



Communicating amid far-right threats – Guidance for local authorities

At a time of rising tension and political polarisation, what we say – and how we say it – can be hugely impactful, either fomenting division or bringing people together. Local authorities and other public bodies bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty can, through effective use of communications and messaging, help communities unite around shared values.

Local authorities across the country are reporting an uptick in negative comments, many of them related to council initiatives on cohesion and bringing the community together. There are also reports, however, of an increase in engagement from residents pushing back against negative comments.

By putting out strong, clear, joined-up communications, local authority communications teams can play a key role in community cohesion, helping bring people together with values-based messaging.

The following guidance brings together advice on framing, looking at how language can unite people around shared values, and tips on how best to use social and traditional media to get the right messages out there safely, especially at times of high tension.

A strong, clear voice for the community

At times of greater polarisation in communities, becoming more cautious in our public communications can seem like the wisest choice. However, [research](#) shows that, in a divided climate, positive values-based messaging can be incredibly effective at cutting through hatred and noise, minimising the impact of misinformation and increasing community cohesion.

Values-based messaging is messaging that appeals to an audience's core values, connecting with their emotions and needs, rather than just seeking to impart information. It fosters deeper connection by focusing on shared principles. You can read more about values-based messaging [here](#).

Some of the values we all share include things like:

- Benevolence
- Self-direction
- Achievement
- Universalism
- Security
- Tradition

You can find a more in-depth list of shared values, based on in-depth research by psychologists, [here](#).



When planning public communications - whether about planned events, ongoing local authority programmes or trigger events in the local area - think about how your framing can tap into some of these shared values, and help everyone feel represented.

Dos and don'ts

DO:

- Be mindful of what stories are in the news currently and how that might impact people's reactions to your output
- Acknowledge legitimate local concerns when applicable, for example in cases of a highly-publicised violent crime
- Contact HOPE not hate if you need help with background information on far-right actors and groups, or for support with drafting statements
- Make sure messaging is joined up and consistent across different departments and public bodies, and over different platforms.
- Check what personal information members of the public might be able to find out about your team using AI tools - for example, use ChatGPT to see what information it is able to scrape about contact details of members of the communications team
- Remember that the news cycle moves extremely quickly, so even if you are receiving negative attention, it will likely not be sustained

DON'T:

- Share anything personal or internal with a journalist, even if it feels unremarkable
- Post photos on social media that might be tracked to your own or others' home address
- Describe all anti-migrant protesters as 'fascists' - this may push people further to the right. Instead, explore any links organisers may have with established far-right groups - contact HOPE not hate for support with this

Procedural tips

Social media channels

- Look at your list of words in comments that mean replies are automatically hidden - as well as swear words and racial slurs, consider adding catchphrases commonly used by the organised far right
- Consider the timing of posts - if a post is going out that might stir negative comments or backlash, make sure they go out early in the day so someone is on hand in the following hours to monitor comments
- Record the profile names and details of any repeat offenders who leave offensive comments [then report to platform?]

Press

- Check what other articles a journalist has written recently before working with them on a story, in order to have a good sense of what framing they may use
- When giving quotes on stories that may be controversial, consider citing a spokesperson rather than a named person from the council, to avoid any potential personal blowback

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Navigating far-right mobilisations can be tricky, but there are lots of examples of good practice out there. Speaking out confidently and with conviction can really help bring people together, and can help at-risk community members feel less alone. You can find some examples of positive, robust messaging from local authorities below:

- <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2026/statement-leader-brighton-hove-city-council>
- <https://news.hackney.gov.uk/news/mayor-garbett-standing-in-solidarity-with-the-trans-community>
- <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-archive/hertfordshire-county-council-reaffirms-commitment-to-tackling-hate-and-strengthening-community-cohesion>
- <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/unauthorised-flags/>

If you'd like support with messaging and framing, background information on any individuals or groups of concern, or other support communicating amid far-right threats, please do reach out to HOPE not hate by emailing communities@hopenothate.org.uk, and we'll do our best to help.