

Words of Michael Gurney, DL, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk
5th May 2026

Opening of Jewish Living Experience

Mathew Syed from last Sunday Times's paper "To live in a free country and feel that it is becoming foreign and dangerous – not because of what you have done but because of who you are – is one of the heaviest burdens a society can place on its citizens. What has happened to us? The treatment of British jews has become intolerable."

This City has a historical legacy of anti-Jewish hate and intolerance in the middle ages. Surely we have learnt over the last 800 years? I know first hand how wonderful the Jewish community are in Norwich offering a warm welcome to everyone who wants to know more. They could not have been kinder or more welcoming to me.

That is why this exhibition is so important. It is about informing and educating. It is about shining light into the darkness of intolerance. It is about celebrating difference not denigrating it. If we do not educate our children about different approaches to life, about moral values and the value of every individual we are surely doomed as a society.

In the current circumstances it is doubly important that all of us here take on the responsibility of fighting anti-semitism in any form – open and hidden. In schools, in pubs, on the football terrace and at work. That we encourage dialogue and understanding between all communities and all faiths. That we educate our children about different religions and why difference is so valuable. That we stand up for others especially the weak and minorities. **No one** should be fearful in our communities.

We all must now stand up and defend every individual in our society. As HM the King said when he took the throne "Wherever you may live in the United Kingdom and whatever may be your background **or beliefs**, I shall endeavour to serve you with loyalty, respect and love, as I have throughout my life".

Here in Norfolk it is surely up to all of us to serve each other.