

# 14 STEPS TO CHALLENGE HATE

**When hate groups come to threaten our communities, with the right strategy and tactics, it is possible to create a response that makes us stronger and more resilient. What at first seems like a threat can be transformed into an opportunity**

## 1. TURNING A THREAT INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

The first step is therefore to take a step back, and have a think about the big picture. Who will be your allies? Who will help you reach into the communities who are most threatened? How will you tell a positive story? How will you make sure people are not too fearful to get involved in a positive response? By working with communities we can aim to use the extremist threat to bring people closer together.

## 2. WORKING TOGETHER

The Local Council, the Police and other public bodies will want to respond to any threat, and with the right support, so will faith communities, local charities and community groups. Think about creating a way to bring everyone together to discuss concerns and to start to work together on a positive response. It's really helpful if everyone sits down together early, so that any responses can be coordinated. Not everyone will necessarily end up doing the same thing as each other, and different groups will be necessary have different priorities, but a coordinated response will be far more likely to have the desired outcome of lessening the threat and building a stronger community.

## 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is not always about who is in front of the microphone or who gets their photo in the local paper, and the best leaders in a situation are not necessarily always those who have a formal position before a threat comes to your area. Sometimes the 'leader' in a situation is the person who is prepared to spend the time on the phone, persuading everyone to get together and discuss a path forward. It



helps to give a nod to those people who are already in positions of leadership, and to 'amplify' the voices of people who are organic leaders, people who have started to get involved because they care about their community. Don't underestimate the importance of taking time to make a plan, with clearly designated tasks, to make sure things come to fruition – sometimes being a leader is being a fixer! If you are the person who is making sure things actually get done, that will give you the credibility you need to continue to lead the response.

## 4. INVOLVING TARGETED COMMUNITIES

When we plan a response it's so important to consider the community which is most impacted by the incoming threat. We actually need to work closely with two distinct groups, those that are the victims of hate and those communities perceived as vulnerable to divisive ideas. So invite representatives from both to get involved from the outset.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING AND INVOLVING FAITH COMMUNITIES

In many communities in the UK, some of the strongest networks bringing people together regularly are faith communities and places of worship. Sadly, for minority faiths, they are also likely to be used to being targets of hate. Most places of worship will have an organised leadership, who should be relatively easy to reach, and who have a good reach and are a trusted voice in their own community. If you're a little intimidated to approach members of a faith you've not previously interacted with, don't be – our experience has shown us that the best thing to do is to be open about your own relative ignorance, and ask questions in an open and pleasant manner. Nine times out of ten, your efforts will be appreciated and you'll receive a super friendly welcome.

## 6. DE-ESCALATING TENSION

Think through every intervention, big or small, to make sure it does not have the potential to make a situation worse. It is possible to overreact to a perceived threat, drawing

more attention to it and whipping up fear. For example, if a far-right group announce a town-centre march, take time to check how large and active that far right group is – the response to a planned march of thousands will be very different to one where twenty people are expected.

It's important to avoid the spread of disinformation; if a nasty leaflet has appeared claiming to be in the name of a particular group or faith, find out if it is a marginal group, and publicise that widely, hopefully with the help of a local leader from that faith who is prepared to publicly denounce the nasty views expressed.

## 7. ADDRESSING THE DIFFICULT ISSUES

Some issues are incredibly difficult to deal with. Issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation are incredibly emotive but this is precisely why we must be bold and honest about them. It is counterproductive to deny something bad has happened, but try to work on a response that is outcomes focused, and particularly if there are victims, make sure any response focuses on making things better for the victims where possible.





## 8. INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

The public are the very reason you are responding to the situation your community faces, so make sure to include regular people who want to stand up and get involved in making a positive difference. Where appropriate, this might be through holding an open meeting, or it might be organising to leaflet local homes, telling everyone about what you have planned, and how they can get involved to help. Every aspect of our campaign should seek to involve the wider public. This is a struggle for hearts and minds and your campaign can only succeed if the wider public embrace it. Think about creative ways you can get local residents to endorse your campaign, using photos and shareable ideas that people can post on their own social media sites.

## 9. CLEAR AND ACCURATE INFORMATION

Your information and news must be trusted and easily understood. Whenever and wherever you are communicating about your response, keep it brief, true and easy to engage with.

## 10. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF MYTH BUSTING

Sometimes it seems that what groups who push hate are saying is so easy to counter, with a few facts and figures. But research has shown that 'myth busting' can often actually serve to further strengthen the original contention. People respond more to emotion than to facts, so it's a good idea to use facts and figures sparingly (sometimes they really are necessary), and instead, use a personal story or explanation

which uses emotions to explain why something is not what it seems.

## 11. CONTRASTING THEIR HATE WITH OUR HOPE

When Hate comes to town, what people will notice about whatever has taken place or been announced is the negativity and anger. It is so easy to fall into the trap of fighting fire with fire, of providing a vocal, angry response, but our research shows that people will respond to positivity – messages of hope will drown out messages of hate, and people will have empathy with the koid of message that says 'there is no place for the in my community'. The extremist vision of society is so different from ours. We must use every opportunity to present a modern, positive image of the society we want to live in.

## 12. THE POWER OF THE LOCAL MEDIA

Even in today's digital information age, the local press, and local radio stations, are a good way of getting a positive story out to a community. Often they are really keen to feature good news stories of local people working together in the community, so get them on board early, and make sure someone is responsible for keeping them up to date with developments. Make sure you send them photos of any events you hold, and where possible, invite them along, or ask their advice for what kind of photo they are most likely to publish. Find someone in your group who is comfortable being interviewed on the radio, and agree between yourselves what the most important points are that they need to emphasise in any interview.

## 13. TRUSTED MESSENGERS

People are more likely to listen to a message delivered by someone they know and trust. Find endorsers and advocates that people know and trust. Local celebrities, sport people and clergy are all useful. We have even had a town crier involved in speaking up on a campaign in the past - not a bad idea to use the loudest (and tallest) person in the town to spread the word! Don't forget though that there are also people working in communities especially in the voluntary sector who might have less profile but who are very highly regarded.

If you are thinking of a name for your campaign, think about local knowledge, and come up with a name that connects to something positive that people can connect to and are proud of. Likewise, if you are arranging a photo opportunity, think about doing it in front of a local landmark that people love.

## 14. BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Any event or intervention that has worked or been well received should be highlighted and celebrated. This includes media coverage, and potentially posters for community spaces and places of worship, or even leaflets into people's homes. If you feel you have developed a great energy amongst those who got involved, why not use the campaign as a springboard to plan future positive events in your community. This will keep up resilience against any future negative events and help build a local network, where you can all call on each other should the need arise.

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