

Opening message

Holocaust Memorial Day is a national commemoration dedicated to the remembrance of those who suffered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

In 1945, Soviet troops entered the Auschwitz complex in southern Poland and discovered suffering on a truly monstrous scale. Over a million men, women and children had been murdered there with brutal efficiency in accordance with the abominable policies of the Nazis.

We must ensure that the horrors of that time are never forgotten as well as the mass suffering of more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Above all, Holocaust Memorial Day is a reminder of our collective responsibility as individuals, communities and nations to speak out and to confront all forms of hatred, racism and anti-Semitism.

History has taught the world that indifference is a conduit for yet more suffering. As concentration camps were gradually liberated, the world came to learn of the time scale of Nazi persecution, of millions of Jews and other vulnerable groups including political prisoners, gay people, Roma and Sinti communities and those with physical and mental disabilities.

In 2017/18, there were 94,098 hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of 17% compared with the previous year.

In order to combat hate in our communities, individuals have a crucial role to play in changing what is seen as acceptable language and behaviour. These changes are made through actions – if certain groups are routinely excluded, make sure to include them. If a group is viewed with suspicion or fear, find out more about their way of life and begin a dialogue.

We must not allow differences to divide us but instead allow our similarities to unite us. Let's continue to stand together with everyone in our community.