

## A Brief History

### A comprehensive and succinct history of the Charity

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#### From Mile End To Stanmore Via Berkshire -The Story of Norwood incorporating Ravenswood

The Charity started as a small trade boarding school for the children of poor members of the Jewish community. Through amalgamation, growth and diversification, it has developed into the comprehensive Jewish welfare organisation that it is today, supporting children, adults and families living with learning disabilities or coping with social difficulties – the safety net of the community.



In **1795**, the Goldsmid brothers, Abraham and Benjamin, raised the princely sum of £20,000. However, it took them another 12 years of wrestling with government bureaucracy before they were able to use the funds to establish the Jews' Hospital in Mile End, the aim of which was "to uplift the morals and occupations of the young poor", and to keep them out of conversionist and Christian free schools. At that time, the term 'hospital' was used to denote a charitable institution that cared for the sick, old or destitute, or housed and educated the needy young.

A small section of the Jews' Hospital was used as an old-age home for 10 people, while the rest housed the trade boarding school for the children of poor families. The first pupils comprised 10 boys and eight girls.

Following the death of the Goldsmid brothers, Queen Victoria's uncle, the Duke of Sussex, became the Hospital's patron in **1815**, and royal patronage has continued since that time. Her Majesty the Queen is the current patron.

In addition to the Jews' Hospital, another institution, the Jews' Orphan Asylum, had been established in 1831 in Leman Street, London. This initiative reputedly was a consequence of the **1830** cholera epidemic that killed thousands of people in the capital and left many children orphaned. Originally, seven children were housed at the Asylum, but over the decades that number grew, and by **1860** it housed 60 orphans.

During the same period the Jews' Hospital was becoming overcrowded, with 100 boys and 40 girls enrolled by **1860**. The buildings had also become dilapidated so, in **1866**, philanthropists Barnett and Isabella Meyers presented the Jews' Hospital with eight acres of land in West Norwood, which included a large, purpose-built Victorian building with vastly improved facilities to accommodate 220 children.. In **1876**, the Jews' Hospital was merged with the Orphan Asylum, and the children from the latter moved to Norwood.

The numbers of Jewish children at Norwood increased from 159 in **1877** to 260 in **1888**, and because of the increased demand, many had to be turned away. Eventually, the home was expanded, and after **1911** it was able to accommodate at least 400 children who were educated on-site.

During the Second World War, the children were evacuated to homes in Worthing and Hertford, and this exposure to the wider community facilitated their integration. After the War, the institution, then known as the Jewish Orphanage, started to undergo some changes of its own. The children attended local schools and the number of children at the Orphanage started to decline. In **1956** the name was again changed to the Norwood Home for Jewish Children, a name that lasted until the merger with the Ravenswood Foundation 40 years later.

Ravenswood was created in **1953** in Berkshire by a group calling themselves the Jewish Association of Parents of Backward Children. Its mission was to provide care and education for their four 11-year-old boys. After the acquisition of a second home and a farm five years later, the Ravenswood Foundation was formed.

Meanwhile in the latter half of the **1950's**, nine family houses were built or acquired by Norwood in South London, with the aim of giving children a homely environment. The first two houses were built on the grounds of Norwood in **1957**, and within the next four years, seven more houses were acquired in the neighbouring streets. The old Orphanage became redundant and was eventually demolished in **1963**.

By the mid-**1970's** the socio-demographics of the community were changing rapidly, and far fewer children were in residential care. The Norwood family homes were moved to north London and eventually closed one by one, with the last one closing its doors in **1992**.

In **1985**, Norwood opened its first registered residential home for adults with learning disabilities. Five years later the Kennedy Leigh Children and Family Centre in Hendon was opened, offering practical advice and support to families living with learning disability or facing social disadvantage. The centre also housed Binoh, Norwood's education and therapy service that supports children with special educational needs.

In **1996**, Norwood merged with Ravenswood, and opened family centres in Redbridge and Hackney. It was called Norwood Ravenswood for six years before finally changing its name to Norwood in 2002. Norwood is now the UK's largest Jewish charity supporting children and families with learning disabilities or coping with social difficulties. It currently provides a wide range of over 120 specialist services delivered by approximately 1200 staff and around 650 dedicated volunteers to all segments of the Jewish Community.

Norwood's services include registered and supported housing, respite care, special education, employment and leisure services. Norwood also supports families that are in crisis, those facing social disadvantage and children who require fostering and adoption services, both in the UK and internationally.

Into the 21st century, Norwood continues to grow. In January **2008**, Cherie Blair officially opened Wellbeing at Bearsted, a centre offering health and wellbeing services to the local Orthodox Community in Hackney.

In June The Hope Charity, the London-based organisation supporting children with special educational needs, joined Norwood's umbrella of children and family services.

Norwood has also opened a new integrated nursery in Hendon in September 2008, accommodating children who have disabilities or require additional support, as well as providing a first-class facility for children who have no special needs.

In 2008, two new specialised facilities were completed at Ravenswood in Berkshire. The Tager Centre, will be home to 16 adults with a range of autistic spectrum disorders and the PB centre will be home for 16 residents with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

In March 2009 Norwood joined forces with Brighton care home Sussex Tikvah. Norwood is pleased to expand its services into the South-East and integrate

Sussex Tikvah in their high-quality residential services for adults with learning disabilities.

### **Recent developments**

In April 2010, Norwood opened its RD Crusaders WorkHub in Stanmore to provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to learn new skills and, where possible, enter voluntary or paid employment. The building includes the eighth Norwood shop, which also provides a training programme which offers people who use the WorkHub the opportunity to gain retail experience.

The Pears Special Resource Provision, built as part of a new Jewish Community Secondary School, opened in September 2010. Inspired and developed by Norwood, the PSRP will eventually cater for 50 children with autistic spectrum conditions. First-class facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, a sensory room and individual therapy rooms. There are quiet spaces for children indoors and outdoors, and a replica of a one-bedroom flat to prepare students for independent living. Norwood will provide assessment and specialist therapies.

Norwood, which is now based in Stanmore, has come a long way in the past 200 years. It has evolved to become an organisation that we can all be justifiably proud of, meeting the ever changing needs of the most vulnerable members of the Jewish Community by being a warm and caring organisation that is professionally run – a formula that should serve it well for the next 200 years!.

To find out more about Norwood's services, volunteer or to make a donation, call Norwood Direct 020 8809 8809.

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