



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religion: Education

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [8733] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools are required to include the teaching of RE in the education recovery plans of pupils that have lost learning during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: Religious education (RE) is not an optional subject for state funded schools. They must teach RE to all pupils throughout all Key Stages up to age 18. Teaching a broad and balanced curriculum is important to the academic, social, and personal development of young people. These requirements have not changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department is working with a broad range of stakeholders to develop a range of short, medium, and long term options to ensure all young people recover their education over the term of this Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8733>

Religious Hatred: Islam

Steve Reed (Labour) [11572] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds data on how many and what proportion of local authorities in England have adopted the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia.

Luke Hall: The definition proposed by the APPG on British Muslims is not in line with the Equality Act 2010 and would have severe consequences for freedom of speech, which is why the Government does not accept it or hold data on its adoption.

Government does not, and will not, tolerate anti-Muslim hatred in any form and will continue to combat such discrimination and intolerance wherever it occurs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11572>

Information about the APPG definition can be read at

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

Religious Hatred: Hinduism

Navendu Mishra (Labour) [11691] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to tackle Hinduphobia in the UK.

Luke Hall: The Government is committed to tackling hatred against people of all faiths, including the Hindu community. The Hate Crime Action Plan (2016) and Refresh (2018) set out our plans to tackle hatred directed at anyone for their race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender identity, which includes raising awareness of hate crime and encouraging reporting. We are now looking at ways to renew our strategy and will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders from religious communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11691>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/927673/2016_Hate_Crime_Action_Plan.pdf

The Refresh referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

Social Media: Hate Crime

Sam Tarry (Labour) [11700] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to hold (a) Instagram and (b) other social media platforms to account for (a) racist and (b) other hateful content.

Caroline Dinenage: Online abuse of any kind is unacceptable. Racist abuse and other hateful content has no place in an open and tolerant society.

We are taking groundbreaking steps to hold companies accountable. Under new online safety laws, all companies in scope of the framework will need to take swift and effective action against criminal online abuse - including abuse which takes place anonymously. Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. Priority categories of legal but harmful content for adults will be set out in secondary legislation and these are likely to include some forms of online abuse.

Users will also be better able to report abuse, and should expect to receive an appropriate response from the platform. This might include the removal of harmful content, sanctions against offending users, or changing processes and policies to better protect users. If a company fails in these duties, it could face an investigation and enforcement action from the regulator, Ofcom, including large fines.

The draft Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework, has now been published for pre-legislative scrutiny. It is for Parliament to determine how and when the Bill will be scrutinised, which the government hopes will be soon.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11700>

The draft Online Safety Bill, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Social Media: Hate Crime

Elliot Colburn (Conservative) [11725] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 3171 on Social Media: Antisemitism and with reference to the priority harms to be set out in secondary legislation under the planned Online Safety Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021,

whether he plans to include in those priority harms (a) anti-Semitic abuse, (b) homophobic abuse, (c) abuse on the grounds of disability and (d) abuse on the grounds of other protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Caroline Dinenege: We know that groups with protected characteristics or with particular mental or physical health conditions are currently more likely to experience harm and abuse online. We are continuing to work with stakeholders, Parliamentarians and Ofcom to identify specific priority harms and to determine how to formulate these in legislation. The list of primary harms will need to capture online abuse, both where it is legal and where it constitutes a criminal offence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11725>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-18/3171>

House of Lords Written Answer

Antisemitism

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL663] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many anti-Semitic attacks were reported during May in (1) England, and (2) London; and what steps they are taking to address such abuse.

Lord Greenhalgh: There is no place in our society for antisemitism. The Home office do not release monthly statistics – these will be published in due course. However, the recent figures from the Community Security Trust have recorded 267 antisemitic incidents between the 8th and the 24th of May. Of those, 115 were registered in London specifically.

This Government takes hate crime against any community very seriously and are clear that victims should be supported and the individuals who carry out these heinous crimes must be brought to justice. We are providing £14 million this year to the protective security grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings. We were also the first country to take the important step of adopting the international holocaust remembrance alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism in 2016; and, following our encouragement, over 3/4s of local councils have adopted the definition, along with many other organisations, including the Premier League and over 80 Universities– demonstrating their willingness to support the Jewish community.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/hl663>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Places of Worship: Social Distancing

Alexander Burnett (Conservative) [S6W-00400] To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to reduce the social distancing requirement in places of worship from two metres to one metre.

Christina McKelvie: We acknowledge how challenging this past year has been for everyone in our society, including places of worship. We are grateful to all of Scotland's faith and belief communities for all they have done to keep their congregations safe and to support our communities during this unprecedented time.

From 26 April, we moved towards greater easing of the health protection restrictions, with the removal of the 50 person limit in places of worship; instead the numbers of people who can attend are limited according to the building capacity

and physical distancing of two metres, along with other measures informed by a risk assessment.

The Scottish Government is reviewing physical distancing including its impact on places of worship and an announcement, which will consider the faster spreading Delta variant, is expected in the near future. Sectoral guidance will be further updated at that time to reflect the outcome of the review, including proposals for as clear a route as possible to the reduction/removal of physical distancing to enable people and organisations to plan effectively for a full reopening. Physical distancing has been an important tool for controlling the virus, but as with all restrictions, we will only have this in place as long as is necessary.

The Scottish Government has to balance the harms from the virus which are potentially fatal, with the impact on faith and belief communities of the restrictions on places of worship. However, please be reassured that the Scottish Government understands the important role of congregational worship in supporting spiritual, mental and social wellbeing and will continue to engage with faith and belief communities regarding the scope for further easing.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/written-questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-00400>

Scottish Government

Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Hate Crime in Scotland, 2020-21

- ... The total number of charges reported to COPFS containing at least one element of hate crime increased to 5,525 in 2020-21, 4% more than 2019-20.
- The majority of hate crime charges contain a racial element. However, the proportion that contain a racial element has generally decreased over the last ten years, from 75% in 2011-12 to 59% in 2020-21. The proportion of hate crime charges that relate to sexual orientation has increased from 11% to 29% over the same period.
- There were 3,285 charges relating to race crime reported in 2020-21, an increase of 6% compared to 2019-20. The number of charges has increased since 2018-19 but is still 28% lower than the peak in such charges in 2011-12, when 4,547 were reported.
- The number of charges reported with a sexual orientation aggravation increased by 5% in 2020-21 to 1,580. Except for 2014-15, there have been year on year increases in charges reported since the legislation introducing this aggravation came into force in 2010.
- There were 573 charges with a religious aggravation reported in 2020-21, 14% fewer than in 2019-20.
- The number of disability aggravated charges increased by 14% to 448 in 2020-21. With the exception of 2016-17, there have been year on year increases in charges reported since the legislation introducing this aggravation came into force in 2010.
- There were 46 charges reported in 2020-21 with an aggravation of transgender identity, compared to 47 in 2019-20. ...

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site-news-from-copfs/1957-hate-crime-in-scotland-2020-21>

Hate Crime in Scotland, 2020-21

Report

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/images/Documents/Statistics/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202020-21/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202020-21.pdf>

Data

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/images/Documents/Statistics/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202020-21/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202010-11%20to%202020-21%20breakdown%20by%20Procurator%20Fiscal%20Office.xlsx>

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Holocaust

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

UK to chair international holocaust remembrance alliance

The UK will chair the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2024 ...

The Alliance, which is made up of 34 countries including the US and Germany, unites governments to promote and strengthen Holocaust education and research.

The UK already plays a leading role in the IHRA and its chairmanship will strengthen work to combat Holocaust denial, along with championing the IHRA definition of antisemitism – the UK's use of the definition has been recognised as the gold standard across the globe. ...

The UK's chairmanship will be supported by experts including representatives from the Holocaust Educational Trust, UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education, the Association of Jewish Refugees, The Wiener Library and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said: It will be a poignant moment for the UK to chair the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2024, 80 years after the first discovery of the Nazi death camps. We will never forget the worst crime of modern history, and we will never relent in the fight against antisemitism.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said: It will be a great honour for this country to chair the IHRA and continue to lead the way in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance.

Our new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will bear witness to the evils of the Holocaust and stand as a permanent reminder of why we need to make a stand against antisemitism wherever and whenever it appears.

UK Special Envoy on post-Holocaust issues, and head of the UK IHRA delegation, Lord Eric Pickles said: As the head of the UK delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, I am especially honoured that we will be chairing IHRA in 2024.

At a time when Holocaust distortion and revisionism is on the increase the UK intends to be at the forefront of nations that uphold the truth of the Shoah, with a clear unblinking eye. The UK Chair will build on cooperation between international institutions to fight antisemitism and Holocaust denial. ...

The UK was the first country to adopt the adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism in 2016. At least three quarters of local councils and over 80 universities in the UK have adopted the definition ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-chair-international-holocaust-remembrance-alliance>

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: International Trade

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): Last month, Members in all parts of the House were horrified by the appalling outbreak of violence between Israel and Gaza. Can the Secretary of State set out whether British arms exports were used in any way against innocent civilians in that conflict? If she is unable to do so, does she not agree that the inability to know where our arms are being used, and what for, is hugely concerning given the potential breaches of international law?

Elizabeth Truss: We welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza last month. We are committed to a durable ceasefire. As the Under-Secretary of State for International Trade, my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley and Holderness (Graham Stuart) mentioned, we have one of the most robust export control regimes in the world and we take these issues very seriously.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-10/debates/939411C0-C83E-4031-94AD-CA8BDA3F1ACC/TopicalQuestions#contribution-0CA42DCA-14DB-4CCB-8C45-E8B0758F8FCA>

Topical Questions: International Trade

Anum Qaisar-Javed (SNP): Rouzan, a medic, and Yasin, aged nine—those are only two names of the many children and frontline medics who have been killed during systematic oppression of the Palestinian people by the Israeli Government. Export licences to sell arms to Israel worth £80 million—£80 million—have been granted by Ministers in the Department over the past three years. Lives have been lost, businesses have been attacked, homes are in rubble and families have been torn apart, yet the UK Government are still selling British-made weapons to Israel. Will the Minister please clarify whether it is UK Government policy to sell arms to those complicit in violations of international law? (900795)

Elizabeth Truss: The UK has one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We rigorously examine every application on a case-by-case basis, and the criteria are clearly laid out in legislation to ensure complete compliance with international law.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-10/debates/939411C0-C83E-4031-94AD-CA8BDA3F1ACC/TopicalQuestions#contribution-DCF26BC9-5298-4BDF-98D5-D805EE62FAFD>

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Teachers

Christian Wakeford (Conservative) [8792] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK monitors teacher training programmes for teachers in the Palestinian Territories whose salaries are paid for by UK aid.

Palestinians: Schools

Christian Wakeford (Conservative) [8793] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the process of producing the content for the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum.

James Cleverly: It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable and has no place in education.

Following the UK's calls for international action, our European partners agreed to lead an independent review. We understand the review is in the final stages. We will study its findings carefully before deciding on any next steps. We remain in close dialogue with our European partners and continue to press for completion and publication of the review as soon as possible.

In financial year 2020/21 we provided £20m in funding to the Palestinian Authority to support the salaries of education workers in the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8792>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8793>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Middle East: Peace and Security

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [8567] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had on the potential effect of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on regional peace and security with his counterparts in (a) Israel, (b) United Arab Emirates and (c) Bahrain.

Iran: Nuclear Power

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [8568] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had on Iran's nuclear activities with his counterparts in (a) Israel, (b) United Arab Emirates and (c) Bahrain.

James Cleverly: The Foreign Secretary has been clear that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon. Our immediate priority is working with Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) participants to return the US to the deal, bring Iran back into compliance with its commitments and restore the benefits of the deal for all. The Government has also long been clear about its concerns over Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) continued destabilising activity.

We regularly discuss regional issues with the Governments of Israel, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain including their policy towards Iran, and continue to support the security of our allies. The Foreign Secretary was in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories over 25-26 May for talks with Ministers following the Israel-Gaza ceasefire, including on regional security. I [Mr Cleverly] discussed regional security with HE Khalifa Shaheen al Marar, Minister of State with responsibility for Arab Affairs at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 28 March.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8567>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8568>

House of Lords Oral Answer

UN Peacebuilding Fund: Financial Support

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): On 1 June more than 60 parliamentarians signed a letter calling on the Government to support coexistence in the Middle East by committing to the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Given last month's violence, surely this is the time to invest in peace and coexistence in the Middle East. Can my noble friend—the Minister—tell me whether the Government intend to support this fund and whether they will raise the issue at the G7?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I think the noble Baroness referred to me as her noble friend, and of course we are friends outside the Chamber, beyond the formalities. I can reassure her that the Middle East will be among the key areas of discussion,

both bilaterally and collectively within the G7. I will write directly to the noble Baroness on the issue of the fund.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-10/debates/0260777B-3941-4768-BEAA-09F30CB86D3D/UNPeacebuildingFundFinancialSupport#contribution-03B665BA-F288-4125-9A11-6F851A237B7D>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL636] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the sustainability of their position in support of a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and (2) the impact on that sustainability of recognising Palestine as a state.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May. During his visit the Foreign Secretary met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver Palestinian self-determination and preserve Israel's security and democratic identity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-26/hl636>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

UN World Conference against Racism

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [11506] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to boycott the UN Durban IV Conference on racism.

Nigel Adams: The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including antisemitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the antisemitic actions and speeches in and around the 2001 Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence of antisemitism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11506>

Members: Correspondence

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [11507] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 7 May 2021 from the Rt. hon. Member for Chipping Barnet on whether the UK Government will boycott the Durban IV UN conference on racism.

Nigel Adams: The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including antisemitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious

and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the antisemitic actions and speeches in and around the 2001 Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence of antisemitism. A reply will be sent shortly to the letter of 7 May from the Rt.Hon. Member for Chipping Barnet.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/11507>

Racial Discrimination: UN Resolutions

Douglas Chapman (SNP) [8638] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government did not support the UN resolution A/RES/75/237 on action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Nigel Adams: The UK is fully committed to the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as to the promotion and protection of human rights for all without discrimination on any grounds. We will continue to be one of the strongest advocates for those United Nations mechanisms that help to combat racism.

However, as set out in our explanation of vote (<https://undocs.org/A/C.3/75/SR.15>), the main sponsors of resolution A/RES/75/237 were unwilling to engage with UK suggestions on the text. States had an opportunity to shape the debate on racism at the United Nations in a way that brought countries together, forging a collaborative approach and working with civil society to uproot the evils of violence and discrimination. The UK hope that the main sponsors will seize those opportunities at the next session and take an approach that recognized the need for collaboration and consensus.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8638>

The resolution referred to above can be read at

<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/237>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Middle East and North Africa: Peace

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Conservative) [8737] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its effect on the UK's goal of delivering peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa.

Iran: Diplomatic Service

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Conservative) [8738] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of alleged comments by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps having significant influence over Iran's diplomatic activities.

James Cleverly: The UK Government has long been clear about its concerns over the continued destabilising activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This includes IRGC political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups including Hizballah in Lebanon and Syria, militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. The IRGC is sanctioned in its entirety by the UK.

We regularly raise Iran's destabilising role in the region at UN Security Council. We continue to support the security of our allies, including through our close defence partnerships across the Middle East and by working to strengthen institutions and build capacity in more vulnerable countries, including in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8737>

and

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 4 days**

Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales (closing date 17 June 2021)

<https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales>

Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) (closing date 30 June 2021)

<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

Protect Duty (closing date 2 July 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life in the EU (closing date 5 July 2021)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13068-Strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-Jewish-life-in-the-EU_en

Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance (closing date 16 July 2021)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-curriculum-for-wales-religion-values-and-ethics-guidance.pdf>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

TOP

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438