



## Speaking and Attending Public Events

### 1. Background

We acknowledge that we are a community with a rich diversity of opinions and we value informed decision making.

Many of our staff and volunteers/Trustees are called upon, or pro-actively choose to make public statements and appearances on difficult issues, relating to Israel, political parties and other volatile topics. It is also possible that any topic can potentially be problematic in certain contexts.

This document aims to provide guidelines to staff and volunteers to raise awareness of the potential effect of them speaking in public or attending political meetings or events. It applies to all Trustees, Officers, Staff and volunteers of Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue. This policy sets out when you may expect Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue to protect you and when participation in public events may result in formal (disciplinary) action.

In preparing this document, it is acknowledged that not all eventualities can be anticipated. If in doubt, you must refer to the Senior Rabbi, Chair or other senior member of staff.

### 2. Definitions

**Personal capacity** means that attendance is not part of your normal work, but of interest to you.

**Professional capacity** means that attendance is considered to be part of your normal work.

**Bringing Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue into disrepute** means anything that is outwardly adverse to our aims and values

For those staff in the most senior positions, for example Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue Council Members, Rabbi etc or for staff whose roles are outward facing, it should be noted that there are very few occasions where attending events could be considered to be in a personal capacity.

### 3. Policy

Members of staff and Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue volunteers/Trustees have a responsibility not to bring the organisation into disrepute. Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue recognises that there may be times where there is an obligation for certain members of staff to make public statements or appearances (either in their professional capacity or privately). Where public statements are made, these, wherever possible, must be prepared in advance and advice taken from our Synagogue Chair.

Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue accepts that staff may wish to explore a variety of events that may be of a political nature. They must be aware that if publicly recognised at such events or gatherings, their presence may be construed as 'representing' the view of Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue. Staff must therefore make it known to their line manager prior to attending such events and seek advice and guidance. Whilst the line manager will look positively at such requests, if they feel that attendance at the event would reflect poorly on Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue, in consultation with other senior managers, they may advise that the individual(s) should not attend.

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Should there be any unwarranted response where permission has been given; Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue will act as it can to protect the individual(s) concerned. Attendance at such events where advice has been ignored may make it harder for Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue to publicly defend that individual, and may lead to disciplinary action.

For more senior staff, where they are required to speak in public or attend high profile events, they are reminded that, regardless of whether they attend in a personal or professional capacity, anything they say will be considered to be the view of Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue. Senior staff are expected to be able to appropriately judge a situation and act accordingly. If they are in doubt about attending a particular event, they must refer to their line manager and the officers in the first instance, and thereafter the Chair if a decision cannot be made.

#### **4. Protection of Staff**

Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue will provide support to all staff who are subjected to unwarranted backlash following either the attendance at an event, or speaking out, where doing so is clearly in line with the interests of Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue.

Where staff/volunteers/Trustees have obtained permission to attend an event, Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue will do everything it can in order to protect the individual member of staff from any backlash that may subsequently occur. This might mean issuing a statement confirming Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue's position, or responding directly to concerns raised by individuals.

#### **5. Where We Are Unable to Protect Staff**

Where there has been attendance at an event, or a public statement made, without permission or against advice from Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue, a statement may be issued distancing Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue from the event and the individual's decision to attend. Disciplinary action may take place, depending on the situation.

In all situations as described above, members of the Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue Council will be treated the same as staff. Where sanctions are appropriate, inappropriate attendance may lead to dismissal from the Council.

#### **6. Unwittingly Attending an Inappropriate Event**

Staff and volunteers/Trustees are required to do as much due diligence as necessary to ensure that they do not put themselves in a difficult situation.

Where an event subsequently reveals itself to be extremist, inappropriate or completely adverse to Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue's aims and values, the individual is required to extricate themselves from the situation as soon as possible and inform their line manager at the earliest possible opportunity.

In this instance, Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue will provide support and advice to the individual.