



STRATEGY FOR REGENERATION 2026-2029

STANMORE & CANONS PARK
SYNAGOGUE



Sunrise over our new solar installation installed in January 2026

HOW TO USE THIS STRATEGY

The Strategy comes in two sizes: 'Front-End' only and the 'Full Document' which includes the Front End, Schedules and Appendix

For Members: Please read the Front-End Document to understand the direction, priorities and how you can help. Please read Schedule 2 of the 'Full Document' if you wish to see the Council's report on progressing the strategy since last year.

For Committee Members and Active Volunteers: Please read the Front-End and also the related sections of the Full Document to guide your plans and priorities.

For Leaders and Council Members: Please read the Full Document to be able to apply the Regeneration Test and monitor progress.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY EXECUTIVE

Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue stands at a pivotal moment

This Strategy is a deliberate choice to regenerate and remodel what we do in Stanmore and how we do it, and not to drift - it is our response to the changed landscape in Anglo-Jewry and in Stanmore.

We have chosen to focus not on recovering the past, but on building a stronger, warmer and more sustainable community for the years ahead.

This means pouring our collective efforts into making our Shul alive with activity, connection, learning and meaning — and a Community in which members feel valued, supported and involved, not simply a building they visit.

In writing this strategy, we have again been guided by feedback from the Community and by our shared conviction in Stanmore's enormous potential.

However, this Strategy cannot succeed simply because it is published: Regeneration cannot simply be delivered to the Community – it will only be realised if it is owned, supported and put into practice by the wider membership as well as by the leadership.

Jacqui Rudolph and David Metzger – Co-Chairs

Adam Burr – Vice Chair

Sam Rogoff – Financial Representative

Danny Isman and Peter Kraus – Wardens

SACPS HONORARY EXECUTIVE

16 July 2026

THE STRATEGY ON TWO PAGES

OUR VISION:

A Shul that is alive with activity, connection, learning and meaning
A sociable, welcoming, fun and caring community; where members feel valued, supported and involved – not just a building that people visit.



OUR THREE PRIORITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2026-2029

1. Meaningful engagement with more members across all life stages
2. Securing our financial and future sustainability
3. Excellence in everything we do – reliable delivery, a welcoming experience, timely follow-up, evident pastoral improvements



TO BE APPLIED ACROSS AND DRIVE OUR FIVE CONNECTED FOCUS AREAS

Meaningful engagement • Financial and future sustainability • Excellence in everything we do



1. BEIT KNESSET

Community
Relationships,
pastoral care,
volunteering and
belonging



2. BEIT TEFILLAH

Prayer
Meaningful,
welcoming and
engaging services



3. BEIT MIDRASH

Learning
Relevant,
accessible and
inspiring Jewish
learning



4. YESODOT

Foundations
Leadership,
finances, people,
premises and
sustainability



5. KESHARIM

Connections
Israel, charities,
local partners and
wider communal
links

Turning regeneration from an aim into a programme of action.

WHAT WILL CHANGE BY 2029

- Deeper relationships between SACPS and more members,
- more consistent pastoral care,
- clearer pathways for young families, and
- a Shul building alive with purpose throughout the week

WHAT WILL THIS REQUIRE

- Strong Rabbinic and lay leadership implementing priorities,
- empowered volunteers,
- resilient finances underpinned by professional modelling, and
- the active involvement of members through participation and support

HOW WILL IT BE MEASURED

We have asked our Council to apply a **'Regeneration Test'** to both check proposals are strategic and to measure progress.

This test looks at what we do and asks whether:

1. It builds relationships (and not just attendance);
2. It increases leadership or volunteer depth;
3. It improves the sustainability of our Community (financial, people/or and space)
4. It strengthens Jewish belonging, learning or meaning; and/or
5. It reflects our strategic priorities

TOP SEVEN INITIATIVES FOR 2026-2027





FOCUS AREA 1 – BEIT KNESSET: COMMUNITY

Community Relationships Events and Engagement • Pastoral and Welfare • Women • Young Families • Youth and children • Seniors • Young Adults • Communication

Positioning SACPS as a central part of more members' lives, with a focus on relationships, pastoral care and connection.

Why this matters

Without strong relationships and a sense of belonging, even excellent services and facilities cannot sustain a thriving Shul. Members have made clear that feeling known, valued and supported is central to meaningful engagement.

Where we are now

- Attendance and engagement have increased across many events and activities.
- Pastoral care is improving but still needs stronger coordination and Rabbinic leadership.
- Some groups, especially young parents and young adults, remain under-engaged.
- There is goodwill towards the Shul, but volunteering and ownership need deepening.

What success looks like

- Consistent and comprehensive pastoral services. Members feel known, supported and valued at key moments.
- Increased participation across services, events, clubs and learning.
- More volunteers and community-led initiatives.
- Greater pride, advocacy and sense of belonging.

Our priorities, 2026–2029

- Establish a Pastoral/Chesed Committee led with the new Rabbinic Couple.
- Deepen engagement with women, young families, seniors, children, youth and young adults, whilst prioritising those groups who are fundamental to our future sustainability.
- Create clearer pathways into volunteering and shared responsibility.
- Build a stronger culture of welcome, follow-up and connection.

Strategic emphasis

This focus area supports meaningful engagement and excellence by helping members feel that SACPS is not only a place they visit, but a community to which they belong.



FOCUS AREA 2 – BEIT TEFILLAH: PRAYER

Main Shabbat Services • Friday Nights • Young Services • High Holidays • Weekly Minyanim

Making services meaningful, welcoming and engaging across generations.

Why this matters

Services remain the most visible expression of synagogue life. Attendance patterns have changed and we cannot assume they will return. SACPS must ensure that services feel accessible, uplifting and purposeful for regular attendees, occasional attendees and those less confident in services.

Where we are now

- Shabbat attendance has stabilised, with encouraging growth in some areas.
- Service length and flow have improved.
- Alternative services are valued but not yet fully embedded.
- Less confident service-goers can still find services intimidating.
- Women's experience of services remains inconsistent.

What success looks like

- Members report greater connection, confidence and understanding in services.
- More members participate and lead across a wider cross-section of the community.
- Services feel uplifting, purposeful and welcoming.
- Young people and families see a clear route into Main Shul life.

Our priorities, 2026–2029

- Make all services as welcoming and engaging as possible without increasing duration.
- Develop a range of service styles for different spiritual needs.
- Strengthen accessibility, inclusion and participation.
- Reintroduce a learning service
- Continue to build pathways from children's services into the Main Shul.
- Continue evolving High Holy Day services.

Strategic emphasis

This focus area supports meaningful engagement by making our services a gateway into belonging, learning and participation. This focus area also creates alternative pathways for different demographics.



FOCUS AREA 3 – BEIT MIDRASH: LEARNING

Religious Education • Non-religious education and cultural activities

Learning that is relevant, accessible and inspiring.

Why this matters

Jewish learning is central to a vibrant community, but it must feel relevant, accessible and energising. SACPS should meet members where they are, whilst offering deeper opportunities for growth, confidence and Jewish meaning.

Where we are now

- Learning opportunities take place on most days of the week.
- Attendance is committed but often small outside services.
- Practical Judaism sessions have proved popular.
- Women, young adults and less confident learners remain under-represented.
- Cultural activities are successful when run, but not yet strategically planned.
- An increasing amount of content is recorded and uploaded to the website or YouTube.

Our priorities, 2026-2029

- Actively engage women, young adults and less confident learners.
- Develop learning that connects Judaism with modern life and practical questions.
- Use recorded and online content to broaden access.
- Develop cultural and informal education as legitimate forms of learning.
- Support members who can become informal educators.

What success looks like

- Participation grows across a wider demographic range.
- Members recommend learning opportunities and return regularly.
- SACPS becomes attractive to those seeking thoughtful Jewish growth.
- Participants feel more confident in Jewish literacy and identity.

Strategic emphasis

This focus area supports meaningful engagement by helping members find Jewish learning that is relevant to their lives and strengthens belonging.



FOCUS AREA 4 – YESODOT: FOUNDATIONS

Lay and Religious Leadership • Office and Facilities Teams • Membership and Finances • Premises

Leadership, finances, people and premises for the future.

Why this matters

Yesodot underpins every other part of the Strategy. SACPS can only achieve the aim of regeneration if it has strong leadership, sustainable finances, clear roles, committed volunteers and premises that support modern community life.

Where we are now

- Finances now affected by membership trends and pressure on key income sources.
- Younger age groups smaller in number than past generations
- Leadership is committed but stretched.
- Volunteering is lower than it once was.
- The site has potential but parts are under-used or in need of refurbishment or upgrade.

Our priorities, 2026–2029

- Recruit Rabbinic leadership aligned with the regeneration strategy and provide support to enable them to flourish.
- Stabilise membership and return to a sustainable budget with alternative income streams.
- Empower volunteers through clearer roles and expectations.
- Strengthen succession planning for lay leadership.
- Develop a realistic, phased premises plan.

What success looks like

- Dynamic Rabbinic and lay leadership working in partnership to engage existing members and attract new members.
- A balanced budget and improved financial resilience.
- Increased volunteer participation and leadership depth.
- Premises used more frequently, effectively and sustainably, generating revenue.

Strategic emphasis

This focus area supports our financial and future sustainability by ensuring SACPS has the people, resources and infrastructure needed to deliver the strategy.



FOCUS AREA 5 – KESHARIM: CONNECTIONS

Israel • Other Local Synagogues • Societal Progress Initiatives • Volunteering • Our locality

Our relationships with Israel, local partners, charities and the wider community.

Why this matters

SACPS does not exist in isolation. Our identity is strengthened by our relationship with Israel, neighbouring synagogues, charities and wider society. For many members, a community's values are demonstrated by outward connection as well as internal life.

Where we are now

- The community remains strongly Zionist in outlook.
- Israel engagement has increased, but active support is uneven outside major events.
- Collaboration with neighbouring synagogues and local organisations is improving but ad hoc.
- External volunteering and partnerships are under-developed.
- Members want focused impact rather than constant appeals.

What success looks like

- Stronger participation in Israel-related learning and activity.
- Regular collaboration with synagogues, charities and communal bodies.
- SACPS recognised locally as a community that contributes positively beyond its walls.
- Members feel pride in SACPS's values, voice and outward engagement.

Our priorities, 2026–2029

- Embed meaningful Israel engagement beyond crisis response.
- Develop strategic partnerships with neighbouring synagogues.
- Build deeper relationships with selected charities and local partners.
- Reduce appeal fatigue by focusing on impact and engagement.
- Create clearer routes for members to contribute beyond SACPS.

Strategic emphasis

This focus area supports excellence and meaningful engagement by connecting SACPS to causes, communities and partnerships that give members pride and purpose.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Strategy is also an invitation to every member to help shape the next chapter of Stanmore. However much time you have, and whatever stage of life you are in, there is a way to be part of it. What matters is that we all play some part in building the future of our Community together.

FIVE SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP

- **Come a little more often**, when you can, and help strengthen the life of the Shul through your presence.
- **Bring someone with you** to a service, club, event or activity, so that others can discover what Stanmore has to offer.
- **Connect with a group** that interests you, whether by joining a WhatsApp group, club or activity, or simply staying in touch with what is happening.
- **Offer some practical help**, whether a few hours of your time, a professional skill, a pair of hands for a one-off project, or support with an event.
- **Take on a greater role** if you are able, by joining a committee, helping to lead an initiative, sponsoring a project, or using your experience to support the Community more regularly.



Helping does not need to mean taking on a formal position. Some of us will be able to give a little. Others may be able to give more. It may be as simple as introducing Stanmore to others and speaking about the Shul with pride.

If you would like to help but are not sure where you fit, please get in touch. We would be delighted to talk it through and help you find something practical, meaningful and manageable. Please contact volunteering@stanmoreshynagogue.org

FEEDBACK

The Strategy Feedback Form can be found at

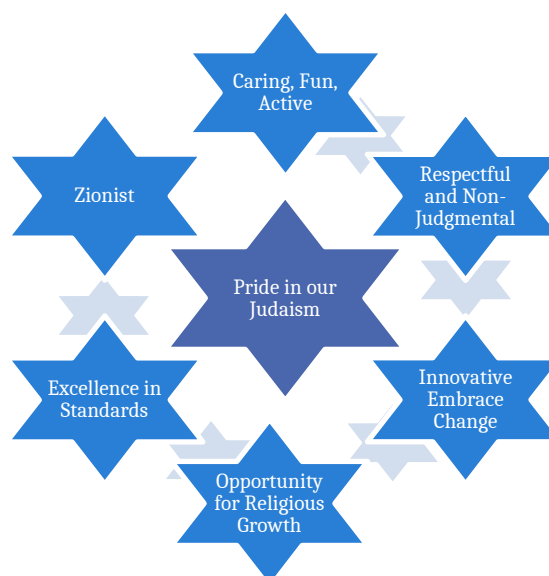
<https://stanmoreshynagogue.org/our-story-our-vision>

FULL DOCUMENT SCHEDULES AND APPENDIX

The following sections provide the supporting detail behind the front-end strategy.

SCHEDULE 1 – VALUES AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE STRATEGY

Our strategy is underpinned by seven community ‘values’ approved by our Council:



Our guidelines for creating and updating the Strategy was that it should respond to our Community's ambitions and set the path for our religious and lay leadership, using:

- An honest diagnosis of challenges and what needs to change;
- A clear action plan with priorities – policies to which we will allocate leadership and resource commitment;
- Appropriate aims in accordance with our halachic principles and values;

and avoiding:

- Poor foundations - goal setting with weak or no analysis;
- Unrealistic/aspirational targets without resources/potential resources; and
- Meaningless business consultancy jargon.

The Strategy is currently owned by the HE with input from Rabbi Eli Birnbaum but it is hoped future iterations will be owned jointly with our Rabbinic leadership. Our Elders and Council are invited to comment ahead of publication. It is intended that progress will be reviewed at least twice a year by Council and the document will be updated annually, with the timing adjusted to allow for changes in leadership, etc.

Each iteration of the Strategy should outline changes that need to take place in order to bring the Shul to a position where it is evidently delivering the strategy (i.e., all our members, our employees, US head office and other observers will be able to see what we are doing and how changes fit in).

SCHEDULE 2 - COUNCIL APPRAISAL OF STRATEGY PROCESS

This is a summary of an appraisal of progress towards the objectives set out in the Strategy, based on a review of the Honorary Executive's Annual Report for 2025–26.

The appraisal has been prepared from the perspective of Council members acting in a non-executive capacity, with the intention of providing an honest and constructive assessment of where progress is being made and where further focus is required.

The approach this year differs slightly from previous years. Rather than a purely narrative review, the appraisal considers progress on a **section and sub-committee basis**, reflecting how activity is delivered across the community. This aims to provide a clearer and more practical view of where strategic impact is being achieved.

In assessing progress, Council has applied a **traffic light system** to indicate overall effectiveness, based on the Regeneration Test outlined in this year's strategy which requires assessment of whether activity:

- builds meaningful relationships (rather than just attendance)
- increases leadership or volunteer depth
- improves sustainability (financial, people or space)
- strengthens Jewish belonging, learning or meaning
- aligns clearly with strategic priorities

Ratings:

-  **Green** – strong evidence of strategic impact
-  **Amber** – good activity, but impact inconsistent or not yet sustained
-  **Red** – limited evidence of strategic impact

Context

The assessment has been conducted against a context without a Senior Rabbi/Rabbinical Couple in place. That has inevitably downgraded some of the marking, not least due to time involved in the selection process. Some strategy areas require direct involvement of a Senior Rabbi, and whilst we have covered those to some degree they will inevitably have either diverted attention from other roles (for example, in the case of Rabbi Eli Birnbaum) or have fallen short of the full commitment a Senior Rabbi/Rabbinic couple could bring.



Beit Knesset – Community relationships, events and engagement

Young Families – ●

There has been a strong volume and creativity of programming, with a number of well-received events. However, some initiatives have required adjustment and attendance has varied, suggesting that the model is still being refined. There is growing engagement, but less clarity on sustained relationship-building.

Youth – ●

There has been significant progress in both scale and depth. Structured programmes are developing leadership, engagement and responsibility, with clear evidence of increasing ownership from participants. This is strongly aligned with strategic priorities.

18-30s – ●

Some successful initiatives and partnerships, particularly earlier in the year. However, activity has not been consistent throughout the full period and engagement appears to fluctuate. There is an opportunity to build a more regular and self-sustaining offering.

General community events and clubs – ●

There is a wide range of high-quality activity and strong participation across the community. However, it is not always clear which activities are leading to deeper connection versus one-off attendance.

Overall – ●

There is clear energy, creativity and commitment across community programming. The next step is to place greater emphasis on consistency, prioritisation and depth of engagement.



Beit Tefillah – Religious services

Shabbat services – ●

Services remain a core strength, with good attendance, strong atmosphere and continued innovation in delivery.

Weekday services – ●

Reliable minyan and consistent participation, supported by strong coordination, continue to underpin community life.

Yamim Noraim – ●

Positive feedback and thoughtful development of service formats have strengthened accessibility and engagement.

Women's Tefillah and Sephardi services – ●

These continue to demonstrate strong identity, participation and growth.

Rabbinic leadership (interim position) - ●

Continuity has been maintained effectively despite the absence of a Senior Rabbi. However, this continues to place a natural limit on further development.

Overall - ●

Religious services remain one of the community's strongest areas, combining consistency with thoughtful development. There is an opportunity to use services more intentionally as a gateway into broader engagement.

**Beit Midrash - Education and cultural activity****Educational provision - ●**

There has been a significant increase in both the range and frequency of learning opportunities, including new and more accessible formats.

New initiatives and content - ●

Innovation is evident, including digital content and short-form learning, broadening accessibility.

Experiential learning - ●

Trips, guest speakers and immersive experiences have enhanced the overall offer.

Reach and longer-term impact - ●

While activity is strong, it is less clear how far this is reaching less-engaged members or building longer-term learning pathways.

Overall - ● (with some amber elements)

There is strong momentum and creativity in this area. The next step is to better understand and extend reach and long-term engagement.

**Yesodot - Organisation, finances and facilities****Finance - ●**

A small deficit has been recorded and reserves are under pressure. Combined with planned capital expenditure, this highlights a need for continued focus on financial sustainability.

Membership - ●

Onboarding and welcome processes appear strong, with a thoughtful approach to new members. However, overall membership numbers have declined.

Premises and capital projects - ●

There is clear ambition and progress in improving facilities. However, the financial implications of these projects require careful management.

Sustainability (environmental) - ●

There has been tangible progress, with initiatives that provide both environmental and financial benefit.

Operational capacity - ●

Delivery continues across all areas but there is evidence of pressure following staffing changes and reliance on volunteers.

Overall - ● (with red elements)

Significant activity and progress are evident, but financial sustainability and capacity remain key areas requiring attention.

**Kesharim - Connections****Volunteering - ●**

Volunteer engagement is a major strength of the community. However, activity is largely operational, with less evidence of structured leadership development.

Israel engagement - ●

Strong, meaningful and well-supported programming reflects deep community connection.

Community care - ●

Consistent, structured and high-impact support continues to be delivered effectively.

External and partnership activity - ●

There are good examples of partnership and engagement, though these are not yet clearly structured or scaled.

Overall - ● (strong underlying green elements)

Community spirit and connection are clear strengths. There is an opportunity to build more structured pathways into ongoing engagement and leadership.



Overall reflection

The past year reflects a community with strong commitment, energy and a high level of activity across many areas.

There are clear strengths in:

- religious services
- education and learning
- volunteer engagement
- community care and connection

At the same time, several themes emerge from a non-executive perspective:

- a need to shift from **activity to measurable impact**
- greater clarity on which areas are building **sustained relationships**
- continued reliance on a relatively small number of staff and volunteers
- financial sustainability and membership trends requiring ongoing focus
- an opportunity to use a clearer framework to guide prioritisation and evaluation

The coming year presents an opportunity to build on strong foundations while introducing greater focus, prioritisation and clarity around what success looks like.

SCHEDULE 3 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HONORARY EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

This guide was first produced in June 2024 to introduce new Council members and sub-committee heads to the leadership structures within the Synagogue and hopefully to encourage them to feel empowered in getting the most out of their roles. Subsequently, it has been shared with the wider membership through the Strategic Plan.

It also sets out our current Sub-Committees and other Shul 'portfolios' which are always evolving so should not be taken as accurate in future

1. What is Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue?

- Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue is formally a member synagogue of the United Synagogue (US). It is not an independent legal entity and is required to operate in accordance with the US byelaws. The latest version of these can be found here with other important US Policies: <https://theus.org.uk/policies/>
- As we are not an independent entity, the US formally owns 'our' properties (the Synagogue building and the Rabbi's home) and any monies sitting in 'our' accounts. However, it effectively delegates responsibility for the same to our Honorary Executive ('HE') and Synagogue administration, and we manage the same as a branch of the wider US organisation.

2. Who are the HE?

- The HE is a 5-8 person lay executive that leads the community with assistance from professionals at the US 'Centre'. They are required to act in accordance with the US byelaws and standards.
- Jacqui Rudolph was formally elected Chair and David Metzger as Vice Chair in 2025 and they occupied the opposite roles from 2023-2025. However, they have operated as **Co-Chairs** from the outset. They are appointed for a 2-year term.
- The HE have the power to co-opt a further vice-chair and Adam Burr has held this position since 2024.
- Danny Isman and Peter Kraus were elected as wardens in 2025 for a 2-year term. Again, the HE have power to co-opt a third warden.
- Sam Rogoff was re-elected as Financial Representative (FR) in 2026 for a 2-year term.
- The Synagogue has the ability to elect or co-opt a separate Women's Officer as part of our HE. In other Shuls, the role of the Women's Officer is to liaise with the Rabbinic Team to enhance women's experience, introduce initiatives and support women of the Community in lifecycle events. The Council has not previously mandated such a role at Stanmore, preferring that there should be female representation in every HE, without a designated role like this.
- The Synagogue has previously co-opted a Pastoral HE to liaise with our Rabbinic Team and Community Care.

3. What are the main roles of the Co-Chairs/ Chair and Vice Chair(s)?

- Creation of a Vision; strategic leadership and responsibility for implementation
- Ensuring that all events, speakers, communications, visits, and collaborations support the ethos of the United Synagogue
- Communication with US Centre
- HR and recruitment
- Line Management of Rabbonim and Administrator
- Chairing of Council Meetings
- Chairing of the AGM
- Community reporting
- Revenue and membership decisions together with the FR
- Capital spend and budgeting decisions together with the FR
- Representing our Community at key events
- Ensuring there is a safeguarding officer
- Delegation of roles to the Council and Sub-Committees
- Leadership/liaison roles with Sub-Committees and Portfolios
- Liaison with other US Shul HEs and attendance at US Chair Events
- Responding to Members' complaints and suggestions
- Succession Planning

A Vice Chair supports the Chair(s) in their responsibilities and steps-in where required. Typically, a HE team can be expected to divide up the above roles between them according to their capabilities and interests.

In accordance with the motion passed by the Council when we adopted this HE structure in 2011, the Chair of the Synagogue is not required to be 'Shomer Shabbat' (as that term is typically understood in the Community) and, if male, is not expected to sit in the 'wardens' box' in the Main Shul. However, it is hoped that they take on the traditions and values of a United Synagogue leader.

4. What are the main roles of the Wardens?

- The Wardens run the Main Shul Services in close conjunction with our Rabbonim and Chazan are responsible for ensuring they run smoothly and in accordance with the ethos and rules of the United Synagogue including the Office of the Chief Rabbi
- They act as the 'Gabbai' in the Main Shul for Shabbat and on Yom Tovim and co-ordinate with any other Gabbaim for other services (weekday minyan, other services on Yamim Noraim, Tzemach, Sephardi service, Women's Tefillah Group, Youth etc).
- The Wardens are responsible for coordinating with celebrants in advance of semachot held in Shul services including discussions of donations to mark the same.
- Prior to 2011, the Wardens and FR constituted the full HE (with any one of them acting as Chair). Whilst we now elect an independent Chair and Vice Chair, at Stanmore the Wardens continue to be active as full members of our HE team, if they wish to do so, supporting the Chair(s) and Vice Chair(s) and being involved in the full range of responsibilities identified above as above. This can include matters such as line management, strategic planning, religious education, our premises and involvement with Sub-Committees. This enables the HE to operate as an effective

and collaborative team and stands as a differentiator with other US synagogues where the roles of wardens and Chairs/Vice Chairs are traditionally distinct.

5. What does the FR do?

- The Financial Representative has primary responsibility for managing the Shul's finances including budgeting
- As with the Chair(s) and Vice-Chair(s), the Financial Representative is not required to be 'Shomer Shabbat' and, if male, is not expected to sit in the 'wardens' box' in the Main Shul or undertake service duties.

6. Who is the Shul Administrator and how does the Office function?

- Shelley is the official 'Administrator' - a required role under the US byelaws with specified responsibilities. She also heads our Office Team as our Community & General Operations Manager and the facilities team also report to her.
mail@stanmoresynagogue.org
- Justine is our Finance Manager and deals with all financial matters in the Office in conjunction with the FR as well as covering other functions as and when needed.
finance@stanmoresynagogue.org
- Karen is the Community Administrator and is responsible for most of our communications such as the Weekly Newssheet but again covers other functions as and when needed. office@stanmoresynagogue.org

7. Who are the Elders and what is their role?

- The Elders are esteemed members of the Synagogue appointed with the approval of the Council to this position to advise the HE. They will have had material experience of the working of the HE and/or Council and/or elsewhere in the UK Jewish Community enabling them to provide such advice.
- Elders are appointed for life. They are invited to attend Council meetings but do not vote at them. They are not permitted after appointment to stand again for an HE or Council role and are not expected to take an executive or managerial role.
- The current Elders are Seymour Saideman and Stuart Taylor.

8. What is the Council and how does it function?

- Each US Synagogue is required to have a Council consisting of the **HE and other eligible members** - the US minimum number for non-HE members is 10 (5 men and 5 women) and the maximum is 24 (12 men and 12 women). In our case, our Council has voted since 2023 to have a Council with a maximum of 20 non-HE members (10 men and 10 women) if all positions are filled. Whilst it is possible to co-opt to fill vacancies in the Council until the next annual election, spaces reserved for men and women respectively cannot be filled by a person of the other sex.
- There is a 6-year consecutive term maximum for members of the Council (unless the minimum of 10 members is not attained and the consent of the United Synagogue is obtained)

- The Council must meet a minimum 4 times a year. We usually expect there to be **8-10 meetings in a calendar year** at Stanmore. The quorum is a third of all members (including the HE).
 - Elders and Rabbonim are invited to attend Council meetings but are not required to do so and do not have a vote.
 - Where a Sub-Committee head, representative or other leader of a Shul group , club or activity is not a Council member, they may be invited at the HE's discretion to attend a Council meeting but are not permitted to vote.
9. What is the role powers and expectations of a Council member?
- The **role** of the Council is to:
 - i. to reflect and communicate the views of the membership about the Synagogue and its activities;
 - ii. to support the HE, the Rabbinical team and professional staff, and HE in delivering the best for all its members;
 - iii. to carry out the formal powers reserved for the Council in the Byelaws - these are set out below; and
 - iv. at the request of the current HE, to monitor implementation of the strategy on behalf of the Community.
 - Under the Byelaws, the Council has the following **formal powers**:
 - o To act as the forum to discuss the affairs of the Synagogue and its proper operation
 - o To assist the HE in the discharge of the administration of the Synagogue
 - o To receive reports, offer advice and guidance to the HE
 - o To receive and approve the annual budget
 - o To receive the report of any selection committee for the appointment of a Rabbi and to determine which candidate for such a position should be recommended to Members for appointment
 - o To determine the composition of the HE for the following year and to fill casual vacancies in the HE
 - o To determine in February or March of each year, the composition of the Council for the following year
 - o To carry out such other functions and powers as may from time to time be allocated to the Council by the HE.
 - In carrying out their duties , it is **expected that Council members will**:
 - o attend the approx. 8-10 Council meetings during the year
 - o be responsible for/actively involved in at least one specific '**portfolio**' (see below)
 - o attend Stanmore events to represent the Council and encourage others to join the Synagogue and attend events, services etc.
 - o participate in either the Shabbat Welcome, Security, Shamash /Lady Steward or Kiddush Teams

- Male members are encouraged to attend Mincha/Maariv prior to Council Meetings

10. What are these portfolios that Council Members are expected to be responsible for/actively involved in?

- Much of the activity of the Shul is carried out through Sub-Committees to the Council. However, there are many other Shul activities, clubs and functions that are not formally Sub-Committees or currently formally reporting to sitting under any such Sub-Committee.
- The current HE have stated that they wish for those involved in these portfolios as well as all other volunteers in the Shul to feel empowered, to have a sense of ownership in connection with their portfolio and to feel their volunteering has an impact. Obviously, there is a need for financial controls and for activities to be consistent with our strategic aims, so it is important all Sub-Committees and other shul-related groups have regular connection with the Council and the HEs, but this is hopefully without impacting on the benefits of purpose, ownership and impact.
- There are occasional concerns that some of our volunteers are over-represented and therefore stretched too thinly over too many committees – they are asked to have this in mind when deciding where they can best make an impact and actively contribute.
- The list of portfolios is shown below. The groupings shown are mostly for convenience. Groups which currently appear under the Community Life grouping will also fall under an overriding Community Department committee to guard against fragmentation and the ‘right arm not knowing what the left is doing’ and to assist with the creation of events which do not fall under other existing Sub-Committees.

1.

Current Sub-Committees and Portfolios at Stanmore

Community Life	Services and Religious Education	Welfare and Pastoral	Infrastructure	Representation
Community Life SC ¹	Services Strategy Group ²	Welfare and Pastoral SC ³	Finance and Fundraising SC ⁴	US Council ⁵
Young Families SC	Religious Education SC ⁶	Stanmore Synagogue Community Care ⁷	Premises SC	Board of Deputies ⁸
Israel SC	Tzemach service	Chevre Kadisha ⁹	Security SC	Local Partnerships ¹⁰
Youth SC	Sephardi Service	Safeguarding ¹¹	Catering SC	
18-30s SC	Women's Tefilla Group	Gemilat Chesed	Sustainability SC	
Seniors SC		Shiva Support	Communications SC	
New Members SC		Tehillim Group	Charities (ad hoc)	
Chaverot SC		Challah with Love ¹²		
Mitzvah Day SC				
Volunteering SC				
Clubs and Activities**				

* SC = Sub-Committee of the Council. Not all Portfolios are formally SCs, and Portfolio and SC heads/leads do not need to be Council members but should either have representation from the Council or HE or report periodically into Council meetings when requested to do so. There will be HE and/or Rabbinical Team members allocated to each SC, so that information circulates easily but they may not be able to attend meetings in practice.

** Current clubs include Safire, Happy Sefer After (book club), Business Networking, the Art Club, the Bridge Club, Stanmore Active (a new collective group currently covering Pickleball, walking and our other sports and activity clubs). Ideas for other clubs we would like to see at Stanmore could include museum visits, film club, theatre club, public affairs interest group, choir and ulpan ('Shulpan?')

11. When /how often should Sub-Committees meet?

¹ Overall Plenary & Strategy Committee for all the other committees in this grouping

² Overall Plenary & Strategy Committee for Services - membership is chosen by the Wardens

³ Proposed Overall Plenary & Strategy Committee for the other committees in this grouping

⁴ A new committee supporting the FR with financial strategy

⁵ Up to 9 Council members currently

⁶ Membership of this group is chosen by the Rabbonim and Wardens and as directed in the Strategy

⁷ Run by SSCC with training requirements

⁸ Separately elected by members for 3-year terms. Numbers determined by Council.

⁹ By invitation

¹⁰ Proposed committee to include interfaith work and connections in Stanmore.

¹¹ By invitation

¹² Challot for those sitting Shiva

- This will vary depending on the subject matter and is not regimented. That said, we hope most Sub-Committees meet at least every 2 months unless their work is of an ad hoc or reactive nature.
- Possibly as a follow on from Covid and partly for reasons of convenience, there has been a reduction in Sub-Committees meeting in person or holding video meetings and instead conducting their business via WhatsApp and bilateral calls etc. This is generally convenient but care needs to be taken that it does not limit the introduction of new faces and succession planning (which in turn increases the burden on a few volunteers who are on too many committees).

12. What do we mean by setting an example in Member Recruitment?

- The Strategy is focused on regeneration – increasing membership, attendance and engagement. The HE are of the view this will rely on two things:

“Changing the dialogue” – changing the way we as members talk about the Shul; being proud of the Shul and becoming advocates of it (which, of course, requires standards to be raised so that this is the case); and

“Member Recruitment” – actively encouraging friends to come to events, clubs, services, etc. and hosting them.

As with all charities, the board (here the Council) need to lead by example on this and be invested in making our events a success. For many, our Shul is essentially a social affair and services, events, activities all succeed through social groups attending – it is very difficult to ‘recruit’ people who are not already connected by one or two degrees to the Shul.

APPENDIX TO THE 2026 STRATEGY

The Appendix is divided into the Five Focus Areas, with each further sub-divided into separate chapters containing two parts: analysis and observations followed by what needs to change.

OUR FIVE CONNECTED FOCUS AREAS				
Meaningful engagement • Financial and future sustainability • Excellence in everything we do				
				
1. BEIT KNESSET Community	2. BEIT TEFILLAH Prayer	3. BEIT MIDRASH Learning	4. YESODOT Foundations	5. KESHARIM Connections
Community Relationships, Events and Engagement Pastoral & Welfare Women Young Families Youth & Children Seniors Young Adults Communications	Main Shabbat Services Friday Nights Young Services High Holidays Weekly Minyanim	Religious Education Non-religious Education and Cultural Activities	Lay Leadership Religious Leadership Office and Facilities Teams Membership and Finances Premises	Israel Other Local Synagogues Societal Progress Initiatives Volunteering and our Locality
Turning regeneration from an aim into a programme of action.				



FOCUS AREA 1 - BEIT KNESSET COMMUNITY

1. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS, EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENT

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. One of the frameworks for this strategy paper and an overall long-term core objective is derived from the United Synagogue mission statement to engage more Jewish people in doing more Jewish things more of the time. In other words, we wish to see a larger proportion of our community engaged with our organised activities (whether religious educational and social), particularly from families and groups who did not feel that they are currently involved or engaged.
2. The HE share the view that success in this objective can only happen by ongoing honest self-analysis and improvement of our relationship with members. We do not live in a society or community where we can take Synagogue attendance and involvement as a given. Our members have other interests and needs and have many other organisations and entertainments competing for their time.
3. Our previous strategy documents also considered the impact of Covid lockdowns and a period without Community Department leadership accelerating the above trend. However, over the last 2 years we have, through the leadership of Rabbi Eli Birnbaum, returned to pre-Covid levels of activities and events in most areas. Attendances have increased progressively at events and services, for example,
 - Almost 270 people attended a recent lunch honouring Rabbi Melvyn Bloom and attended by the Chief Rabbi – thought to be a record for a seated and catered dinner in the Freman Sussman Hall.
 - New book, pickleball and music clubs show the diversity available at the Shul
 - Consistently high numbers coming to our weekly SAFIRE club for older members.
 - A wonderful Friday Night Dinner in 2025 celebrating veterans staying with us for the Peace of Mind programme, seen by many as the highlight of the 2025 calendar.
4. The positive feedback received in our 2025 survey of members stands in marked contrast to that received in 2023, where members revealed negative feelings to explain why they were no longer regular attendees. Back in 2023, the two common themes which needed to be tackled were identified as:

- the breaking of the Shul 'habit' and the competition from other activities which have replaced it; and
- the absence of the pull factor - the lack of feeling wanted, connected and valued and/or the sense that the Shul has let people down and is not consistently delivering services or other events or activities which members respond to.

That feedback was the driver for our decision to re-invest in and re-establish our relationship with many community members in order to 'compete' successfully for our members' involvement and engagement, irrespective of whether that was with clubs, services or pastoral connections.

5. Whilst the feedback has moved to being much more positive and there have definitely been successes with one-off special services and events as well as clubs, we still have some way to go. Our view is that the relationship of many members is positive at a 'transactional' level - insofar as members are happy if their views are heard and the services and events are of the right quality - but we have only seen more modest uplift in the numbers volunteering, indicating we have a way to go in establishing a deeper sense of commitment and ownership.
6. Similarly, there is no doubt the 'dialogue' around the Synagogue has changed for the better and hopefully this will continue to improve with the recruitment of the new Senior Rabbi/Rabbinical couple.
7. There used to be a theory that Synagogue communities in this country could only expect a 'shelf-life' of 60-80 years because of generational demographic changes. This argument, however, no longer appears to hold sway. Jews remain in our area in large numbers, with many under 50s simply choosing not to be members or to not attend our activities. Research conducted recently by Rabbi Eli with the help of the office team revealed that the overwhelming majority of members (appx 1300 people) live within a two-mile radius of the shul building. Although this trend is shifting for many reasons, for now it is important to use this geographic contiguity to our advantage.
8. With the large numbers moving into nearby Edgware, we also think it is reasonable to anticipate there will be renewed growth of interest in Stanmore and there has been a recent increase in prospective members 'trying out' the synagogue services.
9. Some of our members believe Stanmore is an expensive area for families but, in reality, it benefits from a mixed housing stock, which is now competitively priced with, for example, Bushey (whilst benefitting from the Underground and extensive green spaces). There are significant amounts of lower cost housing west of the station which used to be extensively owned by Jewish families.
10. Moreover, some neighbouring United Synagogues have turned around periods of decline/inactivity into periods of growth and renewed activity. In our view there is no reason we cannot emulate this by investing in leadership and engaging with members.

11. The impact of the reduction in numbers of our members on our finances discussed elsewhere in the Strategy has led to experiments to find savings over the years. We think these can be important and acknowledge the need to work within reasonable budgetary constraints. That said, the Executive are also wary of potential false economies – which is why we wish to ensure maintenance of standards ('seeking excellence') is high on our agenda. For example, although for a period we had fewer people attending our services, the Shabbat kiddush (and in particular the kiddush for a simcha where guests are attending) is very often seen as a shop window for a Shul and arguably reflects a community's self-perceived identity. We have therefore invested in both the content and appearance of the kiddush – we see it evolving as an opportunity to attract people to come to Shul and to sponsor the kiddush, rather than an opportunity for savings.
12. In the summer of 2025, Rabbi Eli worked with then Events Manager Sophie Kleiman to totally overhaul the various committees that drive so much of our community's engagement. Seven different committees were incorporated under the umbrella 'Community Life Committees', and each committee now meets every month or two to map out events, analyse feedback from previous events, and brainstorm ideas. However, since the departure of the Senior Rabbi and the Events Manager – with both positions still vacant many months later – this area has fallen into some disrepair.
13. We also need to identify what we consider to be 'successful engagement'. At the moment, we loosely measure attendance, but do not keep records of this, or of volunteers involved or feedback, to track improvements. And of course, like all organisations, the feedback we would find very useful is from members who do not attend events, who are also the members least likely to respond to requests for feedback. Some initiatives, such as the CRP points system linking Shul membership and attendance to school applications, do exist and are designed to help Shuls measure successful engagement, but they can be too opaque, poorly communicated and too easy to circumvent to provide any reliable data. These initiatives will require review.
14. There are many members of our Community with a disability and/or neurodiverse condition. We have occasionally received messages from their families that Stanmore is more welcoming, more accessible and more supportive than many other Communities, but we have never sought focussed feedback from on these members to know if this is a universal experience. Nor have we ever worked with these members and their families to remove barriers and identify changes which will enable them to thrive at SACPS.
15. We should also note the role played by the overhaul of our website and communication platforms in improving engagement as well as the new members' packs created by our Community Department and New Members' Committee.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

16. Our priority objective remains restoring our position as a central part of many more members' lives. We will do this by ensuring we deliver a whole range of touch-points - social educational pastoral and religious - to facilitate contact with the Shul and other members of the community and deliver them to an excellent standard. We have previously described this as requiring a cultural shift transitioning from the traditional notion of a Shul building serving a community, to an active Community which also happens to have at its heart, a beautiful Shul (aka 'a Community with a Shul - not a Shul for a Community'). That is possibly now an overstatement in that this transition is well under way - but we have many more members to reach and the overall objective remains.
17. Our members seek a high level of engagement through events, services and other facilities and we have to ensure that our 'standards' and 'products/productions' are always seeking to meet that expectation. We have labelled this objective as 'seeking excellence' and a key element of this is all parts of our Shul and all committees acknowledging that the need for constant self-analysis and improvement is important. At the same time, we know that some regular members are resistant to even minor changes and we also need to protect their sense of belonging
18. A vital element of our sense of Community comes at important life events and at times of need. Members should know what to expect at such times and the Shul should be able to deliver that consistently. Too many members feel they have not been adequately supported at such times in recent history and this is a critical focus area for us to get right. Support and engagement are a 'two-way street'. This is further considered in our pastoral section below.
19. Engagement also requires regular and proactive contact with our members and understanding what they want from the Shul. Again, this needs to be a priority objective and it is also considered important that our new Rabbi/Rabbinic couple lead this contact.
20. The HE would like this to be a people and relationships-first strategy, but that also means we would also like our building to be hosting more activities for more age groups more of the time. If members are not using our building to attend services, we would still wish them to be using it for other activities whether spiritual or cultural. Accordingly, and within our fourth focus area below (Yesodot), we consider whether we are using our space effectively, including deciding how to incorporate different social facilities into our community centre. This is the first iteration of our strategy which is happening alongside our bringing forward plans in this regard.
21. We recognise that not all of our members will or wish to be inspired by services and shiurim and accordingly our focus is not going to be solely directed at attendance at religious services (although of course we have been working on improving this as well

with our Beit Tefillah and Beit Midrash strategies) – involvement in cultural, physical, educational and purely social activities (e.g. a film club, Israel education, cycling group or just a group of friends meeting at our Community Centre can also be ‘engagement’ with the Shul. The past 27 months since the first strategy was published has seen a host of new activities and clubs launched, many which meet and exist wholly outside our premises. We would like to see many more activities and clubs being created and whilst they should always ideally involve some touchpoint of Jewish connection or meaning, they do not need a religious component – they are at the heart of the notion of ‘a Community with a Shul and not just a Shul with a Community’.

22. We will define tests for projects that we use not only to measure success but also whether we should be doing them in the first place. These will go beyond attendance and budget and require us to maintain better records to track progress. This remains a work in progress with no real precedents across the US (such as KPIs).

As a starting point for this, we have asked our Council to start using a ‘Regeneration Test’ to measure success and strategic progress. This test looks at everything we are planning to do and have carried out and asks whether it:

- o builds relationships (and not just attendance)
- o increases leadership or volunteer depth
- o improves the sustainability of our Community (financial, people and/or space)
- o strengthens Jewish belonging, learning or meaning; and/or
- o reflects our other strategic priorities¹³.

23. A new initiative by Sara Isman working with US Head Office will explore our offering for those with neurodiverse conditions and/or a disability in the coming months. We need to see how we can better support them and their families at SACPS.
24. In an era of rapidly evolving technology, it is important to also recognise that the Shul may well be a central part of people's lives, but that connection is not necessarily sought out based (solely) on physical attendance. We will review the role technology, and especially social media and online content, can play in both diversifying and broadening our connection points to community life.

¹³ Whilst ‘seeking excellence’ is an objective that applies to all services, events, activities and relationships with all members, we have to recognise that engagement with certain demographics is by definition likely to play a bigger role in achieving our overall regeneration objective than others. This is why the Strategy focuses on specific demographic groups within this Section below.

2. PASTORAL AND WELFARE

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. This section of our strategy covers our support for members whether they have a sudden need or prolonged difficulty. It includes a large range of potential activities including visiting and calling members in response to illness or loss as well as proactively, listening to their issues, providing confidential counselling, providing assistance such as shopping and transport. It can also include spiritual support, helping those in financial need, inclusion (advocacy and celebrating) as well as more simply befriending.
2. In Stanmore, it is this area of community life which probably attracts more attention and feedback than any other (bar food!). That feedback has fluctuated in recent years from some positive praise to some quite stark criticism from members who have felt unsupported at key times. In particular, there have been too many occasions in the past twenty years where we received complaints about a lack of support/failure to meet commitments to keep in contact and or contact or visit members who cannot attend synagogue and/or who are unwell. We were aware even before being elected to office that in some cases this has led to complaints and a breakdown in relationships with the families concerned as well as contributing to the departure of very active members of our Synagogue.
3. We have, therefore, been honest with our self-criticism of our pastoral records in the 2024 and 2025 strategy documents. This year we can note a major reduction in the number of complaints (but not quite an elimination of them) but we are unable to determine whether this, is in part, due to reduced expectations in the absence of a Senior Rabbi.
4. Pastoral responsibilities fall under the control and supervision of our Senior Rabbi as a matter of the byelaws of the United Synagogue. Even though we do not have a Senior Rabbi currently, the HE will continue to identify this as a critical area for attention in the next 24 months for the following reasons:
 - A key objective of our strategy is to regenerate and re-engage. Yet a lack of pastoral care and attention has become the principal reason stated by members who switch away from our Synagogue without moving from Stanmore. We cannot continue to lose members and reputation due to this reason. Put simply, we cannot expect our members to care about the Synagogue and its success if we fail to care about them.
 - A second key objective is to stem membership loss and to recruit new members. This will not happen if members do not speak well about their Synagogue.
 - Pastoral care is intrinsic to our values as Jews. Rabbi Akiva famously said deemed 've'ahavta le'reecha kamocha' - you shall love your neighbour as yourself - as the greatest principle in Torah.

5. The size and age profile of our membership also dictates that this is an area where we need further assistance including from volunteers to provide the full range of pastoral and welfare services we have been accustomed to at Stanmore and to ensure that members in need consistently receive the support they expect.

We are very fortunate in Stanmore to have Rabbi Melvyn Bloom who actively visits and calls members who are unwell, as well as a few dedicated volunteers who do likewise. It has, however, been noted that sometimes those visited by Rabbi Melvyn Bloom or other members still complain that the 'Shul' has not visited or been in touch due to contact not coming from the Senior Rabbi.

Accordingly, a key decision for us in our recruitment of a new Rabbi, is how to support them in delivering a truly excellent pastoral service to our Community, including whether we continue with the model we have had for the last 30 years of Rabbonim with different responsibilities or move to a different model with a different balance of responsibilities.

6. For the past 20 years or so, prayers for shiva houses were organised by Rabbi Lew who conducted the vast majority, supported by Rabbi Melvyn Bloom and, on occasions, Chazan Turgel or a capable Shul member. The feedback for our bereavement support has usually been positive. Some families said they would appreciate written guidance being made available and so a new guide was made in 2024 which is now provided to the recently bereaved and which is also available on the new website.
7. We currently benefit from Rabbi Stanley Coten managing bereavement support for the Community and are reviewing if additional Rabbinic support is needed, as was previously the case with Rabbi Garber. Rabbi Eli has made himself available to cover as an officiant at levayas, shivas, stone settings etc. when needed. We recognise that it is very much a temporary solution keeping us in a holding pattern until a more streamlined solution under the guidance of the new Senior Rabbi can be realised and implemented.
8. Stanmore Synagogue Community Care (SSCC) was set up many years ago and is still led by Mrs Susan Starr. It was the forerunner to similar chesed-type organisations across the United Synagogue. In addition to its trained counsellors helping those who have been recently bereaved or who are unwell, since Covid it has had a particular focus on members who are over 80. It performs a vital lifeline for such members, including organising lifts and assisting with shopping. It maintains strict confidentiality and is an understated and undervalued jewel in the SACPS offering.
9. Following the departure of Rabbi Lew, SSCC has again stepped up and is playing a leading role in ensuring members in need are visited or called. It remains important that people let SSCC know of such needs as they cannot help without this information.

The HE are so grateful to all those who have stepped forward to help during this past 18-month period when we have not had Senior Rabbi.

10. Our community also has an independent welfare fund – the Gemilat Chesed Fund – to support members in particular financial need. Again, it is run separately from the SACPS executive and maintains strict confidentiality in relation to those it helps.
11. Our office is also often contacted by those in need of support, for example, in dealing with confidential financial difficulties and always seeks to deal with those sensitively
12. We are very fortunate in Stanmore to have our own Chevra Kadisha, which was established in 1988. This group prepare our deceased for burial with the utmost respect and in accordance with our traditions.
13. A group of volunteers also makes or buys challah for people observing shiva.
14. In some circles within the Shul, friends form informal rotas to support families sitting shiva with meals. We have in the past considered whether this should be formalised into a broader SACPS community function. In the past there have been some concerns around kashrut and other logistics (as well as availability of volunteers to make the meal). We are aware some other Shuls in London do manage this however and we need to look more closely at whether this is something we could aspire to introducing.
15. Happier lifecycle events such as births, Bar/Batmitzvahs, and marriages are held at Stanmore in reduced numbers than in years gone by but remain a solid and consistent part of our community calendar. To date, Rabbi Eli has managed to cover as officiant for almost all Semachot, but it is acknowledged that additional pre/post event support for the families is needed and should be guided and shaped by the Senior Rabbinic Couple. For example, members marrying under Stanmore's auspices are directed to MEP tutors via US Head Office, as Rabbi Eli does not have the bandwidth to commit to numerous additional hours for lessons with them.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

16. The HE have been considering whether the absence of overall Pastoral and welfare function/supervision has also led to a lack of coordination (and therefore people falling through cracks) and/or a failure to evolve as times change - as each element has kept to their own 'mission' and tried to work around a lack of internal communication. Whilst previously Howard Davis did very good work trying to bridge this gap as our Pastoral Executive, the HE are of the view that going forward there should be an overall Chesed/Pastoral and Welfare Committee managed by our future Rabbi and/or Rebbetzin. Many other larger Synagogues have such a committee and the HE have recently set up a virtual forerunner with the suggested actions set out below.

- Ensuring members are aware of the support available to them in times of need – particularly those without nearby active family support and/or those who have requested help.
- Leading roles for our new Rabbi and/or Rebbetzin
- Representation from SSCC and our other pastoral and welfare group
- A clear set of goals for pastoral and welfare services in Stanmore
- Deciding the specific services to be offered and processes for how the right people are contacted.
- A programme of proactive Rabbi-led periodic contact to members
- Integrated with other synagogue initiatives rather than stand-alone – so that those delivering pastoral support are aware of what else is going on to ensure holistic support for congregants
- Clear guidelines on boundaries and confidentiality
- A clear process to use more volunteers with training.
- Establish a system where members can easily request pastoral care support. This might include a direct line to a coordinator who can triage requests.
- Establish a communication plan to build awareness of services available
- Utilise SSCC's excellent developed connections with professionals, centres and organisations to handle complex situations
- Solicit feedback to ensure the programme meets the Community's needs and adjust as necessary over time. Keep track to ensure members feel supported.
- Ensure the programme is inclusive and addresses the needs of diverse groups including the families, the elderly and those dealing with disabilities and mental health challenges.
- Ensure our volunteers are celebrated and appreciated.

17. Our various individuals and groups working in this area have usually been very good in agreeing the appropriate levels of confidentiality to be applied with the member/family concerned. However, in a few cases there has been a default blanket approach applied to the extent that no one else knows about someone in need of assistance and there has been no way to check or monitor if support is being provided until a complaint is made (which is sometimes too late). A more sophisticated approach will be needed which still preserves an agreed and appropriate level of confidentiality.

18. We should review how we can utilise other pastoral touchpoints as a pathway to increase the sense of belonging and participation of members. For example, do Bar/Batmitzvah celebrants become regular participants of the Youth Service? Is there a system in place to invite Barmitzvah boys back on their 'anniversary' to lein in the main shul? Are there follow-ups with those who have suffered bereavements connecting them to Shul volunteering and clubs?

3. WOMEN

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Within Anglo-Jewry, there is a much wider range of educational opportunities available to Orthodox women than in the past.
2. Within the United Synagogue, women's representation and engagement have become a higher priority over the past decade.
3. SACPS was once the flag-bearer within the United Synagogue for greater female engagement and is proud of its role in creating the first Women's Tefillah Group . Although women's representation and engagement have undoubtedly improved compared to 20 years ago, arguably women's engagement at Stanmore in the last 10 years has not developed at a pace commensurate with it being a priority area within the United Synagogue. That said, there has, at least and pleasingly, been an uptick in women's events, education and engagement over the past few years.
4. Areas to be celebrated:
 - Within the lay leadership, there has been at least one woman on the Honorary Executive for many years (long before the US promoted "Women's Officers") and we have our first female chair.
 - Our Chaverot group continues to put on social and learning events for women in the community about once every 2 months. These range from learning opportunities, Israeli dancing, speakers, craft activities, Shavuot Tea and Torah, and social/learning events prior to Chagim amongst other activities. These events are becoming more popular with the women of the community.
 - There has been a renewed interest in learning opportunities for women, led by Rebbetzin Naomi Birnbaum, invited female educators and lay educators. This will hopefully increase meaning, connection and observance for women.
5. The Stanmore Women's Tefillah Group was the first Orthodox female tefillah group in Anglo Orthodoxy over 33 years ago. We are seeing more women from Stanmore attending and leading the services, with many women from other communities in Edgware, Mill Hill and Borehamwood & Elstree coming to participate in and attend our services. . In the service, held 4 times a year, women lead davening, lein from a Chumash and give Divrei Torah and girls lead Anim Zemirot. The women pride themselves on the high standards they set for all aspects of the service. Beginners are encouraged, supported and celebrated.
6. We have held Women's Hallel services in the past and hope to do this again in the future
7. Prior to the previous Senior Rabbi's departure In the monthly Tzemach (previously Limmud) Service, the mechitza is placed very close to the bimah, affording women an

opportunity to be close to the leining and davening. In addition, the Sefer Torah is returned to the ark via the Ezrat Nashim (women's section) allowing women to kiss the Sefer Torah if they wish to. Women are also invited to offer explanations and Divrei Torah during that service.

8. During Pesach in the last 4 years , a mechitza has been in place downstairs for women who wish to sit there. This was very well received by the women who chose to sit downstairs - the women who did not want to do so continued to sit in the gallery.
9. During Simchat Torah over the past 4 years, the women and girls were able to dance with a Sefer Torah (in a different section of the building from where the men were dancing) for the first time in many years.
10. An increasing number of women have started saying kaddish in their year of mourning.
11. There are informal grassroots groups of women who work to create a sense of Jewish connection with each other e.g., the "Women Learning Together" WhatsApp group, where a thought is shared each night of the Omer count to encourage women to maintain the count between Pesach and Shavuot (as well as other sharing throughout the year).
12. Rebbetzin Naomi Birnbaum launched a women's chaburah for 18-30s on Monday nights, which now alternates with a chaburah for older women on the same evening. Numbers for this class are consistent, but small.
13. Rabbi Eli has maintained a consistent weekly educational slot ('Wednesday Wisdom', 'I Believe', 'The Big Issues') which are open to and aimed at men and women alike, but again - while attendance was consistent, numbers remain relatively small.
14. Areas of concern:
 - There are few opportunities for women's or girls' study of Torah on a regular basis. No weekly shiurim are specifically targeted at women and there is currently no proactive attempt to engage women specifically in the learning that is on offer.
 - There have been very few women over the past decade invited as a 'scholar in residence' or similar to address the whole community of women and men. This means that the women of the community have few role models of learned Jewish women and on the whole (anecdotally), women in Stanmore do not perceive themselves to be 'Jewishly learned'. This is despite many women in the community being learned and successful in secular and professional areas.
 - The women's gallery in the Main Service is not as easy to navigate as the men's section due to the nature of the gallery. It is generally much harder for women to move around the space, and to welcome each other. It is also harder to see and hear what is happening on the bimah. At the same time, some speakers make limited eye contact with the women in the gallery while speaking and if inviting questions often omit to look up to take questions from the gallery etc.

- Women who are unable to access the women's gallery have a small area reserved for them downstairs in the main Shul. The women who sit in this area frequently complain that the adjacent men's section is noisy. While others (both men and women upstairs) have an option to move their seat, women in the downstairs area have no other place to sit.
- Whilst there has been an increase in women saying kaddish after a bereavement, women who choose not to say kaddish are not actively supported to find other ways to remember their parent / spouse / sibling e.g., learning or doing mitzvot in their name.
- Women who would like to say 'birchat gomel' (the prayer of thanksgiving for recovery and survival) after an illness or after they have given birth, have traditionally not been encouraged to do so in a service.
- Women of the community might not feel comfortable asking questions to the rabbi e.g., in areas of fertility, mikveh, marriage guidance or other areas where they would feel more comfortable asking for halachic advice from a woman. The United Synagogue has trained 'yoatzot halacha' for this purpose. However, women in Stanmore have limited awareness that such women exist.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

15. Our Rabbinic recruitment process has placed considerable priority on the role of our future rebbetzin in terms of the engagement of the women of the community – allowing flexibility on the exact nature of the role they will play but with a focus on supporting our women to connect more strongly with their Jewish identity in whatever ways suit their needs and stages of life. This should include being able to answer or being the route to answering halachic questions that women might be more comfortable asking a rebbetzin than a rabbi.
16. Women of the community should be offered regular options for connecting to their Judaism – e.g. positive social interactions, women's learning groups, mother and daughter learning opportunities, opportunities for women to enhance their connection to their Judaism in informal ways.
17. Women's learning needs should be an area of priority with shiurim geared towards women or towards being inclusive to women as well as men. Women should have access to high level textual learning alongside men. and women's learning should not be limited to "soft" topics. In short, we should offer learning opportunities for women that are engaging, high level and relevant at times and in places that suit their specific needs.
18. Women should be invited (as regularly as possible) to be part of a programme of external speakers.
19. As part of the development of our Premises plan, stakeholders should agree a strategy around women's seating in the main Shul.

20. As is currently the case, women with a yahrzeit should always be treated as equal to male members in terms of access to a call up (by a male relative) on a Shabbat.
21. We should initiate a programme of education and support for women who are mourners or observing a yahrzeit and/or who wish to say birchat gomel. Education should be available to all in the community about women mourners saying kaddish and both this and alternatives to kaddish should be proactively communicated to all female mourners/observers of a yahrzeit.

4. YOUNG FAMILIES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. It is true that it is not always clear who qualifies as a 'young family' and when that qualification ends exactly, but we can nonetheless make several observations in relation to those families we traditionally consider fall squarely within this category. We tend to consider anyone with children still at secondary school as a young family.
2. The HE considers this demographic to be critical to any plans of regrowth, in particular, in terms of attracting new members with an active interest in the success and development of our Community. There is a perception amongst some members that house prices in Stanmore are higher than other neighbourhoods and this dissuades younger families from moving here. We find this a difficult argument to sustain, as (i) this was seemingly less of an issue when our provision for this age group was stronger in the past; (ii) there is no evidence house prices have risen disproportionately in Stanmore to other nearby suburbs which benefit from higher numbers of younger families; and (iii) even if housing is cheaper in say Borehamwood or Hatfield, there is plenty of lower-priced housing in Stanmore, compared to some communities that continue to sustain growth. Overall, the housing stock can be said to be mixed and commensurate with the standards and location advantages enjoyed by other NW London 'Jewish' areas. Additionally, past concerns over Jewish school catchment areas have receded in recent years. What is more likely to be the case, is that currently there are insufficient numbers of young families currently living in those areas of Stanmore to form a nucleus to attract others in, and that the other benefits of moving into our Community have not been clear enough in recent years.
3. A number of people within this demographic have said they felt somewhat neglected by SACPS in the period between our Youth Directors and between Rabbi Fine's departure and Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's arrival.
4. There is also a perception that our current provision for this demographic tends to assume that the couple has children. Those without children may feel marginalised.
5. Events organised just for adults in this age groups can be poorly attended (25-40 people) and are often cancelled. In contrast, attendance of events geared towards children tend to be more consistent, ranging from 40-80 including parents. Series like the 'Havdalah Jams' have been very successful and consistent. It is therefore important to study how we can achieve a perspective-shift among this demographic from viewing events, services and programmes as a place just 'for the kids' to one that is holistically 'for the family' – with parents also able to gain significantly from the social benefits these events produce.

6. A key touch point for the involvement for parents is the Toddlers and Children services. But the former has dwindled significantly in recent years, often not happening at all. The latter suffers from perhaps being too 'passive' an experience for the parents, with no clear bridge into main Shul participation once children have graduated to Inters.
7. We are fortunate to have a strong group of individuals representing this demographic at Council and committee level – young parents want to get involved and help, which is encouraging.
8. Our premises are also used by other groups and organisations who tend to be from or provide for this demographic, but there is sometimes a lack of a link between these and the community itself.
9. Members of this demographic also include people who have not stepped into Shul since their bar/bat mitzvah. They may well be the 'furthest' demographic we deal with in terms of familiarity with the service and are often only coming due to their children.
10. The existence and benefits of Tribe Community Membership have not always been communicated clearly or effectively. We suspect that many don't take up membership simply because they don't know about it.
11. The Community Department has recognised the need to 'detach' involvement for children and young families from service participation and has launched a number of initiatives that significantly increase 'shul involvement' while offering solid Jewish education and Jewishly important experiences, without requiring service attendance. One hugely successful example of this was the 'Summer at Stanmore' day camp in Aug 2025 that attracted 60 children. Plans were in place to follow this up with a 'Spring at Stanmore' Pesach day camp, but these were unfortunately shelved with departure of our Events Manager in December 2025.
12. Further work is needed in increasing the bridge between our younger services and the main shul services, especially because many parents only attend shul for their children, and don't step foot into the main shul. Small scale initiatives like the Adom Olam Choir and Gelilah Assistant rota have shown modest successes in bringing parents into the main shul, but there is a way to go in this regard.
13. Several changes were made to accommodate the above; including moving the younger services' kiddush from the end to the beginning of the service and improving the timing and coordination of all services involved. Our consolidated efforts to finish the main service around 11:30am has the knock-on benefit of allowing much more young participation in shul.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

14. For the vast majority of our members, service and even attendance is as least as much a social activity as it is religious/cultural. People are more likely to join events and services if their friends are at all age groups – this was never more evident than in the difficulties all communities had in the return after lockdown. In this critical cohort of our community, we need to aim to help relationships form between young families with similar aged children, etc. Accordingly, we should strengthen the perception of Stanmore as a family-friendly community centre. Increase the variety of events and parent-only social events. Consider structuring child-centric events with a parallel activity for parents.
15. We need to strengthen successful pieces like Havdalah Jam by widening the reach to bring in less-affiliated members and members of other communities. Other communities are starting to copy the idea so this could have a huge appeal beyond Stanmore.
16. We should increase awareness of community care support for this demographic.
17. We will continue to strengthen the bridge from the toddlers' and children services to the Main Shul so that there is stronger support to be available for this demographic when they attend Services.
18. We should look to create a clearer and more effectively incentivised structure for service attendance and participation; involvement of youngsters in the Main Shul and a proper follow up programme to kick in after Bar and Batmitzvah, spearheaded by our Youth Directors.
19. Considering the numerical difficulties facing this demographic as we seek to increase it to a critical mass; the collaboration with neighbouring communities is of great importance and is already being explored. Our figures show that fewer than 30% of the membership is below the age of 40. Often the 'pool' from which we recruit for events is therefore too small from the outset to attract a critical mass. Widening that scope to deliver bustling events via collaboration is therefore a matter of mutual benefit.
20. As mentioned in section 1, a great deal of work must be invested into shifting the perception of the building among this demographic from principally a place of prayer and worship (a Shul) to a thriving venue for activities, clubs and events (a Community Centre). We should consider, as part of this, improving the furniture and décor of our younger services rooms, with investments to be made in toys, comfortable seating, and sensory play to make the premises much more appealing to parents of young children. This recognises and leans into the fact that many young parents aren't coming to shul in search of a 'Service' but would prefer to enjoy the social and communal benefits of a Shabbat morning.

5. YOUTH -AND CHILDREN

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Again, this is an area in which SACPS led initiatives for the entire United Synagogue (through the work of Rabbi Andrew Shaw, in particular) leading to the creation of Tribe. This took a long time to be fully successful but needs particular attention now – it has taken over 2 years to recruit a replacement for our previous Community Rabbi, with the appointment of Rabbi Eli Birnbaum in September 2023. The overall offering to the children and youth of the Community during that period was not adequate.
2. The youth of the synagogue is broken down into 4 groups:
 - Toddlers; under the age of 5 (up to reception)
 - Children; 5 – 8 years old (Yrs. 1-3)
 - Intermediates (inters); 8-11 years old (Yrs. 4-6)
 - Youth: 12 + (Yrs. 7-13)
3. The toddlers' service is parent- led and attracts a handful of toddlers on a Shabbat morning.
4. The children's service is led on a weekly basis by Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman. He has been employed by the Shul since 2014 to lead the service and runs a very enjoyable, engaging and interactive service. The numbers recently have dwindled to only a handful of children on a weekly basis but on the Yamim Noraim the service attracts approximately 80 children and receives excellent feedback. Prior to Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman, the service was run by parents and was frequently a first step into volunteering within the Shul.
5. The Inters service has been led by Yonah Quint since Sept 2025. Yonah has successfully kept numbers steady for this age group and has worked with Rabbi Birnbaum to create and launch initiatives like the Gelilah Assistant rota. Yonah is also working to increase the expertise and service skillset of the Inters participants, so that there is a clear learning curve from the Children's service to this. Further plans are in place from Sept 2026 to increase the average overall attendance.
6. In October 2024, following a lengthy and extremely thorough recruitment process, we were delighted to appoint Chani and Ari Davila to the role of Youth Directors. They have been superbly received by the youth, and we have seen an immediate and consistent increase in attendance of both the youth service and events. In Nov 2025, Ari and Chani took on full time roles in regular 'nine to five' jobs and consequently had to reduce their hours of employment with us by 75%. There is a shared feeling that this level of output is

unsustainable given the level of investment our youth demographic needs, and so Chani and Ari will sadly be stepping down from their post in August.

7. In their time with Stanmore, Chani and Ari successfully created and launched several follow-up programmes to the already established 'BnB' programme (see below): 'Live2Give', a volunteering programme for years 7-8, and 'Learn2Lead', a leadership programme for years 9-10. Both initiatives were very well received but have not translated into an uptick in youth service participation.
8. We closed our Cheder several years ago. With many of our children and youth attending Jewish schools, attendances had declined to a level where it was no longer seen as sustainable.
9. Bnei Akiva (BA), having seen dwindling numbers over the past few years, has also not started up again after the summer of 2023. In 22-23 despite a healthy number of younger madrichim, a Rosh (head of BA) needed to be drafted in from a nearby community. This discontinuity of BA reduced opportunities for our youth to gain and practise leadership skills, which had previously been a key part of growing up in a United Synagogue community.
10. In 2024 we launched a fresh new programme called Stanmore after School, initially aimed at pre-Barmitzvah age-group. Take-up was affected due to existing post-school activities, and then by the departure of the Senior Rabbi, and accordingly we have now moved to a softer start for this programme, featuring holiday and pop-up clubs with the intention of building it up to a regular post-school programme in the near future. This past summer saw a hugely successful day camp 'Summer at Stanmore' which attracted 60 participants.
11. Under the guidance of Rabbi Eli, we revamped and relaunched our Bar/Batmitzvah programme in September 2023 under the simple but catchy name 'BnB'. Now headed by our Youth Directors, the jewel in the crown of this programme is the twinning project with children from the Talpiot Youth Village in Hadera, Israel.
12. Our newly revamped Israel committee –led by younger members Zak Wagman and Sami Berkoff – are working closely with the UJS and Chaplaincy to explore initiatives for our older youth, i.e. those on the brink of going to university.
13. Under the 2025 revamp of the shul's committees, the youth and young family demographics were significantly more empowered through the creation of committees dedicated to focus almost exclusively on the needs of those demographics.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

14. Children/Youth – we will detach reliance on Shabbat morning to define success. We will invest in weekday/night programmes that bring families in, who are not (yet) considering regular service attendance as their most frequent touch point. E.g., Youth Zone, extra-curricular activities such as music, self-defence, art, ulpan etc.

Inters – We will develop a similar idea for this age-group such as building up raffle tickets to enter big prize draw end of each month. This demographic is old enough to nag their parents to go.

Youth – The regular youth service should occasionally be integrated into the main Shul (as used to be the case) where they lead part of the service and with youth 'wardens' serving as main Shul wardens. Outings just for this age group will also be developed.

All - Increase Children/Inters/Youth involvement and participation in Main Service, showcase talent, integrate more often e.g., with speeches, quizzes, leading things like Adon Olam etc.

Children/Tots - Broaden offering for children beyond elements under the 'Service' banner, e.g., Hebrew reading, learning about chagim, stories from Nach (rather than restricting this to Yom Kippur). Offer lunch some weeks so that services can start later and/or run longer, if programming demands.

We will increase our provision of child-friendly equipment on-site, with the aim of transforming the Shabbat morning experience from one that currently only revolves around the classic service-kiddush model, to one that encourages both our core attendees to stay for longer, and also our less regular attendees to come more often.

15. We will keep services leadership under regular review – a number of members have noted that in past times our parents led all our children services and this was often a first step for them with regard to further volunteering with the Shul. We also need to maximise the benefits we can gain from Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman's presence.
16. We have seen some success tapping into our older youth as 'madrichim' on an ad hoc basis. Noteworthy occasions include the Yamim Noraim creche, Summer at Stanmore, and the Pirates themed kids Purim party – all of which were run with the help of youth in Year 11 upward. Further progress is urgently needed as a backboard to the successful Learn2Lead programme to establish a steady stream of young leaders.
17. We should ensure our youth have access and information about university advocacy preparation but not seek to replicate the training already provided by other communal groups.

6. SENIORS

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Our Seniors age group is large in number and benefits from our active 'SAFIRE' club, spearheaded by Jo Briggs and Sarah Levy, which has now been running for almost 8 years and is seen by many as a jewel in SACPS' crown
2. SAFIRE continues to grow in popularity. Weekly attendance figures regularly exceed 120, and we welcome new members each week from both within and outside of the SACPS community. Non-members pay more, to ensure that SAFIRE fully covers its own security and other overt costs.
3. Café Shmooze has been a big benefit to SAFIRE activities, with at least 60 people coming each week to have lunch before SAFIRE begins.
4. Eight years of experience show that social interaction and light entertainment are the most important factors for this demographic. Very few current attendees appear to be interested in more religious programming.
5. There is definite appetite for more Café Schmooze and SAFIRE-type activities, should resources ever allow. There is also enormous appetite for outings, holidays and other activities, although these tend to be very timely to organise.
6. We have now established good relationships with other charities and organisations who cater exclusively for retired and elder communities. For example, The Landsby, Farthing Court (Jewish Blind & Disabled) and Mayfield in Watford all now regularly bring a group of residents to SAFIRE each Thursday.
7. SAFIRE is organised independently of our Community Department and relies entirely on volunteers for their success.
8. The lack of air conditioning in the FSH is a regular issue for this age group, many of whom are also entirely dependent on the lift to get up and down to/from the FSH.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

9. We should continue to look at supporting this demographic with events outside of SAFIRE. The combined AJEX and Seniors Shabbat lunch in late 2025 was a good example of this.

10. The promotion of and calendar for events and activities for seniors should be more easily locatable online and around the building. This fits in with our communications strategy
11. Plans for any refurbishment or redevelopment of the FSH should take the needs of this demographic into account.
- 12.

7. YOUNG ADULTS/18-30S

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. The community has been lacking in its provision for this wide demographic for a number of years.
2. It is widely recognised that this is the fastest-moving demographic globally across the entire Jewish world. Historic 'norms' such as attendance of a 'Jewiversity' and even marrying Jewish cannot be taken for granted. With soaring house prices in London, financial and social pressures are forcing our youngsters to make very different life decisions than their parents had to make.
3. We currently estimate 208 members fall within the 18-30 demographic although our historic data shows well over 400 people who were at one point registered as members. This indicates a 40-50% drop-off rate among this demographic once it reaches 21 years old, the point at which a child is no longer considered a part of their parents' membership.
4. Anecdotally, we know that lots of these members/former members no longer live in the area. Our Community is an attractive place for young families but many singles prefer to live in other areas. However, the data indicates that for over 380 young adults who formerly lived in the local area, their families are still here. This greatly increases the possibility of a young member/potential member to return to the area and visit, even if only infrequently.
5. Recurring feedback that social events tend to be attended by older families and young families with children, rather than young people in general. This seems to hold true even for events which are presumably overtly and obviously suitable for this age group. For example, last year's Shul pub quiz was attended by over 100 people, but very few of those were from the 18-30s demographic. It is unclear why this is the case and further research is needed.
6. A feeling among this cohort of being a bit 'lost' in between other offerings at Stanmore. There is a perception (whether or not justified) that the main service and most events are either for younger or older members.
7. We must acknowledge that this demographic is heavily invested in by other organisations, some of whom Rabbi Eli Birnbaum has significant first-hand experience working for, and that competition is therefore widespread. We also recognise that this is a very wide band and not a single cohesive age group. We have tended to group them together like this at SACPS, because we have lacked the numbers attending events to sub-divide them further. In reality, there are distinct sub-sets, including

undergraduates/students, young working single professionals and young married couples.

13. The overhaul of our committee structure led to the creation of a dedicated 18-30s committee, which represents the full spectrum of that age group – from university to young marrieds. However, this committee has shown itself to be in greatest need of guidance, encouragement and support, and rarely sets up initiatives proactively.
14. In 2025 we ran an 18-30's minyan on first day Rosh Hoshana and again on Yom Kippur day led by our former Youth Director, Motti Rottenberg, both were extremely well-received, and attendance was much stronger than anticipated. Several complaints were lodged that we didn't have a similar service on second day Rosh Hashana, which is the type of feedback we love receiving.
15. With the help of our then Events Manager, the 18-30s demographic enjoyed an outing to an Escape Room ahead of Pesach attended by 20 people, a barbecue in June attended by nearly 40 people, and then a Friday night service dinner held with Edgware United in the late autumn which attracted over 50 people. Unfortunately, since the Events Manager's departure shortly after that event, this demographic has been quite dormant.
16. As part of his private work with Aish UK, Rabbi Birnbaum visits various university campuses and will make every effort to meet up with 'Stanmarians' studying there. However, we recognise that this only happens on an ad hoc basis and subject to Rabbi Birnbaum schedule.
17. The recent overhaul of our Israel Committee, now led by two members of the 18-30s demographic, has significantly increased young participation in one of our most important areas.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

18. We need to be realistic about what is needed for this demographic, given the likelihood of them living in Stanmore and seeing Shul-sponsored activities as worth attending. Potential collaboration with other organisations targeting this age-group may be wiser and more prudent.
19. We need a follow-up scheme for post-school age young adults who go to university and leave home and also young married couples. Are we pro-actively reaching out to them and nurturing that bond?
20. We should also tap into our own in-house expertise and professionalism. We have many professionals and businesspeople in the Community and should consider offering mentor/mentee relationship for younger members.

21. We should look to develop a separate strategy and offering for young married couples within this age group. This is actively under consideration. There are large numbers living in and around Stanmore. The established presence and success of the Shirat Hayam minyan in Edgware has created a hesitance to explore the idea of running a minyan for young marrieds at Stanmore, but this is still an idea well worth considering.
22. Our security rota needs recruits, and it is important that younger members and new joiners are asked to join this. It has a good camaraderie and is an easy environment to meet people from Shul. We have already organised a notification system to alert the security team to new joiners.
23. Committee members have raised and requested educational input that is more in-tune with the challenges they face, including (but not limited to) covering subjects such as 'Why marry Jewish?', fertility issues, business ethics, antisemitism on campus among others. Rabbi Eli recently launched a series called 'The Big Issues' that aims to address those questions, but it was marketed for parents of young adults, not the young adults themselves.
24. We will target increased involvement and empowerment of younger members in the running of the main shul and its services. There is scope to use the Tzemach space to train and nurture leaders from this demographic who can then make the step up into the main shul.
25. We will aim for a stronger system of communication and follow-up between Shul/Rabbinic staff, US Chaplaincy and other university-focused organisations to ensure that Stanmore members living on campus for much of the year are still looked after and feel heard (this is not a problem unique to Stanmore – there is a need to improve connections between US Chaplaincy and US Shuls).

8. COMMUNICATION

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. SACPS communications have developed progressively as new platforms and media have become available. There was a regular schedule of emails twice a week and very regular WhatsApp messages (daily or almost daily), but these have lessened since the departure of our previous Events Manager. This is priority area for when we employ a new Events Manager.
2. Staff and volunteers are now trained and confident using software such as Canva, Sendy and our website management. We have a volunteer webmaster who is available to support staff and volunteers when needed.
3. The main WhatsApp Group is mostly used to communicate events but also other offerings such as volunteering opportunities. Unlike our emails, WhatsApp messages are typically focussed on one news item or event only and are considered much more effective as a result in bringing activities to members' attention. That said, not all our members have opted in to WhatsApp messaging and we still need to use emails to reach everybody. The number of members who have opted into our WhatsApp group has increased to over 600 members. As an overall percentage of our membership, this is a huge number and reflect, on the whole, our most engaged members across all age groups. However, it is always impossible to know who reads the messages and who ignores or archives them. There is some anecdotal evidence that the number of WhatsApp messages has become too great and some members are missing information about events we are trying to promote.
4. In January 2024, Rabbi Eli oversaw the overhaul of our WhatsApp community, organising its sub-groups along the lines of specific interest groups within the community. Currently these are: Study@Stanmore, 18-30s@ Stanmore, Young Families@Stanmore, Youth@Stanmore, Israel Engagement@ Stanmore, Ruachim – Raise the Ruach and Bar/batmitzvah@Stanmore. This has helped to streamline the communication process, enabling members to be selective about which updates they'd like to receive.
5. The website is now well embedded as a communication tool and much of the traffic of other communication platforms is to links on the website. This has been successful and we have positive feedback on how easy it is to navigate. It is also much easier to update than its path-finding predecessor. However, since we have not been sending weekly emails, the traffic to the website has lessened. We hope this will pick up again once we have a new Events Manager in place.
6. Our social media (Instagram, YouTube and Facebook) are not being used as regularly we would like and this will form phase 2 of our communications plan – although we should

also acknowledge that a sizeable proportion of our members will never engage in this way.

7. Our annual community magazine, Habimah, continues to present the voice of the community and is the most widely received communication from the shul as all members receive a copy.
8. Our social media (Instagram, YouTube and Facebook) is now updated more frequently but is not being used as regularly we would like – although we should also acknowledge that a sizeable proportion of our members will never engage in this way. At present this is volunteer led rather than led by the community events manager.
9. The Past Events and Gallery features on the website are places to celebrate events that have already taken place. However, it is evident that (working within the guidelines of GDPR, safeguarding, and security) we can be doing much more to ‘trumpet’ our successes visually and pictorially, creating a buzz around events and also ‘FOMO’ for those who didn’t attend.
10. There were 2 weekly emails sent to the Community
 - A Sunday email, publicising forthcoming events, reports on past events and links to external events which might interest our members. This has not been happening regularly since our Events Manager left and will be a priority for our new Events Manager.
 - A Thursday email which replicates the printed newssheet (including a message from a Rabbi) but which is set out differently to be more effective visually on a PC/mobile. This also contains timings for the forthcoming shabbat.

Additionally, the HE will issue occasional emails on important news when necessary.

11. The ‘What’s on’ and calendar parts of our website are not easy to navigate. Some activities are placed under other headings and do not make it into our calendar and the front page can be filled with regular weekly clubs rather than important upcoming Community events. It can be frustratingly difficult to find information on events which have been booked currently and some events do not get entered at all if they are not set up to require booking.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

12. Ultimately, we should try to bring together our communications systemically, for example, linking the website, social media, WhatsApp and emails, ideally, aiming for media to be linked with capacity for through clicks to the website/Facebook/Instagram.

We will also be assessing use of scheduling software to control when information is posted.

13. We should work towards more regular posts on social media, and encourage comments and community interaction on Instagram and Facebook (different generations use these platforms) to raise the profile of community posts
14. We should aim to grow our Shul's WhatsApp group further. This has become the primary method of informing people of arranged events, and we see bookings for events happening as a direct response to the sending of a WhatsApp message with a booking link. Greater numbers on the group should lead to greater engagement with events and with the community. Rabbi Eli now ensures that all 'What's On' brochures published by the shul include a QR code linked to the WhatsApp group. At the same time, we need to be careful about 'message fatigue' and plan our promotions more effectively.
15. We should continue to monitor engagement– how often? How much? The tools for this are in place and continued reflection and analysis would inform our communication strategy
16. We will aim to grow membership of social media and WhatsApp groups as these contain the access and booking links necessary to at
17. For the website calendar, We need to develop either a filtering system or separate schedules for different groupings (clubs; community events; shiurim etc)
18. As part of their plans for the older youth members, our Youth Directors had plans in the pipeline to create internship opportunities for our sixth formers to help run and populate our social media channels. At time of writing, these ideas will need to be handed over to their successors.



FOCUS AREA 2 – BEIT TEFILLAH

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

1. MAIN SHABBAT SERVICE

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. There has been a decline in attendance on Shabbat over the past 20 years or so and that this trend was further accelerated by the necessary Covid shutdown. Many people's behavioural patterns will not simply revert to the way they were before. Whatever reason people had for coming to Shul on a Shabbat morning, for many it is or was a habit that once disrupted must be justified all over again. Some members are clearly struggling with this and the impact on attendance is noticeable not only in terms of numbers but with specific people who were once regular 'Shulgoers' and have just not returned.
2. Of course, attendance has also been challenged because of our reducing and ageing membership, members lost and members transferring elsewhere. If we are to stem the flow and become net positive in membership movement terms, we must, amongst other things, create a Service environment that will not only attract new members but, as a corollary, also bring existing members back to Shul.
3. What does 'back to Shul' mean? Whether members come to pray, to socialise, to learn, for the Kiddush or simply out of routine, re-establishing the habit is proving to be a demanding and challenging task across the United Synagogue.
4. SACPS moved beyond its original 'one-service-for-all' principle some years ago, but some of our developments have not always been planned and strategic. We need to better identify what Religious Services we wish to offer and why, whilst recognising that we cannot design a Service around each member's preferences.
5. Until the departure of the Senior Rabbi, we held a monthly Tzemach Service, although this has not yet attained the regular popularity of the previous Limmud service, and it is notable that very few under 50s attend it. There is a view that it has not fully returned to its 'Limmud' roots in terms of combining coaching and service education with participation and intellectual stimulation. We also need this service to meet the needs of young families.

6. We also hold a monthly Sephardi Service, which is planning to move to twice a month, and a quarterly Women's Tefillah Service. We need to understand if we should be holding both Services more frequently and if so, what impact would this have on membership and/or on attendance in the Main Service?
7. There remains a lack of clarity over what other service styles would people like? People tend to reflect their own passions when suggesting, for example, a Shabbat learning alternative without many of the traditional prayers, or 'choral service' or a more spiritual/meditation style service? Should we be offering a learning alternative on a Shabbat morning that does not actually involve a prayer service in the traditional sense?

In this analysis we need to consider in particular the appeal of services to our young adults, in accordance with our overall strategic priorities and this demographic. We have no specific offering in this area at present and yet we identify young adults and young families as the lifeblood and future of the community.

8. Prior to temporarily acting as our Main Shul Shabbat Rabbi, Rabbi Eli had also successfully established occasional Shabbat morning learning programmes for men and women, but the timing could cause issues for men who need to be in a service at this time. Nonetheless, we think this is worth persisting with.
9. One of the key problems we face is trying to provide more choice of service style, on a regular basis is the configuration of our building. When there is no simcha, the main Shul; is typically not full. The hall is needed for kiddush, and other available rooms are used variously by the children from toddlers through to teens and youth. Beit Mordechai is typically used two or three times in a month for the Women's Tefillah Service and a Sephardi Service, so there is some capacity there.
10. Another question we need to be asking is how we make our Services more engaging and more inviting for women. For those weeks when there is no Women's service and for those women who in any event wish to attend the Shul service, how can we make them feel more involved? For some the 'gallery' is outdated and they would prefer to be on the same level as the men. But even if this were to happen on a regular basis there would be an issue regarding the height and density of the Mechitza. But this is perhaps a small issue. The problem which is potentially insurmountable within the context of an orthodox service in the UK is the lack of sufficient touchpoints that would enable women to fully engage.
11. The timing of our Services is another issue. Many other Communities have experimented, with greater or lesser success, some permanently, with differently timed Services on a Shabbat morning. We have very occasional requests but no serious demand in SACPS currently for earlier or later Services.
12. We did have requests for shorter Services and based on when the timing of when the Shul gets fuller, this suggested that for quite a lot of people, 1.5 hours in Shul is enough.

This has now been addressed insofar as the service length has been reduced significantly in the last year or so. The Service usually finishes in the Main Shul at 11.30 now, unless there is a Bar/bat-mitzvah or it is another special Shabbat with longer leining or additional prayers (previously 11.50 or 12 was the norm).

However, there has been no accompanying change in arrival times so many still time their arrival in Shul for 10.30 or later (following leining) despite the quicker service and earlier finish times.

13. When considering service content and engagement generally, we also need to address the growing issues of how many people attending can read the prayers in Hebrew and following the service, or if they can do so, how many understand what they are saying.
14. In the long Shabbatot of summer months, is there scope to utilise the afternoons for a supper 'seudah' in between Mincha and Maariv? Several of these have been held for our 18-30s demographic with solid success.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

15. There has been much anecdotal commentary in this area, a fair amount of which is conflicting reflecting projections of personal preferences. What is clear is that we need to continue to experiment and evolve our Shabbat morning offering to both retain existing and attract new members.
16. It is also important that we all look out for members whose close friends no longer attend and are on their own. In the past, there was a concerted focus on ensuring such people and visitors were welcomed. Our Wardens and Head Shamash are looking out for such people, but the architecture of the Ladies Gallery means this is less likely to happen upstairs. Ideally, this is something that should perhaps be more widespread and commonplace rather than must be suggested as a top-down initiative. It is also something that may be easier to address if we are able to implement our Premises initiative outlined below.
17. We should build on the success of what has been shown to work, in particular seeking further evolution of the old Limmud style service, Women's Tefilla Service and Shabbat morning learning sessions. Would they benefit from mainstream billing alongside the regular main Shul Service or is the fact they sit outside of the mainstream part of the attraction? How can we involve younger generations?
18. Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's sessions appear to have stimulated a desire to spend at least some of the 'Service' time learning and in discussion, albeit there has been a mixed reaction to the timing of these sessions. We need to build on this as a way of bringing more people into and back to Shul.

19. Suggestions were made to occasionally swap the traditional 'sermon' for a guided explanation, and this happened recently with Rabbi Eli Birnbaums excellent series focussing on Shabbat practices and why we do them as well as explanatory sermons on the Amidah. There is a desire to also do more of this to increase familiarity with and understanding of the Siddur
20. We also need to address the requirement of our young adult/18-30 community. This is addressed in Focus Area 1 above.
21. We would like to carry out further experiments around our Services with the objective of making the service more inviting and inclusive, without increasing duration - this is being actively discussed - and then be able to get better feedback on what works.
22. We should reinvigorate and promote our 'how-to' programme with a mixture of online tools and discrete education of members wanting to improve their capacity to understand and participate in services. This can also extend to home practices such as putting up mezuzot, making kiddush at home and lighting candles for example. Rabbis Eli and Zeidman are exploring the possibility of providing a visual online guide to help congregants navigate Shul, the service and ritual.
23. We should explore opportunities with our Sephardi community to enhance and increase this part of our community, particularly if we believe those attending would be willing to become members.
24. We will continue to invest into the Tzemach or alternative services and Women's Tefillah Group spaces as the richest grounds wherein familiarity with and understanding of the services is achieved. It is crucial to establish a steady stream of members who gain the requisite skills and knowledge from these and similar spaces, integrating them back into the main shul.

2. FRIDAY NIGHTS

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Our regular Friday night Service can suffer from poor attendance during the summer months when Shabbat comes in later and when attendance is a particular problem, and especially for those with young families who cannot eat so late. Other than for special events (see below), typically, there are around 30 people in these months, but it has also been less than 20 during the holiday month of August, even though we adjusted the Service timing to bring in Shabbat as early as we can and have a pre-service 'shmooze' with whiskey.
2. During the winter months, with Shabbat coming in earlier, attendance improves significantly. To stimulate attendance during these months a small whisky l'chaim was introduced in 2022 after the service and sometimes a sushi kiddush. These are sponsored to cover cost. Similarly, a few 'themed Friday night services led by our Chazan were successful and attracted more people. In the last three years numbers have grown to between 80 and 120 attendees.
3. In some communities around the world, Friday night can be the best attended service over Shabbat. It is short (rarely more than an hour maximum) and tuneful with plenty of opportunity for the congregation to join in.
4. For many years, Batmitzvah celebrants have had the option for their daughter to give her Dvar Torah on Friday night instead of Shabbat morning. The shul is now actively encouraging those who do so, to give the Dvar Torah in the Beit Mordechai at the end of the regular service (instead of in the main shul in front of friends and family exclusively), so that the wider community feels a part of the celebration. This was done several times over the winter months to largely positive feedback.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

5. As a priority, we need to continue to harness the Friday night 'opportunity' and actively promote and encourage attendance. Attendances seem to increase whenever there is a promotion message. Both 'engagement' and 'community' can be served and developed by attendance at the shorter service on Friday night and 'Shul' is about more than the attendance on Shabbat mornings.
6. To further encourage this, we need to develop and enhance the range of events we hold on Friday afternoon and evening and target the young families specifically in the winter

7. We need to be creative in ways we can 'take advantage' of the attendance of families attending Friday night service to collect CRP points and engage with them.
8. Greater ownership and input from our younger members are needed as a matter of urgent priority. The average age in Shul on any given Shabbat is well over 50 and as a result we simply aren't hearing the voices of our younger members. It is no longer typical for those attending children and youth services etc to come to the main shul before these services start.
9. We will develop a full programme of Friday afternoon/evening events to include:
 - Musically themed services
 - Regular Kiddush
 - Occasional Community Dinners with guest speakers
 - Engage with families who attend to collect CRP points.
10. In order to encourage Youth and Young Adult attendance on Shabbat generally we should consider specifically targeted Friday evening activities/events for this age group.

3. HIGH HOLIDAYS

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Our services for Yamim Noraim 2025/5786 sought to incorporate feedback gathered from members in 2024, as well as developing some new ideas.
 - One Shacharit service was held on Rosh Hashana, before splitting for leining and Musaf.
 - The layout of the FSH was changed so that the mechitzah ran down the hall lengthways instead of widthways. This allowed for men and women to sit parallel. However, this was met with strong consternation especially from the women, and an emergency contingency plan was put in place for Yom Kippur with the seating rearranged to a front-back formation and an improved mechitzah running widthways. It remains unclear how to best solve the FSH conundrum, as there was equally strong negative feedback last year bemoaning the front-back arrangement.
 - Our co-chair Adam Burr worked closely with Rabbi Birnbaum and the caretaking staff to design proper large and colour-coordinated signage to help people navigate the premises.

- Adam also worked with a team of volunteers to 'meet and greet' congregants as they arrived, giving each one a brief rundown of the services available and their location.
 - Yamim Noraim programming was communicated via email and WhatsApp several weeks before Habimah was distributed to members. This marked a significant improvement with regard to communication and raising awareness, although it remains unclear how impactful this messaging was in the middle of the summer holiday.
 - We were not allocated Rabbinic Interns (as is anticipated to be the case again this year), brought in Rabbi Dr Samuel and Ma'ayan Shoshanna Landau as our scholars in residence. The Landaus ran an alternative 'immersive' service in the FSH that received mixed feedback. Shoshanna led an explanatory service on second day Rosh Hashana with Rabbi Birnbaum that received very positive feedback. Overall, it was felt that whilst the Landaus were a positive presence and well worth experimenting with, the cost did not justify the actual impact.
 - Rabbi Birnbaum worked closely with the wardens to ensure that alternative services and programmes were clearly announced in the main services.
2. On the whole, we saw an increase in on-site attendance over the Yamim Noraim, but a continued decline in those who actually sat down in a service. This suggests that more thought needs to be given to how we can engage shulgoers who may not feel comfortable or equipped to join an actual service.
 3. That said, the pattern of attendance on Rosh Hashanah is becoming more pronounced with attendance on the second day markedly lower than the first, even when the service is combined as in 2025. Services start at 8am because of the mandatory content but are largely empty on both days until around 10.30am – some two and a half hours after the service started.
 4. On Yom Kippur, the Kol Nidre Services are well attended, although a noticeable decline in the FSH is now apparent. However, on Yom Kippur day the Services tend to not fill up until around 11.30/12.00 in time for Yizkor and then empty again through the afternoon. The Neilah Services are no longer as well attended as Kol Nidre and show a decline from pre-Covid years.
 5. Over the years, with the assistance of our Rabbonim, we have been able to remove some small sections of the YN Services. It is unlikely that we can do more, which means that shortening the Service by restricting content further is an unlikely outcome of any further review.

6. We continue to learn from previous experience and build new option into our programming. The establishment of a kids' creche and play area two years ago is now a 'norm', as is the provision of a marquee just for youth activities. Rabbi Eli Birnbaum is always on the lookout for new and innovative ideas to enhance and broaden the YN experience – especially for less frequent participants. Last year, a beekeeper was brought in at relatively minimal cost who ran a presentation for the kids and then honey tasting for the wider community.
7. It is evident that many of our members will only attend Shul for these three days a year, and increasingly, just two days. If we fail to engage with those members, then we may not have another chance for the following 12 months. Whilst this has been the driver for much of our alternative programming, careful thought is still needed on what, if anything, they hope to get out of their brief and infrequent visits to shul? Could core experiences like Shofar and Yizkor be reimagined outside the perceived confines of a formal main service? Is there ample enough opportunity for our staff and/or core members to meet and socialise with the fringe membership?

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

8. We may not be able to change or reduce the content of our services, but we can review the way they are delivered and consider whether our two Main Services should reflect a different style – one more formal, one less so; one more choral, one less so; one with more frequent explanations of the meaning of our prayers one with less; and so on. As with our Shabbat morning service, in order to achieve the desired level of engagement we must objectively review what we do and how we do it. This was implemented to an extent with the Landaus last year, but feedback revealed significant obstacles in: getting communications/advertisements well-worded and in front of people well in advance, as well as a prevailing reluctance among many (especially older) members to participate in anything that isn't a traditional formal service.
9. Rabbi Birnbaum is working with Adam Burr and David Caplan to explore reconfiguration options for the FSH. Women will be consulted before any decision is made.
10. There is a recognition that although feedback for last year's explanatory service was overwhelmingly positive, the proper time for it is first day Rosh Hashana, which is when huge numbers of unaffiliated members come to shul; it is felt that this target audience stands to gain the most from a successful explanatory service.
11. Timely planning for the Yamim Noraim has been enormously challenging this year without a Senior Rabbi to guide the process, and an Events Manager to support it.
12. We should continue to experiment with alternative options for those who do not engage with the traditional Service. We should also look at timings to cater for those who want a

bit of both!

13. Clearer communication and messaging as to what each programme or talk is and who it is aimed at (and what they can expect to gain from it) must be a top priority this year.

4. WEEKDAY MINYANIM

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Our daily prayer services serve as a community bedrock, additionally providing the necessary opportunity to those who wish to recite kaddish. Of course, the weekday Services also support happy occasions with bar mitzvah boys often being called to the reading of the Torah for the first time on a Monday or Thursday morning, baby naming and the occasional Brit.
2. The Weekday Services are friendly and intimate and perhaps best express the concept of community through prayer. Sometimes happy events and occasionally a yahrzeit is marked with a l'chaim. On a regular morning there is always tea, coffee and biscuits available.
3. Unless there is a special Service our regular timings are in the morning, 8.30am on Sundays; 7am on Mondays and Thursdays; and 7.15am on Tuesday, Wednesdays and Friday. These timings were designed to finish by 8am, to enable people to travel to work. Afternoon and evening Services are combined in summer months but split in the winter between a 1.30pm Mincha Service and a 7.30pm Maariv Service, although occasionally these timings also need to be adjusted.
4. We have a rotating core of circa 15-20 men who form the backbone of the Weekday Services, and they are supported by others who are from time to time in mourning and saying kaddish. Very occasionally, and more so in the summer months, we can struggle for a minyan and on a couple of occasions in 2025 we failed to obtain a minyan.
5. The 'weekday minyan' WhatsApp Group has been successful in ensuring a minyan is present for most Services, but not always. When calls go out for people to make the minyan it is sometimes too late and after the scheduled start time for the specific Service.
6. Essential as they maybe, the weekday minyanim are 'functional' services with little opportunity to make them more attractive. In the main people will come, because they have to, mourners and people with a YZ, or out of a sense of community and duty. However, several initiatives have been launched this year which are timed to 'springboard' off the back of our regular minyanim. These include Rabbi Birnbaum's "I

Believe” breakfast shiur on Sunday morning, the Stanmore Music Club immediately after that, and Rabbi Sudak’s “Hot off the press” series which ran after the early winter Mincha.

7. Most people who attend currently want to get away after the service (for work or family reasons) so encouraging people to linger for refreshments or learning opportunities is popular with attendees but does not appear to be beneficial in increasing attendance.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

8. The main priority is to actively promote the mid-week Services and encourage member support. This can only really be encouraged as a service back to the Community.
9. We should continue to look out for accessible online minyan-support rota systems to ensure that a minyan is always present for the mid-week Services. Now many regulars would simply not use a system to ‘book-in’ for services so those organising struggle to have advance knowledge if a minyan is not going to be present.



FOCUS AREA 3 – BEIT MIDRASH EDUCATION

1. RELIGIOUS LEARNING

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. The current religious learning (shiurim) on offer has been hugely upgraded through Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's efforts, subject to a few seasonal variations.
 - Sundays – series run by Rabbi Eli Birnbaum on topical or contemporary issues (sometimes morning and sometimes evenings)
 - Monday evenings – Rabbi Melvyn Bloom's Mishna shiur; Rebbetzin Naomi Birnbaum's Women's Chaburah
 - Tuesdays – Following winter lunchtime Mincha, Rabbi Mendy Sudak was running a popular series on knotty Beth Din issues mostly concerning real life civil dispute examples.
 - Thursday evening – Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's Single Malt Sedra series (running as terms rather than every week)
 - Fridays in summer – Rabbi Eli Birnbaum or Zeidman publishes a video response to a question submitted via 'Ask the Rabbi'.
 - Friday evening – in winter months, a short shiur by Rabbi Eli Birnbaum at the end of the service.
 - Shabbat afternoons – Shabbat morning sermon which is currently given by Rabbi Eli Birnbaum unless there is a guest speaker. Rabbi Melvyn Bloom's Gemara shiur and in summer months, Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's Pirkei Avot in context series
10. Additionally, there are regular talks for women organised by the Chaverot committee. These are held in the homes of different members and are attended by an average 20-25 women.
11. The number of people attending set piece shiurim is small but regular. It is almost exclusively men who attend weekday shiurim
12. Title and content of shiurim are now regularly advertised (which was not the case previously) and most are featured through high quality posters and graphics, bringing the production quality of our education in line with that of our events and programmes.

13. Rabbi Birnbaum has started working closely with Jerry Bower to drastically increase the number of recorded shiurim which are then available to watch on the shul website.
14. The HE in the past received some fairly direct criticism over the variable quantity, style and quality of our religious education offerings. This has not been the case however in the past year.
15. There has been a pejorative cultural observation that we are not in the main a 'learning community' and certainly some excellent and well-promoted initiatives have faltered in the past. However, the HE tend to hold the perception that too little has been done to match the learning on offer with our community's needs and availability and that when this happens, the community usually responds.
16. Related to this point, it is apparent that many members suffer from something of an identity crisis that is far from unique to Stanmore in grappling with some confusion and opacity with what it means to belong to a Modern-Orthodox community and what ethos that identity entails. It has been recognised that clearer and more confident communication and explanation/promotion in this regard of our shared values and religious aspirations is needed across the United Synagogue. Stanmore should be no exception to this drive. Rabbi Eli's recent "The Big Issues" series goes a long way to addressing these topics, although in-person attendance has been limited.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

17. It should be noted perhaps somewhat ironically that education and learning is the only community field that doesn't have its own dedicated committee brainstorming ideas and spreading awareness of opportunities.
18. Members should be actively encouraged to attend shiurim through personal phone calls from the Rabbonim, through publicity including the publication of shiurim titles, and through offering engaging sessions, so that word of mouth starts to encourage others to attend.
19. There needs to be a wider variety of religious learning to attract the following groups, who are not choosing to access religious learning currently:
 - Women (whether as women-only learning but also as mixed learning together with men)
 - 18-35s
 - Those who wish to learn more but might feel anxiety around their perceived lack of Jewish learning and /or ability to read Hebrew.
 - Those who seek to be religiously engaged including in Jewish learning but find the current shiurim on offer are not meeting their needs

- Those who seek to be religiously engaged including in Jewish learning but who cannot make the times of our shiurim.
 - Those who are not religiously involved.
20. The HE and Rabbonim will hold planning sessions analysing barriers to attendance and what is leading to current attendances being so low.
 21. There should be a focus on providing Jewish learning for the groups mentioned above with a clear connection between the needs of each group and the learning on offer. Contemporary topics that are relevant and engaging across the spectrum should be available.
 22. The shiurim for those who are already engaged should continue but with greater promotion by both our Rabbonim personally and in our SACPS communications as a priority objective and with greater effort to engage others in the ongoing shiurim. Enabling a social/food component to the format of some programmes may help.
 23. A greater degree of interaction and a connection between the members of a learning group could be enabled, so that members feel involved in the learning and/or gain a responsibility to other members of their learning group to attend, e.g., chavrutot.
 24. Given the size of the community compared to the number of individuals who are equipped to provide high-quality Jewish education (currently three or four people), more should be done to partner with local organisation and utilise external speakers and educators to provide more touchpoints and more variety.
 25. We need to consider the changing patterns and habits of how educational content is 'consumed'. This is especially important for those with families and in employment who cannot make the times of existing shiurim. Are we using short-form video or social media enough? Are we too reliant on the quite formal in-person experience? Is our educational too academically inclined? Can more be done by way of immersive or experiential education? This is of course a problem facing the entire world, not just Stanmore.

2. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND OTHER EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Cultural events and activities and other education for adults are currently organised as ad hoc events and not as part of a strategic plan – they are often reactive rather than

proactive (e.g., a speaker is available, and someone contacts them). There has been no specific lead on this area which means that there is little joined up thinking around what is on offer.

2. Our Community used to have the opportunity to join annual trips to either Israel and/or Eastern Europe featuring a mixture of religious learning and cultural activities. These were very popular pre-Covid. An attempt to arrange a trip to Poland in 2024 failed to obtain sufficient take-up but that may have been due to timing and this will be tried again.
3. We have partnered with LSJS on several occasions to run very successful tours, including the Cambridge Genizah, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, and one scheduled at the National Gallery.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

4. Our educational and cultural activity lead(s) need to be clearer on what they are trying to achieve with programmes in relation to our strategy.
5. Education does not need to be a formal lecture or talk; we could be encouraging informal education e.g., book groups as they foster all the goals above.
6. There is also significant scope for immersive education that is built around hands-on activities. Rebbetzin Naomi has run a number of very successful events under the Chaverot banner, including a creative art evening in the wake of the terrible situation in Israel. Before Rosh Hashana 2024 we partnered with Ta'amim for a 'Masterchef' style event in which participants competed in teams, all while learning about the symbolic foods of the new year. Ahead of Rosh Hashana 2025, we worked with Rabbi Dr Rafi Zarum to create a similarly immersive experience around the symbolic foods. Our 18-30s enjoyed an 'escape from Egypt' outing ahead of Pesach. Our younger services got to see some of the Ten Plagues animals in the flesh on Pesach.
7. Engaging adult members in activities that are not exclusively social is vital – however, religious education is not all that should be on offer. A team of lay and professional leaders should lead on creating a clear programme of events around adult education to avoid the current ad hoc nature of education on offer.
8. We should recommence Shabbatonim and overseas trips (including to Israel).
9. The team should encourage suggestions from members as to what might interest them (grassroots participation) while managing expectations around what can realistically be

offered and in what time frame. Topics can be on Jewish interests specifically, but not all events need to be exclusively on Jewish topics.

10. Informal educators should be encouraged to step forward from the community e.g., book groups.
11. As with religious learning, education events should be well advertised and well promoted with personal contact being the key to good engagement.

3. EDUCATION FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN

This is dealt with in our Beit Knesset section above.



FOCUS AREA 4 – YESODOT FOUNDATIONS

In this section we deal with leadership as well as organisational structures and finances. Although this subject appears relatively late on in the strategy document, it contains some of the most critical objectives for our HE.

1. VOLUNTEER LAY LEADERSHIP

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. We were one of the last US Synagogues to transition from the previous model of Honorary Officers acting as both wardens and chairs/vice chairs (in our case, with a co-opted Women's Honorary Officer and Financial Representative) to our current Honorary Executive ('HE') some 16 years ago. The intention was to attract both individuals willing to act in exec roles but not to have the regular and religious demands of acting as a warden, and the opposite, individuals willing to serve as wardens without needing to be involved in the 'business-end' of running the Synagogue.

We would like there to be a third warden (or group of younger wardens learning this role) but despite the warden's job being considerably reduced compared to past decades, it has been difficult to find people willing to take this on.

2. Our Synagogue Council consists of up to 20 members split equally male/female (currently there are 18 Council members: 9 men and 9 women following the co-opting of Adam Burr as vice-chair). The Council was previously slimmed down to 14 members but on review it was felt there was a need for wider more active representation. All Council members were elected in 2026 for a one-year term and can serve up to a maximum of 6 years consecutively.

The Council meets to consider the overall running of the Synagogue, including matters of finance strategy and governance. The vast majority of work actually takes place in Council Sub-Committees (which include non-council members).

3. Honorary Life President and Elders – this is a hugely valuable resource; whereby experienced members of the Community can be called upon to advise the HE and Council. They are appointed for life by the HE with approval of the Synagogue Council

and they have the right to attend Council meetings but not to vote at them. Our current Elders are Seymour Saideman and Stuart Taylor.

4. The roles and responsibilities of HE and council members together with the current Sub-Committee structure is set out in Schedule 3 to the strategy – a document originally produced to brief new Council members.
5. In our opinion, our current lay-leadership structure has been broadly successful and there has also been no evidence of the structure leading to conflicts between members of the larger HE. Additionally, we continue to benefit from 'involved' wardens who are a core part of our Executive team – this is a distinction with other Shuls where the Executive and warden teams can function separately.

In recent years there has been significant burden on the Chairs and Vice-Chairs at certain times (for example, Covid and prior to Rabbi Lew's departure). During those periods, it can be a struggle to devote time to other issues

We note that a couple of other large Synagogues have a paid Chief Executive. The concept of such a role has been looked at in the past but at this time, we do not see how it could be affordable for the Community in the short-term, other than possibly as part of the premises plan as a major restructuring.

6. In addition to the above, we currently have 3 Board of Deputies Representatives and an under-35s observer.
7. Up to 6 HE and Council members also serve as United Synagogue Council representatives – this is yet to be nominated for the new Council.
8. Although we have a relatively large and engaged Council, overall, the decline in numbers volunteering at the Shul remains a concern and succession planning is difficult. There is a dangerous assumption that the 'right people' will simply step-forward at the 'right time' – but if our members are not engaged and do not feel ownership of the Shul, we cannot rely on this.

We have previously surveyed members on this and the following table summarises the common responses/perceptions, with our HE's experience/views also noted:

<i>Reason given for not standing / Perception</i>	<i>Our experience</i>
HE roles – I don't have the time right now or commitment.	The role of the HE has certainly grown over the last 20 years. However, our subdivision of roles makes the week-to-week manageable with sensible prioritisation. It is possible to co-opt people to specific portfolio management to reduce the burden further.
Wardens – I wouldn't know what to do. I don't know enough members.	Can be very quickly learned by shadowing a warden! All of those who have taken on the role had to start somewhere.
Council roles – It is just a talking shop with no real role or input	Council members take on portfolios of responsibility within the Shul. We are very keen for them to be empowered to develop these portfolios further. We aim to make our Council meetings business-like and focussed on strategic priorities. For those with genuinely no interest in the Council, it should be noted that there is no need to be on the Council to be working on one of our Sub-Committees.
All roles – it is a thankless task	On the contrary, people seem to offer thanks all the time. It is true that many of us volunteer initially out of a sense of duty or obligation but all of the current HE (bar one of us) has been in office before with previous Executives, and we all found it sufficiently fun and rewarding to do it all again. Hopefully this counts as contradictory evidence!
All roles – I no longer care (or I no longer care as much after Covid/now that my children have grown up)	See Focus Area 1 on engagement generally. Our contrary experience is also that many people still do care and have strong views on the direction of the Shul and that they want to be listened to and engaged with.
All roles – Too much politics	We have been fortunate that this has been a rare occurrence in Stanmore for many years and that most Council members readily accept that anyone with different views also just wants what is best for the Synagogue.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

9. Please see our descriptions of the current roles at Schedule 3. We should keep a watching brief on whether it makes sense to develop specific HE portfolios on specific/key functions (e.g. pastoral).
10. Succession planning to key positions is often left too late or not done at all. Furthermore, our election process is not always conducive to smooth or informed handovers. The first couple of months following an election can therefore be disrupted (and these are then followed by the summer holiday period and Yamim Noraim). This timetable needs to be managed better. The HE and heads of Sub-Committees should be actively and openly engaged in succession planning to avoid interruption and ensure a smooth handover of information in advance of changes where possible/known.

11. We would like to see greater involvement in our sub-committees. There is a lack of awareness across our community that one does not need to be on the Council to be involved in these sub-committees.
12. Sub-Committees should feel empowered to develop their own strategies, events and activities, provided these contribute to and are consistent with our overall strategic objectives and budgetary disciplines. In principle, our sub-committees should operate with a similar structure to the Council, each member holding a remit which is theirs to focus on and bring to the table at meetings with any concerns or suggestions. We will review whether Committee members feel they have sufficient 'ownership' of their areas to empower decision-making.
13. Notwithstanding the limited formal functions reserved for the Council in the US Byelaws, we want them to always feel able to challenge the HE to ensure good governance always and compliance in the administration of our Synagogue.
14. We will promote volunteering initiatives within and outside our Community.
15. We will annually review whether our lay-leadership structure is fit for purpose in accordance with US byelaws, including greater consideration as to the effectiveness of the size of our Council and organisation of our sub-committees.

2. OUR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Rabbi Mendel Lew left our community in February 2025. The Selection Committee formed to create a brief for and recruit a replacement surveyed and held a meeting to gauge members' views. The resultant process and search to recruit a new Senior Rabbinical Couple in 2025 resulted in a decision not to appoint from the initial pool of applicants. This was announced to the Community in January 2026.
2. It is evident to the HE that this is a very different recruitment situation to the last time we recruited a Senior Rabbi, following the retirement of Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen. We are currently at a critical point in our history and simply need to ensure we get this recruitment right.

Based on members feedback, the following areas were emphasised as important aspects for the recruitment:

- There needs to be a focus on relations and engagement with members including pastoral support – reflective of our strategy and desire to be a community that cares for each other.
 - Our tradition of 'non-judgementalism' remains vital in a Community as diverse as ours.
 - Our membership wishes to have inspiring female leadership in our Community
3. The post of the Senior Rabbi at our Synagogue is widely regarded as one of the premier positions in Anglo-Jewry reflecting the historic size of our membership. The HE is also aware that people inside and outside our membership regard the Senior Rabbi as effectively synonymous with the Synagogue itself. Our scale does however mean that the Senior Rabbi cannot be expected to do everything, and we are fortunate to have both our other Rabbonim, our Chazan and volunteers who will step forward when the Senior Rabbi is not available.
 4. Our current religious leadership structure of Senior Rabbi + Chazan + Assistant/Community Rabbi has remained the same for around 30 years without any significant review of whether it continues to fit our need and is affordable for our reduced membership. Given the number of changes we have experienced in the last decade, we are reviewing this structure within the current recruitment process.
 5. We have had a strong tradition of dynamic assistant and community Rabbonim focussing on younger families and this has been continued by Rabbi Eli Birnbaum who joined us in 2023 as Head of Community Development. He is not only an impactful speaker but has been working hard to create new and engaging activities and programmes. We work

closely with Rabbi Eli Birnbaumin developing the implementation of our engagement strategy, especially in the critical Young Families age groups.

6. In the past, a Rabbi's role was deemed to be understood by implication, but rarely expressly or well-defined. The increased scope of our activities, changing needs of communities and the growing professionalisation of the United Synagogue means this is no longer appropriate and we agree clear scopes of work and priorities with our Rabbonim so that expectations are mutually understood, meeting with them regularly. Similarly, our Rabbonim benefit from a levelized appraisal process in the United Synagogue which focusses on skill development and objective setting, as well as performance appraisal.
7. We are privileged to be supported by Rabbi Melvyn Bloom in connection with pastoral matters and Services.
8. We are also fortunate to have a renowned Chazan in Jonny Turgel, who grew up in Stanmore, leading our Shabbat and Yom Tov Services. We know that some members have comments that many smaller Communities in the UK have moved to not having a chazan for a 'regular' Shabbat, often in the interests of financial savings or for stylistic purposes. We do not see this as relevant to Stanmore currently – it is equally true that the larger synagogues retain chazanut as part of their Service and that Chazan Turgel is rightly regarded as being in the very top bracket of Chazanim in the UK. He is aware of the timing pressures of our services and has been very cooperative in helping to bring service times down in recent years.
9. We employ Youth Directors to lead our youth and children's activities. Ari and Chani Davila have announced they will shortly be moving on and we have begun the process of recruiting replacements.
10. Our Rabbonim provide important leadership and stability to our community but there has been an inconsistent history of involvement in matters of strategy and attendance at Council meetings. The current HE believe this needs to change. We intend to work as partners with both our Senior Rabbi and Head of Community Development, meeting with them very regularly and involving them in this strategy and with Council meetings moving forward.
11. The HE view is that it is critical that the Rabbinic/religious leaders of the Community should:
 - be empowered to lead and visibly do so; and
 - work as a mutually supportive team but with complementary focus areas (to avoid gaps in our offerings to our Community)
12. The HE are the traditional recipients of comments regarding our Rabbonim and other religious leaders - we recognise that within our membership there is always a multitude of views in this regard and are pleased for this tradition to continue!

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

13. The recruitment of a new Senior Rabbi is vital to the future of our Community and must not be rushed at the expense of picking the best available candidates. No other initiative under this strategy has as great a bearing on engagement, care and membership, and ultimately therefore, the success of the Strategy, as this one. We need to find the right Rabbi and give him the resources to succeed.
14. The HE see a sense of common purpose and partnership with our Rabbinic team as critical to achieving the reset and recovery described within this Strategy. This can only be achieved with regular meetings, trust and a shared purpose.
15. As addressed elsewhere in this Strategy, regular and proactive contact outside of Services between our Rabbonim and members (in good and less good times) continues to be seen as an absolute requirement by our members. Our Rabbonim should lead our efforts to see a greater number of our members attending our events, clubs and services.
16. As a priority objective under our Beit Knesset Focus Area, our future Rabbonim will be encouraged to reach out to our members on a regular basis, to check on their wellbeing and to encourage attendance at Shul events activities and services where appropriate to do so.
17. As a priority objective, we will aim to empower our Rabbonim, Youth Directors and those involved with Sub-Committees to lead: to develop their own strategies, innovations, events and activities consistent with our overall strategic objectives and budgetary disciplines.
18. We will adopt the US CRE process for appraising our Rabbonim and enabling them to develop their skills.
19. We will engage in regular review of our needs and priorities in the religious leadership team to ensure their roles evolve to meet the needs of our Community and our finances.

3. OUR OFFICE, ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES TEAMS

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Stanmore has a dedicated 'office' team comprising our Community and General Operations Manager, Shelley, our Finance Manager, Justine and our Community Administrator, Karen. Whilst each have distinct roles, they work as a team, covering each other's absences. A new temporary Events and Marketing Coordinator is being recruited, reporting to Rabbi Eli Birnbaum, and we need to fill this position permanently as the level of activities is considerable.
2. We know that past Executives have spoken with the United Synagogue Headquarters about the rationale for dedicated administration teams in each Synagogue and we believe that some smaller communities share resources for efficiency reasons. Equally it is true that larger Synagogues tend to benefit more from an office that gets to know its members - our team are very often the first 'face' of the Shul that members come into contact with, often at difficult times. It is important that they are friendly, welcoming and understanding.
3. Most Senior Rabbonim at large Synagogues now have a PA or, at the very least, diary manager and it is likely that one of our team will need to undertake that role when we have recruited a new Senior Rabbi.
4. Since Covid, our Office team enjoy some degree of location flexible working, enabling them to work from home. This can also be necessary in the current security climate when the building is otherwise empty. The arrangement is in keeping with modern working practices in many organisations and our team work collectively to ensure that they remain available to callers and often work regularly outside of traditional office hours, although, of course, means the physical office is not always staffed. Members are invited to comment to the HE on how they have found this arrangement in practice (or indeed whether they have even noticed).
5. Our Premises team is absolutely vital to the running of our facilities. We are very fortunate to have Siobhan Forbes who keeps our Synagogue building to standard. Siobhan is assisted by Ramea. We find that they are highly responsive to our needs, dedicated and care about our building.
6. Siobhan has had a difficult burden over the past two years where we have had only intermittent support from a third part-time caretaker but have significantly increased the number of events and their complexity. Two new assistants have recently been recruited for Shabbat and we hope the new arrangements will be more effective in ensuring the smooth running of our premises.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

7. It is important that our Office team and Premises team are consulted early as we introduce initiatives, particularly around the use of our building and space. They often add huge amounts of value to our thinking.
8. Whilst our current office arrangements appear to work well, we should keep both structure and flexible working arrangements under review to ensure they meet members' needs.

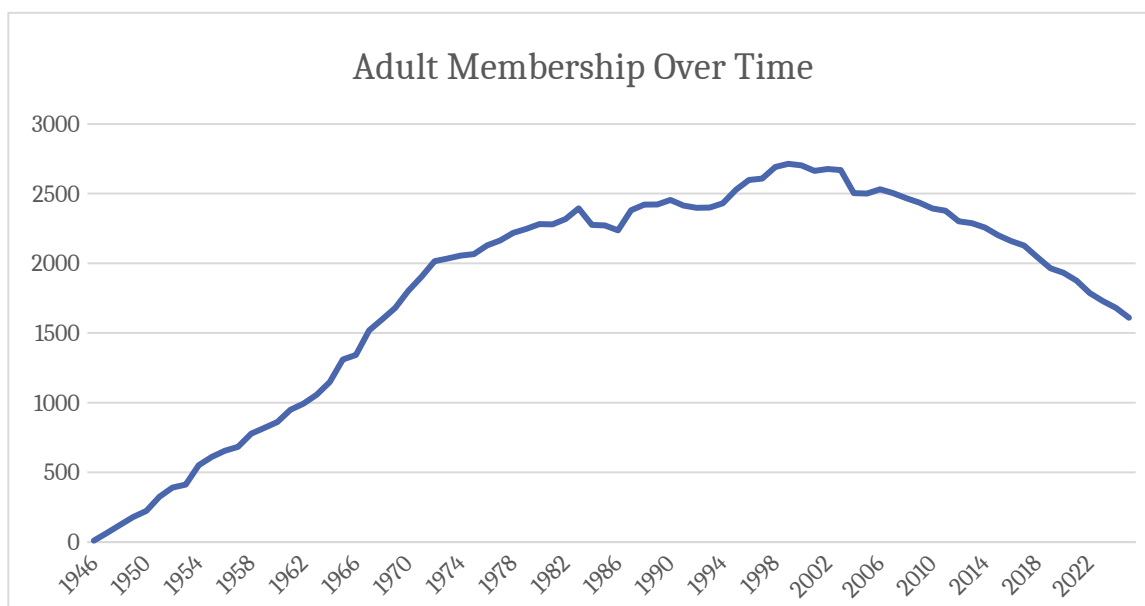
4. OUR MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. On the next page, we include a historical table of our total membership, showing a decline to pre-1970 levels. Whilst we remain a 'large membership' Shul, the decline is now impacting on our finances, threatening the sustainability of our 'full service to all members' model. We have carried out modelling looking at different future cases and our projections show that if we do not arrest and reverse this decline, we will not be able to afford all the things we have come to expect at SACPS.
2. The United Synagogue collects data on the reasons for member departures but the information this reveals can be limited and hard to draw clear conclusions from. For example, we can see that in most years the number of member deaths is offset by new joiners. That said, we also appear to also be losing previously engaged members in their 60s and 70s to other communities - some to live near their grandchildren but without a balancing influx of people moving into Stanmore in that same age group to be with their grandchildren here. This is essentially because we are not attracting sufficient younger families to Stanmore.
3. Whilst a lot of the information we have for departures is personal/anecdotal rather than necessarily demonstrative of clear trends, the two largest reasons for numbers declining appear to be (i) deaths and (ii) the loss of a social-pull factor to stay in Stanmore, (i.e., to compete with reasons to move, for example to a nearer Shul, closer to family or to Israel). These are similar to a couple of the engagement concepts explored in our Focus Area 1 Beit Knesset section. It is also important to note the growing trend among young marrieds to live in further-afield locations due to affordability of housing. Anecdotally, areas in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire are steadily attracting this demographic, for many of whom proximity to a Shul or community is not a priority value in house hunting.
4. The age profile of our synagogue membership is also now strongly weighted towards middle and older age cohorts. We do enjoy a growing group of active younger families but are under-represented in the 30-40s and 40-50s age group with these bands having 50% of the numbers of 50-60s and 60-70s.
5. There is at least anecdotal evidence that increasing numbers of young Jewish families do not bother joining a synagogue until they need to celebrate a bar/bat-mitzvah and some then cancel after these events.

Table Of Total Stanmore Adult Members (Men and Women) at Year End

1946	10	1971	1902	1996	2598	2021	1875
1947	66	1972	2016	1997	2608	2022	1787
1948	123	1973	2034	1998	2691	2023	1729
1949	179	1974	2055	1999	2714	2024	1680
1950	224	1975	2066	2000	2703	2025	1610
1951	325	1976	2128	2001	2663		
1952	391	1977	2164	2002	2677		
1953	412	1978	2218	2003	2669		
1954	551	1979	2247	2004	2504		
1955	611	1980	2282	2005	2500		
1956	655	1981	2279	2006	2531		
1957	683	1982	2318	2007	2504		
1958	778	1983	2395	2008	2467		
1959	819	1984	2276	2009	2436		
1960	861	1985	2272	2010	2393		
1961	949	1986	2237	2011	2377		
1962	993	1987	2381	2012	2302		
1963	1058	1988	2421	2013	2288		
1964	1148	1989	2422	2014	2257		
1965	1310	1990	2455	2015	2202		
1966	1342	1991	2415	2016	2160		
1967	1519	1992	2398	2017	2127		
1968	1598	1993	2400	2018	2044		
1969	1680	1994	2431	2019	1965		
1970	1803	1995	2528	2020	1932		



6. We also recognise that there is a growing population of young Jews in this age group living in the East Stanmore / Stonegrove / West Edgware areas who we wish to attract to our Synagogue.
7. Other local synagogues include on the East side of Stanmore, Edgware and Hendon Reform (Stonegrove) and the Yeshurun Federation Synagogue with its Young Adult Minyan (YAM) alternative; the Mosaic premises on Stanmore Hill (hosting 3 communities in Masorti, Reform and Liberal); and in the South, Belmont United Synagogue. Whilst all run activities in addition to Services, none operate at the scale and with the same level of activity as our Synagogue. Unlike in neighbouring Edgware where there has been an explosion of minyanim over the last 20 years or so (many of which are not community-focussed), this has not happened in Stanmore, although we cannot assume that will remain the case going forward. Moreover, as we benefit from the retained memberships of families who have moved away, we should acknowledge that there are also many local families who are members of Synagogues further afield.
8. This reinforces the HE's instinct that SACPS must aim for excellence and best practice in all that we do. We cannot assume post-Covid and with increasing costs, that members will stay members for ever. Habits have been broken and reshaped over the past 4 years and we need to aim to demonstrate the value of membership of SACPS at all times.
9. Some savings made during the Covid period have somewhat mitigated and masked the underlying picture of reduced revenues up to now. As we have gone back to a full programme of events, it has become clear that we are now likely to be operating at a deficit once we recruit a Senior Rabbi.
10. Our view is that the cost of our Synagogue membership represents very good value especially for engaged members who attend multiple events and Services when compared to the costs of, say, other social memberships such as gyms and golf clubs and the wide range of activities on offer. However, we need to acknowledge that this view is unlikely to be shared by members who are not currently actively engaged.

We have begun to introduce new member initiatives in 2026. To date, this has had limited impact so we intend to better advertise this campaign.

11. Another area of income that has also reduced (in this case disproportionately to membership revenue) in the past 20 years is offerings and other donations. Offerings on the bimah and from semachot (Bar- and Bat-Mitzvahs and weddings) have also significantly reduced and when made, donations do not keep up with inflation. The HE relaunched the annual Platinum Fund in 2024 to fund our Community Department Budget and this has been successful. In 2026 the HE published our first ever Sponsorship Brochure to highlight more areas in the Shul seeking funding including capital projects.

12. There has been a reduction in members donating kiddushim in circumstances where previously the same would have been common, with the Shul then needing to fund such kiddushim. Hall hire has not recovered since prior to Covid either.
13. Our capital reserves will likely to be depleted by the cost of repairing the rabbi's house in London Road.
14. Accordingly, SACPS has an ongoing need to explore alternative revenue sources and financial strategies, whether arising from the use of its facilities or otherwise. This may unfortunately lead to reassessment of current usage of the building.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

15. In order to restore our financial stability and ability to remain a 'full-service' Shul, we must arrest membership decline and also move towards again gaining members. The recruitment of new Rabbinical leadership creates an opportunity to change the dialogue around our Synagogue and achieve this aim but will not be an overnight solution.
16. When the Shul was growing as a community, it had debt and, to an extent, this was considered to help bind the community together in collective fundraising (through what was then known as the Building Committee). It is in our self-interest, that some of that spirit needs to be re-established for the short and medium term. The HE has therefore created a new Financial Committee and welcomes members with relevant credentials and interest who wish to participate in this.
17. The new Financial Committee's scope includes looking at alternative and innovative sources of revenue raising to reduce the burden on our members. Some of this work has already begun, including within our Premises Plan
18. As a priority objective, we need to target stopping our membership decline and by the end of 2027 have created the environment for membership to grow again. This is vital to restoring financial stability.
19. As a priority objective, we must aim to returning to a balanced budget by 2029 (i.e., all regular expenditure is met by income and not, for example, from past surpluses).
20. We need to continue to implement membership initiatives with young adults and young families, as the future of our Community. This also attracts the grandparents of such families when they move homes. We will also aim to improve our welcome (and welcome information pack) for new members
21. In the event that our membership and fundraising initiatives do not succeed or take longer than hoped to take effect, the HE will of course need to consider fall-back plans,

including costs savings and restructuring alternatives, in order to ensure the Synagogue can continue to operate prudently.

22. As a longer-term objective, we need to be aiming to grow our membership again and financial resources with the target of achieving a modest surplus budget of £20-50k pa above regular expenditure to build up capital reserves.
23. Within our premises strategy, we should aim to create a rolling 3-year facilities management and refurbishment plan to enable better planning in relation to capital reserves and mitigation of the risk of unforeseen capital expenditure (see the next section).

5. OUR PREMISES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Our main premises in London Road has benefitted from targeted refurbishments – particularly the project creating Beit Mordechai and refurbishing the Main Shul. However, its exterior and other interior parts (for example, heating equipment and the toilet facilities) are now showing their age and wear and expensive repair projects are increasing in their regularity. Our capital reserves have been eroded by these and the HE is concerned that we may be vulnerable to a sudden need for major capital expenditure which is not covered by insurance. Our restored Premises Committee has been carrying out inspections and surveys to identify short-term maintenance needs in a more proactive rather than reactive way (which tends to be more expensive). This should enable us to budget more accurately in future and reduce the risk of unwelcome surprises.
2. The use of our Community Centre facilities has also reduced. Whilst clubs like cubs, scouts, brownies etc, SAFIRE and Pickleball make regular use of the hall, we receive very little income from hall hire. Some of this is no doubt down to appearance but it is also down to physical limitations: our lack of an attractive or large reception area and lack of lift access to the kitchens, as well as better alternatives nearby. Limited attempts to advertise the Hall more effectively have not had results so far.
3. When our nursery provider needed to close a branch, they chose Stanmore and our lack of purpose-built facilities probably played into this decision.
4. Our office space has been crowbarred into various rooms our building where possible without any evident planning. We have rabbi offices on the first floor being used as storage, a donated library being used as a Rabbi and Community Department office, and a Community Care group which have been segregated into a portacabin which has

become permanent by accident. This arguably runs counter to creating a sense of cohesiveness amongst those based in the building during the week. Ideally, we would like to have better and contiguous office space, if possible.

5. We also own the Rabbi's home on the other side of London Road. This has not had any significant repairs in the last 19 years and needs significant work before the arrival of a new Rabbi. Tenders received to undertake this work exceed all estimates and, at the time of writing, we need to understand how we can afford this type of work, which is not independently amenable to fundraising, going forward
6. At the same time, we need to ensure our buildings continue to be fit from an evolving security perspective.
7. We now keep a regular watch on sustainability practices (buildings and operations) through our new Sustainability Committee formed in 2024. The installation of 137 solar panels on our roof in December 2025 is a significant project for not just us but also the whole of the United Synagogue. Over each of the next 25 years, the system is projected to generate 65,000 kWh of electricity and avoid 30,000 kg of carbon dioxide emissions.

The solar panels will significantly reduce our carbon footprint, lower our energy costs for the next 25 years, and allow us to demonstrate sustainable practices for our community and the next generation in the face of steep increases in our energy costs. They are a meaningful step toward ensuring that our synagogue remains vibrant and financially resilient.

8. Whilst previous strategies have looked at how the Synagogue might look in future if fully redeveloped, we believe there is a simpler and more cost-effective project which can be equally effective. We are fortunate in Stanmore to have a few members with the professional skills to help design such a project and are currently working with them with the following brief reflecting previous Strategy statements:

- To utilise the area between the Shul building and Community Centre building effectively.
- To reflect our engagement strategy, so that our Community Centre can be used by more people more of the time. This involves ideas such as a purpose-built nursery; a drop in coffee shop area, and fitness facilities.
- To develop upgraded and income-producing community facilities which are also in-demand and therefore relieve some of the financial pressures on the Community – including:
 - upgraded function hall facilities and reception space
 - upgrading our lift facilities for catering and disabled access.
 - coworking office facilities which we can rent to communal organisations and/or businesses
 - upgrading our toilet facilities, including toilets for men on the first floor.

- improving our security including access points, control areas and 'invac.' capabilities.
- updating our M&E systems (including heating, cooling and communications).
- To bring our own office space into one shared collective space with private areas
 - enabling a more cohesive and collective team ethos.
- As an option, changing our Main Shul area into an amphitheatre-style seating format, facing East and with men and women at the same level.

The resultant draft Premises Plan has been reviewed at Council level and we believe it has the potential to truly energise our Community as a project which in its own way will help deliver a positive future for us all. At the time of writing, the plan is undergoing an engineering feasibility and costing review and we very much hope to be able to present it to the Community during 2026.

9. Our Community benefits from the Stanmore & Canons Park Eruv, which is helpful to observant families with young children who want to use a pram or baby buggy outside their home on Shabbat and to people who use a wheelchair or walking frame. Although it was founded by members of our Community, it is not owned by our Community, but rather by a separate charity. Its maintenance, funding and connections to other nearby eruvim, therefore, fall outside our remit.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

10. If our premises plan passes through its engineering feasibility and affordability gateway approvals, we will need to start specific fundraising initiatives if it is to be realised.
11. Through professional inspections, we will seek to create a professional rolling 3-year facilities management/preventative maintenance and refurbishment plan to enable better planning in relation to capital reserves and mitigation of the risk of unforeseen capital expenditure.
12. Developing a longer term 'property-plan' enabling us to create a strategic and longer-term plan for our Synagogue building aligned with members needs for the next 20 years.
13. Further reducing our reliance on disposables; reducing waste and our carbon footprint. This is a vital issue for many members, and we need to start implementing mitigation strategies and recommendations from our Sustainability Committee.
- 14.



FOCUS AREA 5 – KESHARIM CONNECTIONS

5.1 CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. SACPS prides itself as Zionist. Our membership is overwhelmingly Zionist in outlook.
2. Having stated the above, it is right to recognise that evidence of this affiliation had declined prior to the horrific events of October 7th, 2023; or rather had not yet restarted following Covid. We did not have an operating Israel Awareness Committee. Events and activities had reduced to Yom Hazikaron, Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. Our Rabbonim would speak passionately of our love for Israel from the Bimah but, being self-critical, our community activities perhaps did not actively reflect our passion unless sparked by a tragic event or an escalation in violence.
3. Of course, this changed from October 2023. Solidarity events were hastily organised, and the Community responded with large numbers attending these and travelling together to other communal activities. Additional prayers for Israel became part of our daily and Shabbat prayers and our committee was restarted (and has subsequently been re-energised). We worked with multiple organisations to develop projects, volunteering opportunities and to bring in guest speakers to address the ongoing conflict and plight of the hostages.

There was some concern expressed in the 2025 Strategy document that attendances again were beginning to tail-off not least due to the high correlation between those attending Israel-related and other Shul events and talks with the same pool of engaged members at both. We were not seeing a significant uptake in attendance among less affiliated or non-members for Israel events, even those events with little to no religious or educational outlook. This caused some self-reflection but 2025 also saw a hugely successful initiative with Peace of Mind, highlighted by a sell-out Friday night, as well as a hugely successful and well-attended 'shuk' Yom Haatzmaut event that sold out despite only one week of advertising.

4. We should equally recognise the reported reduction in Israel/Zionist affiliation amongst younger adults, often attributed to social media and news reporting on politics as well as

activism on Campuses. That said, we cannot say that we have seen much evidence of this within our own Community so far. The recent instalment of Zak Wagman and Sami Berkoff to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Israel Committee should help in reconnecting with the younger demographic.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

5. We will continue to do more to reflect Zionism as one of our key values – essentially this means refocussing our ‘worldview’ with a love for Israel as one of our foundations, with all our leadership involved with this.
6. This will entail partnering with relevant charities to encourage a sense of ownership and ongoing relationship with members - the Peace of Mind and Talpiot Bar Mitzvah programmes have been excellent initiatives. Other examples include increasing our number of Israel-related events and speakers and reinstating an annual ‘mission’ trip for our Community. The recent ‘shuk’ event run with WZO and an upcoming Ulpan class with the same organisation show the benefits of partnering and outsourcing some of our Israel related provision.
7. We should prompt our representatives (including our MPs and Councillors) and representative bodies (including BoD and the US) to address antisemitic behaviours masquerading as anti-Zionism.

5.2 CONNECTIONS TO OTHER LOCAL SYNAGOGUES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Traditionally , United Synagogue Communities have operated as islands, with each Synagogue trying to provide as many services as they can afford to members but sharing very little in conjunction with one another, even where this is not particular efficient.
2. We have been doing more in conjunction with other local US Synagogues in recent years. We have shared a number of visitors and speakers with Edgware, for example, and often organise external events and trips in conjunction with Belmont and Bushey. We have found there has been a cultural shift and communities are much more open to sharing events nowadays.
3. We also organised an event for pre-University students in 2024 which had the participation of 26 other US communities and was very well-received.

4. That said, despite good personal relationships with the leaders of all our neighbouring US communities, there can still be barriers to collaboration and a tendency for each Shul to want to do its own thing. Accordingly in early 2025, the HE arranged a local forum with their opposite numbers at Belmont, Kenton and Pinner to look to do more together. This has also been a key initiative for Rabbi Eli Birnbaum as well.
5. As a general proposition, we have found it more difficult to organise events in conjunction with other non-United Synagogue orthodox synagogues nearby, such as the Yeshurun in Edgware or nearby reform synagogues, albeit we were pleased that EHRS attended our Israel solidarity services immediately post October 7th. On the whole our membership cares less about what divides us from these communities than what unites us.
6. There is a view amongst some of our members that it is inevitable that some United Synagogue communities will have to merge in future and combine resources in a hub-and-spoke type model (i.e. with one larger Synagogue with the resources of a large multi-functional site supporting other local minyanim). For example, the Northwood and Ruislip communities merged in the last year.

However, we would also add that the above view often travels with an entitled assumption that Stanmore would be a hub, because of the size of our building, whereas the membership and financial data in Section 4 demonstrates why such an assumption may be dangerous and inappropriate. In our view, our priority needs to be re-establishing Stanmore as an attractive Community, rather than hoping that it may be rescued by potential mergers or closures that may not happen or even be desirable.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

7. As mentioned elsewhere, many of our nearby Synagogues face similar issues to us and numbers of members and financial issues will require us to look more closely at sharing resources. There are obvious inefficiencies in each Synagogue trying to do similar things rather than combining numbers on occasion. This is also relevant to current recruitments at ours and local Synagogues where a collective approach might be more effective.
8. We think it makes sense to continue to look for opportunities to combine with the other local communities and to share best practice. Our HE should continue to meet with local Synagogues representatives regularly to discuss increased co-operation and sharing of resources.
9. In due course, opportunities may present themselves to combine resources for greater efficiencies, but we are not actively looking at this currently and believe it would distract from our main priority as above.

5.3 CONNECTIONS TO SOCIETAL PROGRESS INITIATIVES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. It is probably fair to say that our community is not known for having an activist tradition outside of issues that have directly affected us as Jews (such as Soviet Jewry, Israel and the development of the first UK Women's Tefilla group). Indeed, it has been the experience of our Executive that there can be resistance to even quite minor and basic changes related to sustainability and preservation of the environment, notwithstanding that they are for the good of all or even re-establish former practices.
2. As a general proposition, it is also the case that the younger generations of Anglo-Jewry feel very differently towards such issues and are unlikely to wish to be members of insular organisations that do not share such values.
3. SACPS was relatively slow on the uptake of environmental initiatives led by the United Synagogue and lagged behind other Communities in this area. This was probably due to the previous lack of 'champions' to drive the necessary change in this area. In 2024, our new Sustainability Committee was created with the intention of bringing forward positive changes in this area. We are now likely viewed as a flagship Community, not least due to the installation of the 137 solar panels mentioned in our Premises section above.
4. On a smaller but equally important note, we have begun to tackle aspects of our consumption, including wasteful single-use products. We replaced the use of disposable plates at kiddush with colourful crockery. We continue to encourage avoidance of bottled water and will look at water filtering options in 2026.
5. This area within Kesharim now needs to look beyond environmental concerns and look at other pressing issues in society. Other religions and, indeed, other branches of our religion have grasped the opportunity to look at what contributions can be made to our wider society in relation to other national and local issues including poverty, mental health and refugees.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

6. We need to analyse and play our part as a responsible organisation in relation to consumption and recycling: reducing waste and establishing more sustainable practices that are affordable, as recommended by our Sustainability Committee.

5.4 VOLUNTEERING IN AND OUR CONNECTIONS WITH OUR LOCALITY

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. The Hebrew word for volunteer is mitnadev, meaning “one who becomes noble.” This reflects Judaism’s ideal attitude toward volunteering, namely that it can become a self-transformative act that increases one’s sense of nobility by having done good work. Moreover, it tells us that we should treat our volunteers with respect and honour, as if they were nobles visiting our congregations.

As noted elsewhere, Synagogues that fully embrace the volunteer resource are more efficient, effective, and achieve their mission, vision, and goals. . Moreover, volunteering helps create camaraderie and a sense of ownership – our wider community is replete with examples of volunteer organisations that are more motivated than equivalent paid employee organisational equivalents.

2. Currently, we do not have any formal relationships with charities in the local area or other institutions which are an engaged in providing a public good or benefit (such as hospitals, hospices, care homes, schools and public spaces) or further afield. This includes institutions which look after our members.

Other local religious communities, including other local Jewish communities have managed this even if these have developed from grassroot initiatives rather than strategically.

3. We believe it would benefit our Community to become known as a place to find volunteering opportunities within our locality and would further our commitment to becoming a ‘Community with a shul, not just a shul with a Community’. We believe this could also enable engagement with younger more socially concerned generations as well as enabling access to other opportunities, for example, job offers and work experience.
4. We noted in the Yesodot Focus Area that there has been a reduction in volunteering within our Community for SACPS itself and explored reasons for this. We identified there that volunteers want to know that their time will be used wisely, that they will have an impact, and that their volunteer experience will be enjoyable.

With the exception of the annual Volunteers Brunch and Volunteers Shabbat we do not celebrate or thank our volunteers in a meaningful way. We also use the same volunteers repeatedly, risking burning out dedicated individuals. As a result, we end up begging for volunteer help, often at the last moment, and volunteers who have been

coerced into helping may feel resentful and consequently unwilling to put themselves forward in the future.

It has also been noted that we have a large pool of diverse talented people in our community, but we often do not know what their skills or areas of expertise are. This information could be extremely valuable in connecting potential volunteers with opportunities and benefit the community as a whole. We should also regularly articulate that volunteering is for all age groups.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

5. We need to evolve our relationship with local institutions/charities, potentially identifying one or two we can develop a deeper relationship with.
6. We should recognise and thank our volunteers more often. Possibly with regular events dedicated to them.
7. We are looking at how we can develop a Community skills database and have already begun including information about volunteer engagement in shul communications such as Habimah, social media channels, etc. This may be a project where local Shuls can link up.
- 8.

5.5 CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER CHARITIES

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS:

1. Although we are ourselves part of a charity, SACPS has always facilitated other related charity appeals, particularly at traditional times of the year.
2. Our main charity appeals were always at Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre appeal) and Pesach. The Kol Nidre appeal was originally run and shared mainly with the JIA/UJIA and selected other charities. In recent years the United Synagogue has taken over the running of the appeal from UJIA. In 2023, analysis of our financial position led to a decision to limit the appeal to ourselves and the United Synagogue (including its constituent parts such as University chaplaincy and Chesed), but since then we have reverted to partnering with outside charities.

The Pesach appeal was traditionally run for the benefit of Jewish Care but has also benefitted other charities alongside Jewish Care in recent years.

Additionally, the Shul facilitates donations to the poor at Purim to perform the mitzva of Matanot L'evyonim.

Finally, the Gemilat Chesed fund supporting the needy in our Community makes direct appeals to members when funds are needed.

3. A few years ago, the HE noted that several other charity appeals have also begun to be facilitated by SACPS. However, there has been feedback indicating a growing concern that SACPS has been asking for funds for other charities on too many occasions and that some members have become exasperated on being approached repeatedly through the Shul, however important these appeals are. As a result of this feedback, the HE took a decision with the support of the Council to revert to our previous policy limiting direct appeals for funds to the Pesach and Yom Kippur appeals:
 - Since 2024 we have been piloting a new policy of selecting 2-4 partner charities each year (one of which must be local and one of which must be Israel -based) and asking each to suggest how we can develop meaningful communal links and not simply act as a fundraising resource for them. This has been going well to date with charities providing speakers for events and appeals raising increased amounts.
 - The Pesach appeal is now devoted to domestic appeals and has been steady in the past 3 years and we need to review why it has not engaged members
 - The external charity part of the Yom Kippur appeal has been devoted to Israel charities over the past 3 years. The decision to focus the appeal produced an initial uplift and since then it has grown in line with inflation.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

4. There was a strong connection with the Peace of Mind charity following the visit of one of their groups to the Shul in 2025 so we are continuing that partnership. We would like to see the same happen with one or more domestic charities.
- 5.

The Strategy Feedback Form can be found at

<https://stanmoresynagogue.org/our-story-our-vision>