

Dear Sir,

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky's article about the Claims Conference and the fraud committed against the German government neglected to include a reassurance for Holocaust survivors that they will continue to receive their regular compensation payments despite the recent events.

We are happy to offer this clarification and also to say that we certainly feel honoured, as well as privileged, to represent and support Holocaust survivors and refugees at this critical time in their lives.

By forming, some years ago, an ad-hoc Umbrella Group to submit joint applications to the Claims Conference for support for social and welfare programmes, we have been able to reach out to former Nazi victims across the country and facilitate the speedy distribution of funds and deliver vital services to them. Not only has our model of bringing together specialist agencies, drawn from across the community, to develop strategy and avoid duplication been commended by the Claims Conference, it is also highly regarded in other countries.

This year alone we will disburse approaching £2m in social and welfare assistance. This vital financial help allows us to make life-changing interventions and provide assistance to enable Holocaust survivors and refugees to live in dignity in their own homes for as long as possible.

It is difficult not to overstate the impact of these modest grants; a hearing aid, a new washing machine, respite care, chiropody, a stair-lift, the list is endless. Our role is not only to identify how we can creatively help our members but also to partner the Claims Conference to strive for more assistance and reflect the changing circumstances of our members. The sources of these funds are primarily the German and Austrian governments but also the Swiss banks and European insurance companies.

The funds are also used to provide services for the benefit of survivors and refugees. For example, the Claims Conference supports our outreach programme, which enables us to offer a unique and dedicated setting for survivors and refugees to socialise and enjoy entertainment together. We also receive assistance towards the costs of our social workers, greatly needed at a time when local authority social services budgets are being trimmed. Having had support towards these programmes, as well as our meals on wheels and transport services, we are now working with the Claims Conference to achieve support towards the costs of top up fees for residential care.

Michael Newman, on behalf of: The '45 Aid Society, Agudas Israel Community Services, the Association of Jewish Refugees, Jewish Care and the Jewish Refugees Committee