

# OUR COMMUNITY INSPIRED BY JEWISH VALUES

We believe that BES@Yavneh and the wider BES community can grow and develop into the most vibrant and welcoming community in the UK. But it's going to need a lot of positive determination to make it work



*A strategic vision  
for BES@Yavneh,  
the BES  
community in the  
Southside of  
Borehamwood*

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## Executive Summary

BES@Yavneh is an integral part of the wider BES community, the part based in the Southside of Borehamwood. By constructing a collective vision and defining strategic priorities, BES@Yavneh can continue to grow and develop whilst remaining welcoming, encouraging participation and providing a Modern Orthodox spirituality.

**Our Vision is to be a thriving and welcoming Modern Orthodox community, inspired by Jewish values, where everyone can feel spiritually enriched, support one another and help those in need**

## Our Strategic Priorities

### Shabbat and Chagim: Reimagining the synagogue for spiritual inspiration

- Improving ruach and ensuring that all attendees can engage
- Inspiring weekly alternatives to the main Yavneh shul service
- Within halacha, helping women, youth, boys and girls to be more involved

### Youth: Engaging our youth in vibrant community experiences

- Continue and expand the nascent youth activities as part of the wider BES programme

### Community: Enjoying being Jewish together with people that live near us

- Social Action programmes to help those in need in our town.
- Care for and support those in need in our community

### Welcoming: Remaining open, inclusive and friendly as we continue to grow

- Welcoming and getting to know all new people on Southside
- Ensuring that everyone feels included

### Participation: Dedicated volunteers supported by info, training and thanks

- More volunteers, enthusiastic, confident and fully supported

### Viability: Ensuring our long term future as part of BES

- Working towards the success of the whole BES community.
- Significant representation in the wider BES governance
- Management of an agreed budget, with authority for local decisions



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Emeritus Rabbi: Rabbi A. Plancey  
 Senior Rabbi: Rabbi C. Kanterovitz  
 Rabbi: Rabbi B. Boudilovsky  
 Rabbi: Rabbi A. Azizoff

18th December 2015

On behalf of the Rabbinical team, I would like to say Kol HaKavod to the members of the Yavneh Think Tank team for the time and hard work they have put into compiling the proposals to help BES support and lead spiritually the ever growing Jewish Community in Borehamwood. Without a doubt the Yavneh minyan is a significant member of the BES family and, like Croxdale, is having to look at how it can address the increasing needs of our diverse community, which is already well in excess of 1300 families, in addition to non-members who use our facilities. Currently we have the Hashkama, Limmud, Ascot, Youth and Nitzan minyanim in addition to the main shul services, as well as increasing our other programmes such as children's services and Youth programming led by Rav Amos, and... this is only the beginning.

The Rabbinical team, led by myself, supported by Rebbetzen Bianca, Rav Boruch, Rebbetzen Esther, Rav Amos and when needed Rav Finn are here to provide spiritual guidance, leadership and education. In addition, as Senior Rav it is my task to make the Halachic and Hashkafic decisions in regards to the operations and strategy of BES as a whole.

I look forward to working with the Think Tank team and the BES HOs as we progress through the next stage of agreeing which of these proposals can be implemented and seeing them come to life.

Rabbi Chaim Kanterovitz  
 Senior Rabbi – BES

### **Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue**

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Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue is under the umbrella of the United Synagogue, Registered Charity No. 242552

## Acknowledgements

The recommendations and vision described in this document are the result of many, many hours of conversations and discussions amongst the Southside Think Tank committee and scores of members of the BES community. We greatly thank everyone that has contributed to the conclusions that we have reached and for all of the time and thought that they have given to the future of the BES@Yavneh community.

In particular, the members of the Think Tank, Leanne Altberg, Howard Brown, Jonny Friedman, Jo Grose, Daniel Morris, Jeffrey Permutt and Dalya Wittenberg, have been a dedicated, creative and enthusiastic team throughout the process, willing to challenge established assumptions.

We also had help from some other members of the community: Eddie Hammerman was invaluable in providing good ideas for framing our conversations, Anya Nicholls provided guidance in how best to conduct market research, and Rabbi Brawer's ideas on reimagining the synagogue inspired many of our thoughts, discussions and conclusions around Shabbat and Chagim.

Alongside this, Rabbi Boudilovsky, the Southside Committee and the BES Honorary Officers have provided solid support for our work.

Personally, I have found this to be an invigorating attempt to better understand the needs of our community and help chart our future course. The people that I have worked with have been truly inspiring and I feel that we have produced an exciting vision for the years to come.

I hope we have delivered a worthwhile outcome.

Simon Berman  
BES@Yavneh Think Tank Chair

## Introduction

BES@Yavneh has achieved some amazing things in the eight years since our inception. We have grown from a fortnightly Friday evening minyan in people's houses to providing a packed calendar of services on Shabbat and Chagim in the Yavneh College shul, exciting innovations including themed Kiddushim, Gingerbread Storytime and Tea In The Park, and a host of other programmes and activities.

*"Feels informal, relaxed, welcoming and inclusive"*

We now regularly see over 250 people on site on a Shabbat morning, including over 100 in children's services, and more than 600 people on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Many attendees feel that BES@Yavneh now has a distinct and attractive identity of its own, yet still remains an integral part of the wider BES community.

So far this growth and development has occurred whilst maintaining the informal, relaxed, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that so many people like about BES@Yavneh. And whilst emphasising our unchanging values of Spirituality in a Modern Orthodox context, Family, Being Welcoming, Encouraging Participation and Equality of Hierarchy.

*"Genuine community feel"*

There are, however, major challenges to be faced. It is more difficult to remain as open and welcoming with the much larger numbers than we had a few years ago. How do we ensure that everyone feels like they have space to pray and can get involved? And how do we retain a warm and friendly feeling at Kiddush?

How do we make the Shabbat morning experience more fulfilling? How do we ensure that our emerging youth cohort is fully engaged and that our wonderful volunteers are fully supported? What other aspects of a Jewish community should we be providing?

*"Sensational children's services"*

Outside of our community, challenges exist around the way we are viewed by the wider population of the town, the changing way that our youth use technology and relate to the world around them and the continued rise in the numbers of Jews in Borehamwood and Elstree.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is how to ensure our long term viability. How to achieve this whilst remaining part of the wider BES community?

How to put BES@Yavneh on a stable long-term financial footing?

These are not easy questions, which is why the Southside Committee set up the Think Tank to investigate these challenges and determine a way forward, a strategic vision for the part of the BES community in the Southside of Borehamwood. Our goal was to create:

*A strategic vision for development over the next few years of the BES@Yavneh community in Southside, to engage and involve local Jewish families and grow BES and the United Synagogue whilst maintaining our core values.*

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To that end, over the course of summer 2015, the Think Tank committee undertook the Big Summer Conversation which culminated in a Conversation Roadshow discussion where about 25 enthusiastic members of the community discussed how to improve Shabbat spirituality and how to expand community activities.

We held over 80 conversations, resulting in a rich set of data collected via emails, videos, face to face and group discussions with attendees and members of all sections of the BES@Yavneh and the wider BES community, the BES honorary officers, the BES Rabbis and Rebbetzens, representatives of the United Synagogue, local councillors and other important stakeholders in our community.

*"This conversation is amazing!"*

The conversations generated 280 ideas and suggestions that, after much discussion and debate, were distilled in this document into 73 recommendations. The recommendations are grouped into sections that focus on the key themes that emerged from the conversations: Shabbat and Chagim, Staying welcoming whilst growing, Community, Participation, Youth, and Long Term Viability.

These six theme sections (page 10 to page 25 inclusive) contain 28 key recommendations, and they include within them the 12 strategic priorities from the Executive Summary on page 3.

The 'further recommendations' listed on page 25 and beyond, however, are suggestions that the Think Tank have determined would be

worthwhile carrying forward but which may need more thought and discussion before implementing.

We believe that by delivering the 28 key recommendations, both BES@Yavneh and the wider BES community can grow and develop into the most vibrant and welcoming community in the UK.

There are a few important points to bear in mind when considering the delivery of these recommendations:

- We have to do so whilst maintaining all the great things that are already happening.
- Many of the recommendations are already happening or under discussion, at least in part. That doesn't negate the importance of including them in this document.
- Many of the recommendations are equally applicable in the wider BES community as they are within BES@Yavneh and we hope that, as a result, they get adopted across the community.
- It's going to need a lot of positive determination to make it work.

To move things forward, the Southside Committee will create a plan for how and when to implement our strategic priorities and the rest of the 28 key recommendations, plus as many of the other recommendations as they deem to be practicable – they'll need your help so please do get involved!

*If you are interested in getting involved in the implementation of any of the ideas presented in this document, please let us know at*

*[yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org](mailto:yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org)*



## Our story

BES@Yavneh started life in 2007 as an occasional Friday night service in the houses of Suzanne and Gary Yantin and Dan and Jo Grose for those that would go to shul if only it were a bit closer.

In that same year, the BES Honorary Officers decided that it was time to expand the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services into an overflow service at Yavneh College. Gary and Dan, along with Simon Berman, became the Gabbaim over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and for the continuing Friday evening services.

With Rabbi Brawer providing strategic support and a drive to expand activities beyond just occasional services, in 2008 we held our first Shabbat morning service in Yavneh College.

Although initially on a monthly basis, by October 2013 our services had become fortnightly. By this time Rabbi Boudilovsky had become our regular Rabbi on Southside (working with Rabbi Kanterovitz who had become the senior rabbi for BES), ministering to those on the Southside, helping to further develop our future direction, and leading to weekly services from Succot 2014.

Alongside this, the Southside Committee was formed, initially as an ad-hoc group and eventually as a sub-committee of the BES Board of Management, chaired by Jo Grose, providing direction for our expanding services and activities and representing the many rotas and volunteers that come together to make BES@Yavneh the success it is.

Our gabbaim have been formally elected at the BES AGM since 2011 and currently consist of Damian Schogger, David Altberg and David Nathan and previously, as well as Dan, Gary and Simon, Harris Lorrie and Grant Benjamin.

As BES@Yavneh continues to go from strength to strength, we need more help than ever to run our ever increasing list of activities and to implement the vision and recommendations contained in this document – please get involved!

*“Very proud to have been involved in the early stages when it was an attempt to create a regular Friday night service in people’s houses”*

## Vision

*Our vision is our dream. It's what we believe are the ideal conditions for our community: how things would look if the issues important to us were completely, perfectly addressed. It's understood and shared by members of the community, broad enough to include a diverse variety of local perspectives and inspiring and uplifting to everyone.*

*Welcoming  
community*

***Our Vision is to be a thriving and welcoming Modern Orthodox community, inspired by Jewish values, where everyone can feel spiritually enriched, support one another and help those in need***

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*Inspired by  
Jewish  
values*

*Spiritually  
enriched*

*This aligns with the purpose of the wider BES community:*

***BES is a Modern Orthodox Zionist Synagogue. We seek to create an environment which promotes spiritual growth and where all Jews can feel a sense of belonging and community through a variety of channels. These include religious services, social, educational and cultural activities provided in a way to meet the needs of all our members.***

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*Supporting  
one another*

*Helping  
those in  
need*

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*And with the new United Synagogue strategy as described in the recent US Strategic Review:*

***Building Vibrant Engaged Communities at the Forefront of British Jewry.***

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## Shabbat and Chagim

Reimagining the synagogue for spiritual inspiration

*We need to be innovative and creative to engage more people and to engage people more in the spiritual life on Shabbat and Chagim*

*“Kids having fun, davening, with smiles on their faces makes me happy”*

Shul services at Yavneh, whether in the shul for Shabbat and Chagim or in the larger dining hall for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, are generally perceived to be a positive and fairly spiritual experience with good levels of decorum, especially on Friday nights and Kol Nidre and Ne'ilah, with the Kiddush being a particularly important and regular focal point for everyone at Yavneh on Shabbat or Chagim.

We were very keen however, especially after talking in depth to Rabbi Brawer and understanding the ideas that he was developing in conjunction with his Spiritual Capital Foundation, to find out what we need to put in place for people to deepen their shul experience, and to feel something that is meaningful and valuable to them.

*“Would ideally like to feel relaxed, refreshed, having had a spiritual experience”*

It is important to note that any changes must retain the Modern Orthodox nature of BES services, that it is ultimately the BES Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Kanterovitz, that makes overall halachic decisions with respect to the wider BES community, and that he and Rabbi Boudilovsky must be consulted with respect to any changes with halachic impact.

During our Conversation Roadshow, Rabbi Brawer facilitated an excellent discussion in which community members described the feelings they would like to leave shul with on a Shabbat morning. People said that on leaving shul, they wanted to feel ...

- Involved
  - Being part of, not merely attending: a participant
  - As part of a wider community
- Happy, joyous
  - That we and our kids enjoyed shul
- Calmness after the weekly rush
  - Useful to have pointers to know what to think about
  - Doesn't have to be quiet to be calm

*“Knowing or thinking about something new”*

*“Included not merely attending”*

- Connected to our heritage
- Connected to God
  - Particularly on Ne'eliah, perhaps because of the investment of time and the building to a crescendo
- Their values were reinforced
- Moved to a different place
- More self-aware through prayer
- Spiritually uplifted and nourished
  - Particularly on Friday night
- Intellectually stimulated and challenged
  - Knowing or thinking about something new

Based on the Conversation Roadshow and on the many responses from our community conversations, we believe that our key priorities in this area should be:

*“How do we encourage people to think more spiritually?”*

- I. **Inspiring alternatives.** Run inspiring weekly parallel alternatives to the main BES@Yavneh shul service to help people achieve their desired feelings and to address the growing numbers in shul
  - Useful to have a coordinator for these Shabbat alternatives
  - Make sure everyone still comes together for Kiddush
  - Needs to be managed carefully to avoid taking too many regular people from the main service – doesn't need to start off on a weekly basis but must take place on Simcha weeks
  - Advertised across the wider BES community
  - Some example sessions:
    - Jewish Meditation
    - Explanatory service
    - Jews in the news
    - In-depth look at the Parsha
    - Theology for Kids
    - A quiet reflective space
    - Alternative learning service
    - Discussion group

*“Offer an experience that is worth going to shul for”*

- II. **Engage women and children.** Involve and engage women, youth and children (particularly girls) in the shul whilst being sensitive to halachic constraints and the community's traditions and minhag.

### Women

- II.I. Ensure that BES@Yavneh is a place where women and men have equal leadership and educational roles.
- II.II. Explore with the BES Rabbis what ways there might be for women to be more involved and engaged in the shul service. Possibilities might include giving divrei torah, girls opening the ark for anim zemirot, women kissing the Torah, women's hoshanot, saying kaddish, plus an educational element to highlight and understand these possibilities
- II.III. Explore with the BES Rabbis what other options exist for Bat Mitzvah services and provide some suggestions to parents. Some example options (some of which would also help with the lack of space in the shul):
- D'var Torah after leining rather than at the end of the service
  - Create a service around Havdalah (making a distinction between childhood and being an adult) or Friday night (along with lighting candles)
  - Hold the Bat Mitzvah service in a different room just for women or for a more intimate feel

### Youth

- II.IV. Ensure that youth are given aliyot and ark openings and where possible helping with davening and leining – the shul should feel like their space too

### Children

- II.V. Provide older children with a regular pre-children service activity in shul like a quiz on the sedra using the chumash
- II.VI. Boys should be invited to open the ark for anim zemirot, lead adon olam and/or do gelilah

*“If we are to hand on our faith and way of life to the next generation, it must sing”*

*“Even if my son is sitting with me [a woman], someone will ask if he wants to be involved in dressing the Torah”*

*“A Friday night service in the Spring – I has just collected my daughter from nursery and we prayed together: it was deeply spiritual”*

- Explore with the BES Rabbis whether girls can also do any of the above or what other options might be available for them
- Ensure that Gabbaim take note of and include boys that are sitting in the women's section

II.VII. Help and encourage parents and children to be in shul together on Friday night and Shabbat morning

II.VIII. Bring more children onto the bimah to sing and harmonise with the chazzan on Shabbat

*“Like seeing the community walking on a Shabbat”*

III. **Engage everyone.** Improve the involvement, engagement and ruach for everyone in the main shul service.

III.I. Provide more explanations during services

III.II. Include nuggets from Rabbi relating to prayer and parsha

III.III. Mechanism to show where we are at all times and help people to follow the service

III.IV. Always announce page numbers and children's services

III.V. Ensure that daveners sing with gusto and that leining, davening and haphtorot are always of high enough quality

III.VI. Build more songs into Shabbat morning, for instance in P'Sukei D'Zimrah, and teach new melodies to the community

- But still sing the songs we already know
- Ensure that the chazan sings the same tune for a few weeks and that it's explained to the community

*“How can we retain the essence of what works at the moment as we grow – it has sometimes felt too big on Shabbat”*

IV. **Simchas.** Building on the work that we already do, create a Simcha Champion to be a focal point between bar and bat mitzvah families and the BES@Yavneh community

IV.I. Manage the communication with the Simcha family

IV.II. Review the letters sent from the BES office to ensure that they make sense from the perspective of a family using Yavneh for their Simcha

IV.III. Gauge space in the shul and plan for more attendees

IV.IV. Ensure that the family understands any options that they might have in terms of type of service (for bat mitzvahs), aliyot

options, use of rooms, Kiddush, booking the Yavneh hall for lunch, etc.

IV.V. Liaise with the BES@Yavneh Southside Committee, Gabbaim and Kiddush coordinators

V. **School Shabbatons.** Continue working with Yavneh to ensure that there is a solution to the problem of Simcha families clashing with the Yavneh College Shabbatons (when the school reserves the right to use the shul)

## Welcoming

Remaining open, inclusive and friendly as we continue to grow

*We have grown a lot over the past few years and are starting to fray around the edges. It's harder to maintain the welcoming feeling and the equality of hierarchy that we have had up to now and some people are starting to feel left out.*

Beyond a certain scale, it is difficult for a community to remain a place full of people that notice when you are not there, or somewhere that most people know most people. The size of community, organisation or any general social structure where the personal touch becomes difficult to maintain is generally thought to be around 150–200 people (known as Dunbar's number).

*"Feels informal, relaxed, welcoming and inclusive. The atmosphere is always warm and friendly"*

BES@Yavneh has reached that size and now needs to think more about the disparate social groups within the community and ensure that the focus is no longer just on young families but that others are provided with as much of a welcome and can feel that it is also their place.

Thought also needs to be given to the physical size of the rooms used for our activities – either the rooms or the activities should be changed if people no longer feel that they have sufficient space.

However, there are constraints that must be taken into account in using Yavneh College. For instance, during a school Shabbaton, during exam times, or when there is a private function on a weekend, the shul, dining room or other spaces may not be available to use.

*"Kiddush can be intimidating if you don't know many people"*

Our key priorities in this area should be:

- VI. **High Holidays.** Be particularly welcoming on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – for a lot of people that's the only time they will be at shul. Include stewards in the men and women's sections to help people to books and seats.
- VII. **Not just for families.** Organise activities that are not designed primarily for families with young children, and that include and



invite other sections of the community, for instance older people, single people, couples without children, young marrieds and/or those who are unemployed. Ensure that those that have non-Jewish partners or are gay feel welcome. Help the many Jewish people in the area that are living alone or lonely to meet people and form friendships.

VIII. **Inclusive language.** Don't use language that feels like it might exclude women or other sections of the community.

IX. **Wider representation.** Include people on committees that are not from families with young children to ensure that activities are run that include all sections of the community and that reach out to those in the community who are alone or lonely.

X. **Welcoming at shul.** Always have someone on the shul door and a group of people at Kiddush welcoming and talking to people – make sure new people are introduced to the rabbi. Have a Welcoming Rota and include a specific Welcomer on the women's side to make people feel genuinely welcomed to our shul from the moment they arrive.

XI. **Kiddush.** Move Kiddush to a larger space like the Yavneh College Theatre (it should however be noted that the Theatre is not available during exam and mock exam periods).

XII. **Welcoming new people.** Have a Welcoming Champion to make sure we go and welcome and get to know people who have recently moved to Southside (not just during shul services), who are on their own or who are not in the midst of the community. Ensure that there is a group of people who are informed when new people move in and so it is not just up to the Rabbi.

XIII. **Include everyone.** Instil a welcoming ethos so that everyone talks to those that they don't know and introduces them to others.

*"I feel a strong sense of warmth and belonging. We always feel welcome."*

*"Starting to unravel a little. Prevent the culture from fraying. Don't lose the Wow!"*

## Community

Enjoying being Jewish together with people that live near us

*We should understand more about what people need from their local Jewish community and how to deepen their connection with the community, and determine how much of that can come from engaging more with the wider BES community*

*“What is rare today is finding community with meaning, community that helps to anchor me in a chaotic world, and that helps to answer the big questions of life”*

*We should be more involved in the life of the local community around us, both as a practical way to enact the values of Tikkun Olam and Tzedakah and to prevent ignorance leading to antisemitism*

People join our community both to participate together in prayer and to meet, connect and enjoy spending time with one another.

So as well as thinking about how to improve our shul services we should find ways to deepen our members’ connection to our community and to one another. As Moshe discovered when building the Mishkan in the Sinai desert, the more we build, do and accomplish together, the stronger we are as a community.

One potential framework to use in determining the scope of activities for a Jewish community is that of Tefillah (prayer and connection to God), Teshuvah (self-reflection and spiritual development), Tzedakah (giving to others, both with money and particularly with deeds).

*“Knowing that we’d be missed”*

Tefillah and Teshuvah are largely covered by our ‘Shabbat and Chagim’ section. But what about Tzedakah? How do we determine which activities we should focus on to connect with and help the others around us in our own and in the wider community?

*“Part of the Yavneh family”*

We have developed the following principles during the Think Tank process to help the Southside Committee to determine whether an idea from themselves or from any other member of the community should be run as part of BES@Yavneh.

- XIV. **Community activities.** Community activities should be run by BES@Yavneh only if they adhere to the following principles:

*“Genuinely feel part of a community I belong to”*

XIV.I. Community activities must:

- i. Bring us closer to our vision
- ii. Be complementary to wider BES community activities
- iii. Accord with BES halachic guidelines
- iv. Be open to the whole BES community

*“We were sad to hear from some (few) non-regulars or newcomers that they found the community cliquy and unwelcoming”*

XIV.II. Priority will be given to community activities that provide:

- i. Support through bad times
- ii. Nourishment, enlightenment or learning
- iii. A way to get people participating, not just attending
- iv. A way to share happy times
- v. A way to enjoy being Jewish together with people living near us
- vi. A way to collectively make the world a better place
- vii. A way to connect with people in the wider Borehamwood and Elstree community
- viii. A local option for Shabbat and Chagim activities

In addition, and based on the many responses from our community conversations, we believe that our priorities in this area should be:

*“The children don’t have non Jewish friends which is sad.”*

XV. **Social Action.** Helping those in need in Borehamwood and Elstree, both as a practical way to enact the values of Tikkun Olam and Tzedakah and to improve community relations and prevent ignorance leading to antisemitism.

Although some individuals may already be helping in this area, how much more powerful would it be if we act collectively?

XV.I. Create a Social Action Champion (and team) to prioritise and coordinate activities

XV.II. Volunteer in the local community, possibly on Xmas in soup kitchens or hospitals, or at the local food bank

XV.III. Provide food to the homeless or to refugees

XV.IV. Link this work into Mitzvah Day

XV.V. Work with local churches, the town council and other organisations, particularly those that have been involved locally with Mitzvah Day

*“With a growing community – how do we fit everyone in?”*

XVI. **Community Care.** Ensure that we look after, care for and befriend those that are in need in the Southside area of the wider BES community.

XVI.I. Work with the BES Care Coordinator to make sure that people from BES@Yavneh are both identified where they are in need and that they volunteer to help those in need

XVI.II. With the BES Care Coordinator, decide whether it would be helpful to establish a Community Care point of contact for the Southside

XVI.III. Work with the BES Care Coordinator to determine how to expand the welfare services provided within the wider BES community

XVII. **Meals where needed.** Provide meals for members of the community that have recently been bereaved, have just had a new baby, have recently moved in to the area, moved house or are unwell, ensuring that kashrut is appropriate for the receiver.

*“A welcoming, warm, orthodox environment, that promotes a sense of community and direction”*

XVIII. **Jewish cross-communal activities.** Run activities (e.g. Yom Ha’atzmaut, Yom HaShoah, Chanukah candle lighting) that involve multiple Jewish communities from the Borehamwood and Elstree area (or possibly also from Radlett and Shenley). Include other Orthodox communities and, where possible, Masorti and Liberal communities as well.

## Participation

Dedicated volunteers supported with information, training and thanks

*We have always tried to encourage people to participate and volunteer as much as possible to get as many people as possible involved in running BES@Yavneh. Now that we have grown we need to find ways of supporting a larger numbers of volunteers and developing new leaders.*

**XIX. Volunteer support.** Invest in our volunteers.

XIX.I. Provide volunteers with quality training sessions (in conjunction with BES, the United Synagogue and other organisations with appropriate expertise), workshops and the information, guidance and resources they need to understand what is required and to feel confident to deliver

XIX.II. Provide volunteers with the support of a social network of people that are doing or have done similar things

XIX.III. Provide volunteers with feedback on how they are doing, and thanks for doing a good job (particularly as it is sometimes in difficult conditions and especially where it involved going out of their way to help e.g. walking across Borehamwood to do leining)

XIX.IV. Appoint a Volunteer Champion to assist with volunteer recruitment and to support those running volunteer rotas in developing training and guidance for their volunteers

XIX.V. Think about including sessions such as first aid, defibrillator use and fire safety training that could be run with organisations from the wider Borehamwood community

**XX. New volunteers.** To deliver the recommendations in this Strategic Vision, more people need to volunteer and take on leadership roles. We should retain and promote the expectation that everyone should try and get involved and can make a difference to the community – it's particularly important to keep trying to involve more new people.

*“One of my most enjoyable Shabbat mornings was when I ran the service for years 3 – 6 ... it's really rewarding listening to them thinking through some of their answers and knowing they've learnt something”*

## Youth

Engaging our youth in vibrant community experiences

*As we have grown, our children have grown-up and we now need to provide our youth with opportunities to engage in the full breadth of community experiences*

*There are approximately 60 young people from BES families on Southside of secondary school age but many of them are not currently attending BES@Yavneh services.*

Since the Think Tank began its conversations, a new Youth Rabbi has joined BES (Rabbi Amos Azizoff), and BES@Yavneh has begun its youth programme including an occasional series of thought provoking and interactive discussions and debates on Shabbat and Chagim mornings.

However, there is much more that should be done, both specifically at BES@Yavneh and in concert with the wider BES community including (as already mentioned in the Shabbat and Chagim section) involving Youth more fully in the shul services.

- XXI. **Youth programme.** Continue with and expand the discussion-based youth programme that has recently begun at BES@Yavneh. Ensure that the participants are challenged, enjoy themselves and learn something new. Ensure that youth are aware of and get involved in the wider BES community youth programme, and that the wider programme is run in conjunction with BES@Yavneh.
- XXII. **Youth in children's services.** Work with Yavneh College to develop a way for pupils to help in children's services as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards or Yachadut programme. Explore how to include youth that attend other schools. Provide them with suitable training and support.
- XXIII. **Yavneh College links.** Work with Yavneh College to explore other ways of working together, particularly to engage their youth.

## Viability

Ensuring our long term future as part of BES

*We need to ensure that our community has a long term future as part of BES and the United Synagogue. A new model for governance and funding of BES@Yavneh will need to be agreed.*

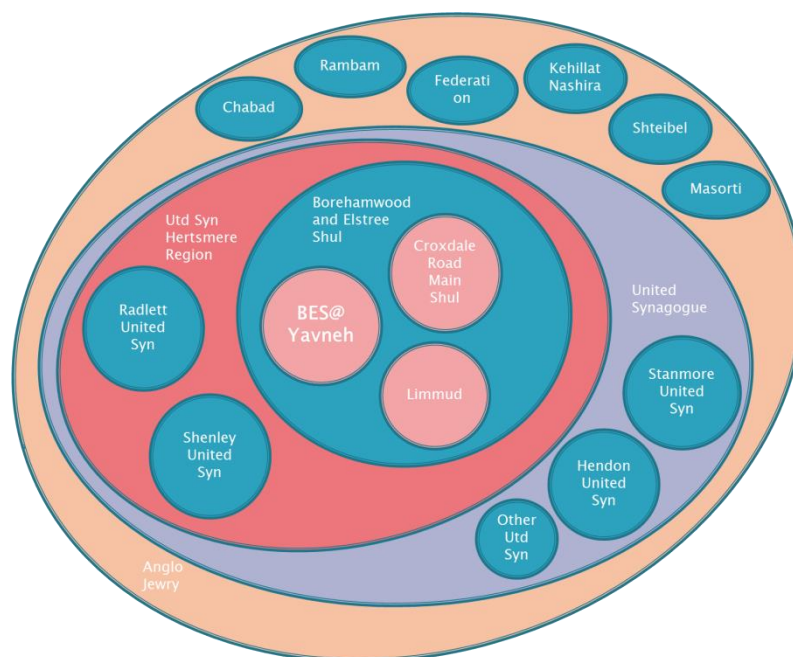
BES@Yavneh is an integral part of the wider BES community, contributing towards and being involved in BES programmes and yet also retaining a distinct identity, running many activities on Shabbat and Chagim to cater for those in the Southside area of Borehamwood who otherwise would not walk to Croxdale Road.

When discussing community, it's important to note that people experience community on many levels. Community is not an exclusive term: you can belong to a shul community as well as, for instance, to the Anglo-Jewish community and even to the local running community.

BES is made up of many different groups of people (BES@Yavneh, Limmud, the Main Shul at Croxdale Road, Nitzan, Mums and Toddlers, Women's Megillah, etc.), all of which have attendees that feel an affiliation to one another as well as to the wider BES community.

*"Incredible innovation at Yavneh should be used to help the wider BES community"*

*"Be spectacular with clear boundaries and rules"*



EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMMUNITY

Within some of our conversations there was a perception that the development of BES@Yavneh might happen at the expense of the wider BES community and that those that attend BES@Yavneh do not feel sufficiently attached to the wider BES community and as a result do not participate in wider BES activities.

*“Worried about strong Yavneh independence – need to prevent a silo mentality”*

There was also a feeling that, at an organisational level, there has been a breakdown in communication and to a certain extent in trust between BES@Yavneh and the wider BES community.

Whilst some toyed with the idea of being an independent community, after some analysis it became apparent that it was considered undesirable and that, even were it something that we wished to look into, it is not financially viable.

*“managing the relationship with the main Croxdale community – a fine balance to remain a separate sub-entity (to enable it to retain its unique identity) but part of the wider community”*

- XXIV. To ensure BES@Yavneh can continue long term as part of the wider BES community, the following principles should be adopted:
- i. **Wider Community.** All aspects of BES@Yavneh’s development shall benefit or compliment the wider BES community.
  - ii. **Vision.** BES@Yavneh’s Vision shall align with that of the wider BES community.
  - iii. **Shared resources.** As an integral part of the wider BES community, BES@Yavneh shares the same BES resources including, for instance, office staff time and guest speakers
  - iv. **Representation.** Provide BES@Yavneh with a significant stake in the wider BES community by ensuring sufficient representation within the wider BES governance e.g. Southside Honorary Officers and more Southside board members.
  - v. **Communication.** Leading members of BES@Yavneh and the wider BES community, including in particular Honorary Officers and Rabbonim, shall regularly share views and discuss aspirations, plans and concerns.
  - vi. **Devolved Governance.** BES shall devolve authority to BES@Yavneh to make decisions (within BES halachic

*“BES@Yavneh’s future and the wider BES structure needs to be planned”*



guidelines) regarding activities:

- That are on Shabbat and Chagim, or
  - That do not detract from existing activities in the wider BES community.
- vii. **Funding Plan.** BES Honorary Officers, in conjunction with BES@Yavneh, shall be responsible for developing and maintaining a plan to cover the funding required for BES@Yavneh over the medium and long term.
- viii. **Financial Autonomy.** Based on an agreed plan, BES Honorary Officers shall allocate a budget, to be administered by BES@Yavneh, to cover devolved activities. BES Honorary Officers shall provide oversight of the administration of the BES@Yavneh budget.
- ix. **Advertising.** All BES@Yavneh activities shall be advertised and offered to all members of the wider BES community. BES@Yavneh shall promote and help with the organisation of key activities of the wider BES community and vice versa.
- x. **Innovation.** Croxdale Road and BES@Yavneh shall learn from innovative ideas tried at each site and roll-out selected programmes across the wider BES community.
- xi. **Online presence.** BES@Yavneh shall manage the content of a distinct area of the overall BES website to help people find out about BES@Yavneh, understand how it works and promote the calendar of BES@Yavneh activities
- xii. **Documented.** An agreed plan for BES@Yavneh, encompassing the above principles, shall be documented and shall describe any proposed changes to BES or United Synagogue byelaws or other constitutional documents.

Other important recommendations in this area include:

- XXV. **More members.** Raise an expectation that people should become BES members if they regularly attend and enjoy BES@Yavneh.
- XXVI. **US Investment.** Suggest to the United Synagogue Trusts that they should explore the idea of investing in Yavneh College to

redefine the financial relationship between BES and Yavneh College, preventing BES spending money on expensive rent and instead providing an investment for the United Synagogue, making Yavneh College into a pivotal location for the Borehamwood and Elstree Jewish community and, potentially, enabling Yavneh College to expand the size of the shul. Alternatively, BES and the United Synagogue Trusts might explore the possibility of purchasing premises elsewhere on Southside to enable BES to expand beyond the size that is available within the constraints of using Yavneh College and its shul.

- XXVII. **Southside Governance.** Consider implementing a more formal governance for the Southside Committee and Gabbaim based on the extent of the committee's devolved authority. In particular, publish the available positions, portfolios and responsibilities on the Southside Committee and establish an expectation that members stay on the committee for a fixed period of time and can then move on to other things.
- XXVIII. **Rabbinic Roles.** Ensure that the Rabbi and Rebbetzen responsible for BES@Yavneh have defined and documented roles, responsibilities and devolved authority with respect to BES@Yavneh, the BES Senior Rabbi and the wider BES community and that these are understood by the Southside Committee. Note that the BES Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Kanterovitz, has overall responsibility for rabbinic and halachic matters in both the wider BES community and in Yavneh College school.

## Further recommendations

*There are many other worthy thoughts and suggestions that we as a Think Tank believe should be taken forward and, where practicable, implemented for the good of our community.*

*Note that many of these recommendations need some further thought and work before they can be fully implemented.*

### Shabbat

- XXIX. Encourage more men to be on the Kiddush rota
- XXX. It helps people feel part of the community when the Rabbi welcomes people at the back of shul or in the Kiddush
- XXXI. Work with the BES Community Care Coordinator to organise a Shabbat Shidduch to match people for lunch, especially those that are on their own or not in the midst of the community
- XXXII. It is enriching when sermons are engaging and stimulating and relate to what's going on in the world
- XXXIII. Make shul announcements in the Toddlers Service
- XXXIV. More Friday night dinners – people love it. Consider a buffet Friday night dinner in the winter; not a long sit down affair but a shorter more informal event.
- XXXV. Activities for youth on Friday evenings in the Winter in conjunction with the BES Youth Rabbi.
- XXXVI. To improve Tea In The Park, create a Tea Champion to ensure that someone brings the rugs, the tea and the food.
- XXXVII. Provide Toddlers Service parents with five minutes of Torah, possibly from the Rabbi, and let parents bless their children.
- XXXVIII. Tell the Children's Service leaders when the main service has 5 or 10 minutes to go to help them get to Kiddush on time.
- XXXIX. Keep running the Community Story talks.

- XL. Run a Summer weekly BES@Yavneh Shabbat Mincha service in Yavneh College or in somebody's home. To do so we need leiners, a Torah and a good likelihood of getting a minyan.
- XLI. Run a weekly BES@Yavneh Ma'ariv service after Shabbat.
- XLII. Run a kids' Tefillah Club on a Shabbat morning.
- XLIII. Hold an early evening young family service or Storytime in the Summer on Friday nights. It's been done in other communities.
- XLIV. Ensure that Yavneh fixes problems in the shul and the school site e.g. cobwebs, broken lights, if the metal shutter in ark is hanging badly, broken toilets, broken siddurim, chewing gum on chairs.
- XLV. Community core values and Our Vision should be prominently and beautifully displayed on a notice board or similar, along with other key information
- XLVI. Provide extensive signs and directions and what's on notices and leaflets on Shabbat and also on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- XLVII. Create a local BES@Yavneh choir for Simchas and other occasions
- XLVIII. Run an Anim Zemirot club on a Shabbat morning before children's services
- XLIX. Use a less opaque mechitzah for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
  - L. Bring in a group of young people or madrichim to improve ruach going

### **Welcoming**

- LI. Suggest that those people that have been stewards on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur may wish to join a Welcoming Rota.
- LII. Knock on doors of Jewish homes to find and welcome people.

## Community

- LIII. Operate throughout the week by using the sixth form block at Yavneh for activities on weekday nights. Investigate the possibility of Yavneh College publicising activities to pupils' parents. If successful, scale up to become a 'JWD6' nightly cultural and community centre for the town.  
Potential activities could include:
- i. Youth activities or just a place to hang out.
  - ii. Enrichment or mentoring for youth.
  - iii. Older people's activities e.g. bridge, arts
  - iv. Theatre or drama group
  - v. Israeli film nights
- LIV. Run sporting clubs, for instance kids running club, women's walking group, football / cricket / tennis / squash teams, triathlete club, cycling club.
- LV. Arrange social events, possibly as a fundraiser e.g. quiz night or murder mystery evening. Can be done more cheaply than Shabbat meals with fish and chips or bagels and still be fun.
- LVI. Publicise the Chevra Kedisha (the wonderful men and women that care for those that have died) and try and get more people to join this invaluable service that the community provides.
- LVII. Create an App for activities run at BES@Yavneh and across the wider BES community.
- LVIII. Publicise and get involved in local Borehamwood town activities, for instance the Remembrance Day ceremony or next year's Queens 90th Birthday celebrations.
- LIX. Do more large scale family events that are not religious in feel like the fair at Yavneh College that was held over the summer
- LX. Create a skills bank, identifying individual resources and talents, so that members use their skills appropriately and productively

### **Participation**

- LXI. The Southside Committee and Gabbaim should encourage everyone to volunteer as part of the security rota

### **Youth**

- LXII. Youth should have a place to hang out within the security of the local Jewish community
- LXIII. Find ways for youth to be represented and involved in the governance of BES@Yavneh

### **Viability**

- LXIV. Count who goes to BES@Yavneh to accurately assess the fraction of BES membership that is associated with BES@Yavneh

## Our numbers

*Our Think Tank conversations and recommendations have been framed by the numbers, and the recent increase in our numbers, of people attending our activities and living in the Southside.*

### Southside

The Southside area of Borehamwood, from which BES@Yavneh regulars are generally drawn from, consists of the wards of Hillside and Kenilworth and makes up about one quarter of the total membership of BES and about one third of the Jewish population of Borehamwood and Elstree.

[Census data from 2011 for Borehamwood and Elstree](#) shows how the numbers on Southside compare to other parts of town.

Ward	Jewish Pop	Total Pop	Percent of Total Pop	Percent of Jewish Pop
Hillside	1,319	9,682	14%	23%
Kenilworth	657	5,906	11%	11%
Brookmeadow	1,429	7,928	18%	25%
Cowley Hill	505	8,439	6%	9%
Elstree	1,840	5,110	36%	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,750</b>	<b>37,065</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Institute of Jewish Policy Research state that the [Jewish population of Hillside ward is increasing at 7.5% per year](#) or an increase of about one third in 4 years. This implies that the Jewish population in Hillside and Kenilworth wards is probably more like 1,760 and 880 people respectively by 2015.

### The wider BES community

These figures are all taken from the BES publication 'A New Framework for Success' April 2015.

Members by Location				
Age Range	Northside	Southside	Elstree	Total
19-21	62	22	53	137
22-29	186	112	118	416
30-39	296	258	122	676
40-49	205	116	167	488
50-59	201	87	156	444
60-69	163	63	106	332
70-79	86	16	56	158
80-89	64	13	29	106
90-99	18	3	8	29
Not known	20	3	8	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>1301</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>2817</b>

Families by Location				
	Northside	Southside	Elstree	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>1332</b>

Children by Location				
Age Range	Northside	Southside	Elstree	Total
0-3	83	76	42	201
4-5	52	54	33	139
6-8	75	69	51	195
9-12	98	59	78	235
13-15	61	17	57	135
16-18	45	24	66	135
<b>Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1040</b>



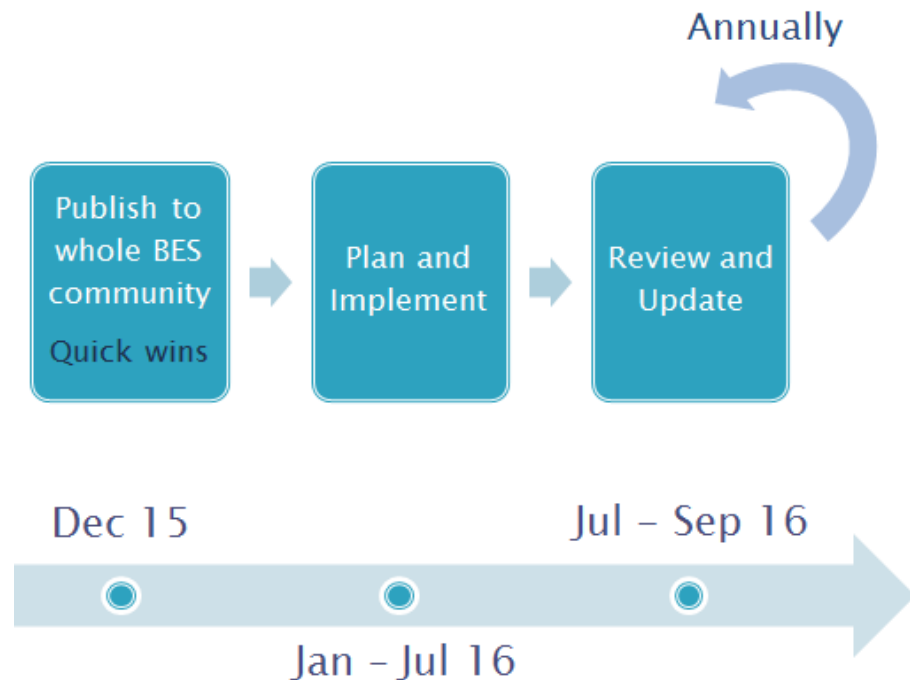
**BES@Yavneh**

There's a lot going on at BES@Yavneh and a lot of people getting involved. Below is a picture of our vibrant community by numbers.



## What next

*Planning and forethought is needed to ensure that our vision and recommendations for BES@Yavneh don't just gather dust and to be able to take what we have learned during the Think Tank process and continue to improve as a community year on year.*



### THE NEXT STAGES OF THE STRATEGIC VISION

#### Taking the Vision Forward

- LXV. Decide which recommendations to implement and construct a plan to do so.
- LXVI. Review the Southside Committee structure in the light of an implementation plan, to ensure that all new programmes and activities have sufficient oversight and support.
- LXVII. Hold a Conversation Roadshow to present our Vision, invite comment and recruit people for implementation.

And if you are interested in getting involved in any of the ideas presented in this document, please let us know at

[yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org](mailto:yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org)

### **Becoming a Self-Improving Community**

- LXVIII. Hold regular Conversation Roadshows with the community to focus on developing some of the key recommendations.
- LXIX. Hold an annual Elul Vision Check to assess the implementation and progress of each recommendation.
- LXX. Hold a short Elul Conversation with the community: a survey and an invitation for emails with thoughts on progress and further suggestions for improvement which could lead to an update of this document if agreed with the Southside Committee.
- LXXI. Maintain organisational and operational records and share centrally held information
- LXXII. Create and manage a strategic risk register to proactively think about and address the risks to the viability and vision of BES@Yavneh

## Glossary

*Explanations for Hebrew terms mentioned in this document.*

Term	Description
Adom Olam	The prayer at the end of the shul service
Aliyot	Call ups to the Torah during the shul service
Amin Zemirot	A prayer usually lead by a child in shul
Chagim	Jewish festivals e.g. Pesach, Rosh Hashanah
Chazan	The person leading the prayers in a shul service
Chesed	Kindness to others
Chumash	The book containing the Five Books of Moses
D'var Torah	A thought or short sermon on a Torah topic
Davening	Leading the prayers in a shul service
Divrei Torah	Thought or short sermons on a Torah topic
Elul	The month before Rosh Hashanah
Gabbai	A person organising the shul service
Gelilah	Dressing the Torah before it is put away
Haphtorah	The reading from the Prophets read during the Shabbat and Chagim shul service
Kol Nidre	A service at the start of Yom Kippur
Leining	Reading from the Torah during a shul service
Mechitzah	The divider between the men and women in shul
Megillah	The scroll from which the story of Esther is read
Mincha	The afternoon prayer service
Minhag	The community's tradition
Minyan	The ten men needed to run a prayer service
Mishkan	The tabernacle built for God by the Children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai
Ne'ilah	A service at the end of Yom Kippur
P'Sukei D'Zimrah	The first part of the Shabbat morning service
Parsha	The weekly portion read from the Torah
Ruach	Lots of people praying or singing with gusto
Sedra	The weekly portion read from the Torah
Shidduch	Matching up people to make partners and friends
Simcha	A joyous occasion like a Barmitzvah or wedding
Tikkun Olam	The Jewish idea of repairing or fixing the world
Tzedakah	The Jewish idea of charity, both time and money