my long involvement with Sukkat Shalom to the people who will form the leadership of the community in the future.

What I would bring to Council is some perspective from that experience, and some knowledge about how various systems – technical, personal, and religious – sustain the continuing life of the community.

I expect to continue, for the moment anyway, as joint religious affairs organiser and as the main IT admin.

I also intend to spend the first six months of this year working with Nick on regularising the financial administration of the community

Gillian Raab

I have been involved with the progressive community in Edinburgh since the years ebiven before Sukkat Shalom was founded, taking on various roles. For me the most important thing I would like to foster is to make it into welcoming community where people can be helped to live a Jewish life and to give support to one another, and the rest of the world. I carry out various tasks as secretary - the most onerous of which is keeping track of our members. I would like to share this with someone else soon.

Helen Searle

I am a new member of Sukkat Shalom, having upgraded from associate member at the end of my conversion last December. I am eager to learn and to reduce the burden on other Council members by serving my community.

Nick Silk

I have been a member of Sukkat Shalom since it was founded and have been on Council for all of that time. I have been Chair and co-Chair of our community as well as being on the Religious Affairs (RA) committee and if I am elected to Council, I hope to continue as a member of the RA committee and continue to help co-ordinate our services, and also to lead some of our services.

As well as helping with the running of the community, I hope that I can use my experience to help newer members of Council, but with the clear intention of helping and not trying to continue doing the things the way they have always been done!

Han Smith

I'm excited to once again be standing for the role of Council Member at Sukkat Shalom. My name is Han (they/them), and I'm a psychodynamic therapist and researcher in Edinburgh. I live with my wife (and fellow Council Member) Jennifer Andreacchi. We're both originally from the U.S. and have been members of this community since 2021. I have been honoured to sit on the Council since 2023.

As a Council Member, I am passionate about working to further establish Sukkat Shalom as a place open to Jews of various backgrounds and beliefs. I co-run the community's social media accounts and will soon be helping with security measures.

I look forward to the opportunity of helping lead and grow this community in the coming year.