

New funding to help universities tackle antisemitism announced on Holocaust Memorial Day

- On 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Communities Secretary announces half a million pounds of new funding to help universities tackle antisemitism on campus
- 450 student leaders, journalists and academics to be taken to Auschwitz over the next three years and expected to educate tens of thousands of students on their return
- Communities Secretary also demands all universities and Local Authorities adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced £500,000 of new funding for a programme supporting universities in tackling antisemitism on campus over three years.

Announced on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the money will support the Holocaust Education Trust (HET) to help educate the next generation about the horrors of the holocaust and the importance of stamping out antisemitism and intolerance.

Each year, 150 university student leaders, student journalists and academics from around the country will hear from Holocaust survivors and visit the former Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they will learn about the importance of stamping out antisemitism.

Upon their return, students will participate in a seminar which will deal explicitly with campus-specific issues and how to identify and tackle antisemitism.

To drive engagement amongst the student population, the programme will work with influential student publications and media, as well as student leaders and networks to disseminate the messages they have heard first hand to tens of thousands of students across the country.

The Communities Secretary has also insisted that all universities and Local Authorities must adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

He has written to all Local Authorities asking them to adopt the internationally-recognised definition and will shortly publish a list of those who have taken this forward and urged others to follow.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, it is our duty to ensure that as the last survivors remain with us, their stories are shared with future generations.

Education is one of the most powerful tools we can use to combat antisemitism. I am proud this Government will fund the Holocaust Educational Trust to educate thousands of students and academics in the horrors of the Holocaust.

This additional £500,000 of funding will allow hundreds of university students and academics each year to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau, hear from the last Holocaust survivors and, on return to their campuses, help educate students on the importance of tackling antisemitism.

I have also been clear that all universities and local councils that have not already done so, must adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. I will shortly publish a list of councils who have adopted the definition and will urge others to follow.

The student programme will be delivered by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) in partnership with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). It follows the highly successful 2018-19 scheme which identified 30 universities in England where there had been reports of high levels of antisemitism or racism.

Funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the next phase will be a chance for a greater number of universities to get involved and builds on from HET's highly successful 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme for school students.

Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust Karen Pollock MBE said:

As we mark 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we are reminded today of the importance of speaking out against antisemitism, wherever it is found.

Student leaders themselves are at the coalface on campus combatting the antisemitism that blights many students' university experience. We are proud therefore that thanks to new government funding we will be able to offer a unique opportunity for student leaders and Vice-Chancellors for the next three years to visit Auschwitz. They will see for themselves the site where 1.1 million people were murdered, to understand where hate can ultimately lead and I hope this experience will empower them to stand up to prejudice, hatred and division on campus and in broader society.

We are proud to partner with the Union of Jewish Students to deliver this important project.

Daniel Kosky, Union of Jewish Students Campaigns Organiser:

We are immensely grateful that our vitally important partnership with HET can continue into the future with the support of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The three-year commitment to taking student and university leaders to Auschwitz-Birkenau will be a vital tool in tackling antisemitism and hatred on campus.

We have sadly seen an increase of antisemitic incidents on campus, with distressing incidents of Holocaust trivialisation at student parties, the use of antisemitic stereotypes on student social media groups, and an increase in antisemitism in campus discussion around Israel. We are determined to combat this and welcome this significant contribution to our longstanding work bringing students of all faiths and backgrounds together to create cohesive campus communities.

Further information

- On Thursday 23 January the Communities Secretary attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. He attended the event entitled, "Remembering the Holocaust: Fighting Antisemitism," to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- HET's new programme will bring together 150 university staff and student leaders from across the country each year through education on the Holocaust, anti-racism work, British values and understanding of faith.
- The scheme will underpin joint activity with the Union of Jewish Students to combat prejudice on campus and promote community cohesion.

* The new programme will encompass all universities, targeting 450 university student leaders directly who will in turn reach a further 24,000 university students.

Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) Project

- HET's Lessons from Auschwitz Project for sixth form students and teachers is now in its nineteenth year.
- It has taken over 41,000 students and teachers from across the UK to the Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as many MPs and other guests.

- For more information see: Lessons From Auschwitz

University participation facilitated by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) and the Union of Jewish Students

- In 2018-19 HET reached 125 senior leaders and student leaders.
- The project identified 30 universities in England where there had been reports of high levels of antisemitism and/or racism and of these 22 institutions 73% participated.
- Four delegations of National Union of Students (NUS), Student Union and student faith leaders went alongside existing LFA trips to Auschwitz, combined with orientation seminars and follow up workshops.
- Participants have included two former NUS Presidents, NUS Vice Presidents for Society and Citizenship, Further Education, Welfare and Union Development; a NUS LGBT Officer; Presidents of the Students Unions at the universities of Abertay, Brunel, City (London), Coventry, Kent, Leeds Trinity, Lincoln, Nottingham, South Wales, St. Andrews, Sussex and Swansea; Education, Campaigns, and Welfare Officers from University College London, Warwick, and Trinity College Dublin.
- Participants in these programmes have facilitated dozens of campus events to combat hatred and prejudice and to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. This activity has reached a further 4000 students on campuses from Exeter to Edinburgh.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition

- The Jewish Leadership Council are working alongside MHCLG to encourage local authorities to adopt the IHRA.

*For more information on the definition and illustrations see: Working Definition of Antisemitism