

## **From the chair (insert pic of chair)**

I am pleased to report that after a rigorous interview process, we have offered the post of Rabbi to Tanya Sakhnovich, subject to contract and work permit.

The Rabbinic Appointment Committee comprised five people with experience of recruitment, coincidentally all of us in diverse branches of the health service, and three with none. I thought members might like to know how we proceeded, especially perhaps if you have never been involved in this sort of thing. Firstly we agreed a job description for the Rabbi. This was a modified version of previous ones used in NPJC. The job description specifies the tasks expected from the postholder (and always has a clause at the bottom saying 'and any other duties commensurate with the post'). From the job description we derived a person specification. This specifies the skills, knowledge and experience required of a successful candidate.

When we had agreed job description and person specification, we planned an assessment process that should allow the candidates to show us whether they had all the essential attributes in the person specification, and would enable us to score them on each.

In addition to doing at least one weekend of services with us, they had to give us a 15 minute presentation on how they would develop the congregation, for its existing and potential members, with key priority areas for the first three years. After that we gave them what is known as an in-tray exercise, which is a scenario where they have returned from a few days away to six different messages, ranging from a congregant having gone into hospital to the Chair wanting to know the Rabbi's availability for the next three council meetings. They were given time to consider how they would prioritise and respond to each of these. We then went on to the interview proper, where we asked a set of scripted questions covering all our areas of interest, from why they wanted to be a Rabbi, through their approaches to education and pastoral care, to how they would manage conflict and criticism.

We were impressed by both candidates, but unanimously decided to offer the job to Tanya.

Assuming the contracting and work permit negotiations go smoothly, we expect to have our new Rabbi in post in early September. Then the Interesting Times start. It has been said many times before that we have impossible expectations of a Rabbi, expecting some kind of combination of Moses (or Miriam?) and the Messiah. The management of a paid employee by a voluntary Chair is also always tricky (not just in religious organisations).

I hope we will all aim to work together in a spirit of co-operation and honesty. It is noteworthy that if Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich completes a three year contract with us I shall be her manager for only the first half of that time. When we think about the next Chair for this community, one of the considerations will be their ability to manage the relationship with the Rabbi, and between the Rabbi and the community.

As ever, your thoughts on all this will be welcome

Susan King  
Chair  
July 2009