

HATE
HOPE
HATE

ACTS OF SOLIDARITY: A POWERFUL RESPONSE TO THE FAR-RIGHT

(Credit: ITV Wales)



FAR-RIGHT GROUPS AND OTHERS HOPING TO CAUSE DIVISION IN COMMUNITIES MIGHT COME TO YOUR COMMUNITY. WHEN THEY SHOW UP, IT'S IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO SHOW UP FOR OTHERS. THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU PLAN AND HOST AN ACT OF SOLIDARITY.

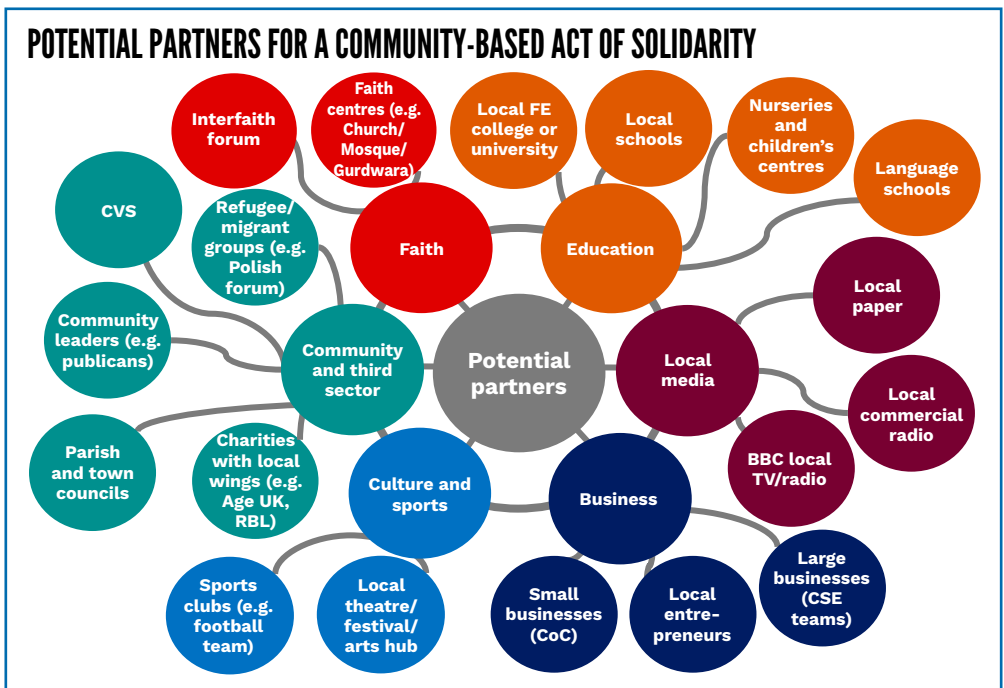
An act of solidarity is an event or action that shows support for a marginalised group. They can be a great way to show that a community supports groups like asylum seekers or drag queen performers who are targeted by the far-right, and they provide a powerful contrast against extreme views. Sometimes the views of the community are side-lined by a vocal minority – acts of solidarity can realign the conversation to include those who have been left out. This resource will help you plan acts of solidarity in your community to help you tackle signs of hate or far-right ideology that you see in your local area.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

In the case of acts of solidarity, there are two main aims:

1. Convince others in the community to embrace the message of hope and positivity
2. Show people outside the community that you are against far-right views and racism

Including as many different voices in the community as possible might mean having to work with new people and organisations. The most effective acts of solidarity are those where a coalition of people can put aside their differences and celebrate being part of a community they can feel proud of.



MESSAGING AND FRAMING

If you want people to come together under a common message, it might be most effective to use a broad message against racism or hatred, which most people can agree with, otherwise people might feel that their concerns are being dismissed. Someone who believes in the inherent dignity and humanity of asylum seekers and who disagrees totally with the far-right might still have questions about UK immigration policy or the use of hotels as asylum accommodation. You can make this a positive message that unites people by saying what you are for instead of what you are against, i.e. you are standing for the community, for the local area or for hope.

It is important to be honest but tactical when it comes to describing the far-right threat. It is important for the community to understand that far-right groups and ideology can be extremely dangerous, but it might not always be helpful or appropriate to share more graphic and concerning images and details.

If you choose to politicise your message, for example by attacking government policy or affiliating with a particular party, you might find that you're not able to reach as many people or that the groups you reach are limited in diversity. Similarly, remember that messages like "refugees welcome" resonate with those who have actively pro-migration views but might not chime with others.

IDEAL CRITERIA FOR YOUR VENUE OR SPACE

Where you host your acts of solidarity will depend on what you have planned. Wherever possible, the more central or publicly accessible your event is, the easier it will be for people to join in.

- ✓ **Geographically convenient**
- ✓ **Familiar and unthreatening**
- ✓ **Neutral – not on one group's 'patch'**
- ✓ **Visible to passers by**
- ✓ **Easy to access, no bureaucracy**
- ✓ **Well-known to locals – near to local landmarks**
- ✓ **Allied with local and civic pride**

CASE STUDY: LLANTWIT MAJOR'S WELSH CAKE WELCOME

In response to leafleting and demonstration planned by Patriotic Alternative, a small but extreme far-right group, residents of Llantwit Major in South Wales planned a co-ordinated 24 hours of events in the town. Under the banner of “Llantwit Major against Racism” organisers focussed on a general message of welcome and tolerance instead of getting mired in the debate around the opening of a hotel as accommodation for asylum seekers. Amongst the events planned were interfaith reflection and refreshments in a church, a football match in collaboration with Show Racism the



A local man dressed as a Welsh cake. Credit: Llantwit Major AFC on Facebook

Red Card and a talk about a philosopher who fled Nazi Germany who had a connection to the town. Most notably, they planned a “Welsh Cake Welcome” event in which Welsh cakes were distributed freely in the town, encouraging locals to embrace newcomers in style. What was so effective about the 24 hours of action was that the variety of different events planned in addition to a highly successful counter demonstration meant that everyone in the community had a way of getting involved. The uniqueness of the Welsh cake event meant that the positive side of the story was what captured media attention, instead of articles and reports focussing on the far-right. Residents of smaller towns are often concerned that far-right activity will become the main notable detail about the area, but Llantwit Major were able to completely flip this narrative and will no doubt be remembered by many for their creative and effective community response. You can read a more detailed analysis of Llantwit’s success in [this blog post](#).

IDEAS FOR ACTS OF SOLIDARITY

Acts of solidarity can come in many different forms, and the best ones are informed by specific local context or knowledge about what would work well in the community. Broad categories of events are:



Sports - these could be amateur events or professional teams from the community coming together for a special match or race to highlight the issue. Show Racism the Red Card can help to organise community football matches with a focus on anti-racism.



Faith-based events - local churches, mosques, synagogues or other places of worship can open their doors for interfaith celebration, reflection or prayer for the community. Faith leaders often have strong local networks which can help boost attendance, as well as having large spaces which can host events.



Public solidarity - people can show their support for the cause without attending a physical demonstration. Ideas include collecting signatures on a petition which is then presented to the local MP or council leader or having a publicly displayed banner which people can add their name or handprint to. Another popular action is displaying a symbol or logo of solidarity in houses and shop windows to show how many people support the cause.



Statements of support - getting local leaders to publicly condemn racism or far-right activism can be an important step to tackling the spread of hatred in your community. As well as your local MP or council leader, you could also ask local charity, business, faith, healthcare and education leaders to lend their voices to your cause.



Creative and hobby-based - events such as concerts, poetry readings, crafting sessions or art exhibitions can be a peaceful and inclusive way of getting the community involved in positive messages around far-right issues. The focus does not always have to be racism or the far-right involvement as long as the event is described as a show of solidarity.



Educational events - this includes lectures, panel discussions or classes from people who might have expertise or knowledge about something relating to the topic. The link doesn't have to be very direct - for example, a history lecture on the refugee crisis in the Second World War or on food or travel in countries asylum seekers have come from could help the community understand the wider context of the debate and bring people together.



Weird and wonderful - anything unusual or exciting in the community will attract attention and encourage people to get involved with the positive message. For example, is there a local symbol that could represent your welcome? Could you have a competition for who could photograph your symbol of solidarity in the strangest place in the area? Could you rename something in the local community to draw attention to your cause?

PUBLICISING ACTS OF SOLIDARITY

The aim of acts of solidarity is to have a wide reach across the community. Therefore, it is important that your planned event is advertised to the right people, at the right time. It might be worth holding certain details back, for example information on who organised the event, until after events are over if you are concerned about attracting attention online or in the community for people opposing your cause. You might also choose to release details of locations closer to the time if you are worried about the event being hijacked in some way. However, it is worth contacting the following people to let them know of your plans:

- **Council.** Most local authorities have a dedicated department for community cohesion or similar, who will have knowledge around publicising and planning events. They might also be able to share information about the event in community newsletters or on social media, if you would like them to.
- **Community policing.** If you are planning to host an event in a public space it is important to inform the police as they need to be aware of large public gatherings, and might have to organise policing multiple events at the same time. Local police service websites will have a webpage with a name like “Tell us” or “Contact us” where you can make these reports. It is important to emphasise the peaceful nature of your event so police can respond accordingly. For smaller events on private property (e.g. a talk or an event in a place of worship), there is no requirement for police involvement.
- **Local MP.** It can be helpful to inform your MP and develop a relationship as they might be able to promote the event either before or after it has happened, raising the profile of your town’s resistance to the far-right.
- **Local news.** Local newspapers might be interested in covering your events, especially if there is an angle. Note that different outlets work to different deadlines so it will be helpful to let local news know about your plans well in advance. See our press release guide below and our separate resource on engaging local media for more information.
- **Social media.** Local community groups can be a great place to drum up enthusiasm for events, with the caveat that they may accidentally receive negative attention. Check the membership and rules of any groups you post in to make sure that you’re sticking to the format of the group. It might be helpful to contact a group admin in advance in case of needing to block accounts or remove harmful comments.
- **Local advertising opportunities.** Messaging boards in local areas such as in shops, post offices or similar can help to reach members of the community who aren’t online.



Credit: Together with Refugees in Penrith, Cumbria

SENDING A PRESS RELEASE TO LOCAL NEWS OUTLETS

The best way to inform your local and national news outlets about your event is by creating a press release and contacting journalists in advance. A press release should include all the details about your event, who your group is and why you're organising the event. This helps journalists gather all the information they need in order to write their story and gives them details for how they can attend events to report on them and do some interviews. Only include information in the press release that you are happy to be released publicly. If you do not want something to be published, but you'd like to let a journalist know about it because it will help them write the story, you should ask for it to be 'on background' or 'not for publication'. If you are not happy for your full name to be used, you should let the journalist know. You could include only your first name or use an alias if you want to be interviewed.

A good press release should include the following:

- **Title** - basic overview of the events planned.
- **Introduction** - what your intentions are for the event and why it's planned. Include clearly the date and location for your event.
- **Quotations** - include a quote from organisers or people involved with the events who are happy to be quoted in the paper (include whether their names are to be included, see above) . You can explain why you decided

to hold the event, who it is for and what you hope will happen or change in the aftermath of the event.

- **Photographs** - if the event has already happened, include photographs and mention that people in the photographs have consented to be named and featured (if that is the case and it is safe to do so). Remember that photographs including anyone under the age of 18 require parental consent to be shared in public. It might be helpful to consider using consent forms if you will be photographing an event. Only send photographs you have permission to use - this could be photos you, friends or family took. If the event is upcoming, include specific dates and times and potentially ideas for which events will be visually engaging so they can send a photographer if someone is free.
- **Contact details** - include an email address and phone number for someone who is happy to be a point of contact for journalists if they have any further questions
- **Partner organisation details** - it can be helpful to signpost to the journalist any other organisations you've been in touch with so they can be contacted for quotes, too. HOPE not hate often provide quotations on far-right groups and the wider context of the far right in the UK. If there is another specific local issue such as homelessness or violence against women, then consider contacting a group specialising in these issues, too.
- **Release date** - most stories should be marked "for immediate release" if they are meant to be part of the standard news cycle. However, if you would rather agree a specific date for publication, indicate this on the press release by writing "Embargoed until *time* and *date*".

BOX: CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING AN ACT OF SOLIDARITY

- Decide on the event you are going to host
- Consider your audience and messaging
- Find people to share the planning with
- Decide on an event name (you might also want a logo and colours)
- Secure a venue for the event
- Check accessibility for the event
- Write a description of the event and who you want to attend it
- If needed, make security arrangements
- Publicise your event: what will be the best way of making sure the event reaches the right people and goes as you planned it?
- Write a press release and contact local news outlets
- Host the event: remember to ask someone to bring a camera to take photos!
- Share photos and reflections of the event with attendees and your MP or council if you want them to share what you've achieved

WHAT ABOUT COUNTER DEMONSTRATIONS?

If a far-right demonstration is planned in a local area, often a counter demonstration will be organised to take place at the same time in the same location. Often counter demonstrations can show that those who oppose far-right narratives and champion inclusivity and tolerance outnumber those with messages of hatred.



Counter demonstrators outside Honor Oak pub in Lewisham defending the pub's right to host Drag Queen Story Hour events. Credit: The Daily Mail

However, the demonstration environment is not always safe and accessible for everyone in the community who wants to show their support. For example, children, neurodivergent people or those who are concerned about being identified by the far-right might not want to take part in a counter demonstration. For this reason, having other accessible acts of solidarity planned can mobilise parts of the community that might not have otherwise been there. In addition to this, counter demonstrations which are held in the same location and at the same time as far-right protests can often increase tensions between the two sides and ramp up hostility. People attending counter demonstrations can, in the worst case scenario, be targeted by the far-right or organisations present can receive hostility at the demonstration or online. Many people who are informed about this still choose to participate in effective counter demonstrations, but it can be helpful and impactful to have acts of solidarity as a viable alternative.

CASE STUDY: MERTHYR TYDFIL'S COMMUNITY FOOTBALL GAME

In 2016, Harriet, a HOPE not hate local organiser in the South Wales town of Merthyr Tydfil, noticed a feeling of separation between local Welsh residents of the town and Portuguese and Polish workers who had moved there to work in a local meat packing plant. Hate crime had risen by 40% across Wales, partially due to the



EU referendum campaign and the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox. Harriet decided to organise a football match in memory of Jo and as a way of bringing people from across the community together. Although Merthyr Tydfil has a strong sense of local identity, industrial decline and economic inequality mean that people who have always lived there and new arrivals have fewer spaces to meet and interact. Pubs, libraries and community centres have all closed down. Although football couldn't be a direct replacement for these services, it functioned as an effective medium to bring parts of the town together. Football, and other team sports, can provide shared spaces, support networks and formal identities in communities which are struggling to provide these for residents.

HOW TO RUN A COMMUNITY FOOTBALL GAME

1 - DECIDE YOUR OBJECTIVES

Who do you want at your event? What do you want them to get from it? Deciding your audience and aims early will help you figure out who to get on board and how to make your event accessible.



To bring people together after a divisive EU vote, HOPE not hate put together a team of Polish and Portuguese players for a friendly against Quar Park Rangers, a team from Merthyr's local football league.

2 - FORMING YOUR PLANNING TEAM

Building a group of volunteers invested in your community is often easier than you think. Start with friends and family, then contact local community centres, sports clubs and your council (and anyone else you can think of) to find your team.



A lot of work goes into community organising, so make sure not to overload yourself and to delegate some of the following steps!

3 - FORM YOUR TEAMS

Decide how big you want your teams to be and start recruiting – teams usually number anywhere from 5 to 11 players (with some substitutes), and you can choose to host one big game or a small tournament.



Ask some local football teams to help with players and kits - either a big partnership with your town's professional team(s), or bringing a few teams from the local grassroots league together. You can also reach out to local community organisations or your Local Authority, who'll be able to help you make the event accessible and reach out to all corners of the community.

Make sure to find a referee and some stewards for the day itself!

4 - FIND YOUR VENUE

Ask your local club if they're able to donate use of their pitch on a quiet day, or contact your Local Authority or grassroots league about free playing space. They'll also be able to guide you through any insurance or risk assessment needs.



Remember to check that your venue is appropriate to the people you want there - is it accessible? Is there parking? Access to toilets and bins?

5 - SPREAD THE WORD

Use free online design software like [Canva](#) or [Edit](#) to create a poster for your event (or delegate it to one of your team - maybe ask your local Sixth Form or university for design student volunteers). Once you've got a date, time and poster, get advertising!



Using social media, contacting the local press and radio, and seeking support from local businesses or the Local Authority can all help get your event in front of as many people as possible. If you haven't already, approach local organisations to help you reach marginalised groups in your community. Can you get a notice translated? Or put up posters in workplaces with a lot of migrant workers?

6 - RISK ASSESSMENTS

Risk assessments are usually much more straightforward than they sound.



List any health and safety risks that your event might throw up and what you can do to mitigate those. Think of the potential severity of the risk and the likelihood of it occurring, ranking both from 1-5. Multiply the two sets of numbers, and any of your results are greater than 10 reconsider the plan for your event. More detailed risk assessment templates can be found on the government's [website](#).

7 - THE DAY AND BEYOND



Have fun! Make sure to get plenty of photos to share, and think about how to maintain this momentum - you've put together a team of passionate local people and created your own foothold in public life, what do you want to do with it next?

Grassroots football is run by the biggest network of volunteers in the country, and the collective identity and energy that sport can create has a lot of potential for community organising and resilience-forming – can you keep your games going by [forming a permanent team](#)? Can you expand out into the rest of the community?

SHARE YOUR STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE WITH US!

HOPE not hate are always looking to champion communities who put up a fight against harmful far-right narratives. If you would like to share news about acts of solidarity happening in your community and be the hope for someone else, email us at towns@hopenothate.org.uk



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