

HATE
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HATE

SHOWING STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP AGAINST THE FAR RIGHT

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL COUNCILLORS



HOPE not hate research has shown a rapid uptick in far-right activity, with much of the organised far right returning to tactics of demonstrations and leafleting to agitate community tensions.

Many are attempting to exploit local concerns around asylum accommodation, which given the widespread use of hotel accommodation and widening of dispersal, means that the far right are organising in new areas, as well as places they have long attempted to spark tensions. But they are also organising around new issues, such as LGBT+ education in schools or conspiracies around 15 minute cities.

Local political leaders have a critical role to play in ensuring that the far-right threat is unable to feed local division and to minimise their impact. This guide is intended to provide some tips for local councillors to play their role in fighting the far right.

PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP

KNOW WHO YOU'RE UP AGAINST

To lead against the far right, you need to know the far right. Not only will this help you know what to look out for and how to respond, it will also help cement your authority as an expert within the community.

Make sure you're aware of far-right actors who may be trying to infiltrate your community, and, most importantly, how your community responds to this.

ACTIONS:

- Read HOPE not hate's [resources](#), available on our website, for information on far-right actors and the tactics they use to infiltrate communities.
- Be plugged into Community Safety teams, cohesion groups, the police, and any local tension monitoring programmes that may exist.
- Link up with Councillors in neighbouring wards to be aware of any nearby activity that could spill over into your community.
- Get in touch with Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk about any activity in your area, or if you want to find out more about specific actors or groups.



KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

It is crucial that you know how and where your community is vulnerable to infiltration by far-right groups. Knowing what they think about key issues that the far right mobilise around, whether that be asylum accommodation, drag queen story hour or 15 minute cities, will help you foreshadow what sentiments the far right could exploit and therefore how to mitigate this.

Far-right recruitment also thrives on disenfranchisement; proving that you are there to listen and respond to your community's concerns will make them less likely to look to other more extreme forms of representation and affirmation.

ACTIONS:

- Have open, reciprocal and responsive lines of communication with your community. Consult our public engagement resource for guidance on how to engage with your community about the far right.
- Utilise multi-agency partnerships to make sure you're reaching all parts of the community and plugged into all conversations. This should include schools, youth groups, faith groups, sports clubs, trade unions, council community officers and community organisations. Make sure these links are continuously updated to make sure all lines of communication are live.
- Utilise stakeholder mapping. It's impossible to be plugged into every single conversation happening throughout your community. You can map your key community groups to determine which groups you should keep a closer eye on, based on how much interest in an issue they have and influence they have over the rest of the community.
- Monitor local Facebook groups. Keep an eye out for far-right members joining local facebook groups, far-right content being reposted, or far-right tropes being regurgitated.

BUILD RESILIENCE

Once tensions boil over in a community, it can take years to rebuild. Proactively investing in resilience before the far right arrives, so that communities are less susceptible in the first instance, can make a huge difference.

ACTIONS:

- Refer to our [Inclusive Events Guide](#) for inspiration and guidance for community events that can bring people together.
- Work collaboratively across the community to build resilient relationships between different community groups. Link up with schools, faith groups, refugee organisations, community groups and trade unions to make sure all community groups are included.
- Watch our webinars on [How to Fend off the Far Right: Lessons for Local Authorities](#) and [Building a Strong Place Identity](#).
- Think about starting a community newsletter that spotlights all the initiatives and events taking place that can bring people together and highlight the compassion that exists within the community.



USE YOUR POLITICAL POWER

As a Councillor, you are in a unique position of being engaged in both community and political spaces. You can use this to your advantage and become a political advocate for your community; your embedded insights can have considerable leverage in decision making processes.

ACTIONS:

- Use your political power to encourage your local council to prioritise community resilience. Make sure any cohesion strategies include reference to mitigating far-right activity. This can be done through your work on scrutiny committees, using your knowledge of the community as evidence for recommendations.
- Bring your insights to your MP. This can add political validity to claims being made by community members or sector organisations, and strengthen your MP's work to bring an issue to the national agenda.
- In a reactive situation, you can also use your political power to advocate for a particular response from your local council, MP or national Government.
- Consider cross-party working. Where issues cross parties and there is a shared agenda, presenting a united political front can send a powerful message that an issue is being treated seriously.
- Consider mobilising the HOPE not hate [Councillor Network](#). Get in touch with us at Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk for ideas on how you can use your political power to stand up against the far right or for any issues you want us to engage the wider network about.

REACTIVE LEADERSHIP

ASSESS THE THREAT

There is no blueprint for how you should react to the far right in your community. This is all dependent on a variety of factors specific to the particular situation and, crucially, the level of threat that the far right possesses in destabilising your community.

ACTIONS:

- Contact Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk to chat through any specific concerns you have. The combination of your local knowledge of what is happening in your community and our knowledge of how the far right operates in communities will help determine the best course of action.
- When deciding what plan of action to take, it is helpful to assess the threat of the far right in relation to 1) the level of far-right activity in the area and b) how the community has responded to it. This will give you a better understanding of how to respond.

Community reaction	Acceptance	<p>The community is curious about far right messaging, and showing an interest in attending their events.</p> <p>Potential action: Address the issues that the far right are using to infiltrate the community. Tackle any misinformation. Expose the extremity and wider agenda of far right actors.</p>	<p>The community is actively participating in far right events, and spreading far right content beyond the issue they initially engaged with.</p> <p>Potential action: Contact HOPE not hate. Engage multi-agency stakeholders in emergency meeting.</p>
	Rejection	<p>The community is refusing to engage in conversations with far right figures, reporting and/or throwing away leaflets.</p> <p>Potential action: Plan local events to maintain a sense of community.</p>	<p>The community is proactively trying to destabilise far right activity, organising acts of solidarity and counter-protests rejecting far right messaging.</p> <p>Potential action: Support with organising events. Celebrate the community rising above hate.</p>
		Eg posters, leafleting	Eg rallies, active recruitment
Level of far right activity			

BE VOCAL

It is important to be vocal and public in your opposition to hate. Not only is this the ethical thing to do, but also the strategic thing to do.

Far-right actors often hide their most extreme views when engaging with a community, to make themselves more palatable. As a result, it is likely that some members of the community are unaware of what these groups really stand for. It is important that people are made aware of who they are interacting with, as this can be a successful deterrent in allowing far-right groups to access communities.

ACTIONS:

- If it's far right, call it far right. An online post condemning the rhetoric or activity of far-right actors is a simple yet effective way of taking a stand. However, be extremely clear-cut with what you are labelling as 'far right'; knee-jerk reactions to local opposition can be counterproductive.
- Leaflets or community newsletters drawing attention to the extreme views of individuals or groups can be effective if they are trying to infiltrate the community by mobilising around one specific issue that hides their wider agenda.
- Think strategically about where you are being vocal. Putting up a statement on the council website won't necessarily reach everyone that it needs to. Work with multi-agency partnerships to spread messaging authentically within the community, via trusted messengers.
- Support any acts of solidarity against hate taking place in your community. Consult the [Acts of Solidarity](#) resource on our website to plan your own.
- Refer to our [Local Press Guide](#) on how to encourage responsible local reporting on far-right activity.
- Contact Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk for briefings about individuals or groups who are operating in your community.



BE STRATEGIC WITH MESSAGING

When tensions start to rise within a community, many authority figures worry about saying the ‘wrong’ thing that could make the situation worse. Appropriate messaging will vary depending on context, but there are a few general guidelines that we advise:

ACTIONS:

- Consult our resource on public engagement for more guidance on how to talk to communities about issues the far right are mobilising around. This includes advice on audience mapping, different engagement methods and when and how to execute them, guidance for messaging and case study examples.
- Speak sooner rather than later. If your community is mobilising around an issue, you do not want to let far-right actors speak to them about it before you do. Be quick with engaging the community and [countering misinformation](#); your silence leaves room for the far right to further stir up hate.
- Distinguish clearly between what are genuine community concerns - worries about how local infrastructure will cope with asylum seekers being housed in a local hotel - and when this crosses over into far-right territory. This is why knowing your community and what they think is crucial. Painting all opposition with one brush and calling people or ideas far right when they are not will only alienate people and push them further away.
- For more guidance on messaging, watch our webinars on [Countering Misinformation Locally](#) and [Having Difficult Conversations](#).
- Work with your council’s communications team. Your links to the community will be invaluable in ensuring that the content and tone of outputs are effective in reaching and engaging the community. It can be useful to approach these teams with messaging you have already tried and tested with different segments of the community.
- Get in touch with us at Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk if you’re interested in receiving some training in having difficult conversations.

STAY SAFE

Being particularly vocal in opposition to the far right does come with a risk of becoming a target for retaliation. Your safety should always be a priority.

ACTIONS:

- In the event of an emergency, always contact the police.
- Check in with yourself. The most important determining factor in deciding how to respond to any security concerns is the impact it is having on you. Regardless of what others may think, or who the perpetrator is, if it is having an effect on you, then that is sufficient enough for you to take action.
- Consult the LGA's [Councillors' Guide](#) to Handling Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation. This extensive resource includes practical steps to manage both your personal and online safety, advice on addressing psychological abuse and impacts on wellbeing and lays out the legal support available to you.
- Head to our website to access our resource on [Safety & Security](#).
- Contact Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk if you have any concerns about your safety, or for more information on specific far-right actors or groups who may be targeting you.





If you have any questions about this resource or want more information of how you can show strong local leadership against the far right, contact Misbah Malik, Senior Policy and Engagement Officer, at Misbah@hopenothate.org.uk.

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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