

Local vigilante-style groups

At HOPE not hate, we are seeing a continuing trend across the UK of local vigilante-style groups being set up. These groups often purport to tackle things like violence against women and girls, or to support homeless people in the area. However, many have been found to have links to the organised far right, and to have a racist, anti-migrant agenda.

Some of the groups that have been set up look relatively official - they often organise publicly and have social media accounts, and some have official-looking uniforms (for example, vests that say 'Security' on them). Some even carry equipment, including protective vests, walkie-talkies and body cameras.

As above, many of the groups state publicly that they are focused on 'protecting' women and girls, including by organising patrols of (unvetted, non-DBS-checked) volunteers around the



Heywood Community Guard members in group hi-vis vests



A 'night patrol' organised by Unite the Clans with Josh Fernie, an active member of the Homeland Party



local area. However, many have been found to be linked to groups active on the organised far right, and/or to be founded by or welcome members with convictions for things like racially aggravated assault. For example, the group Heywood Community Guard, based in the Greater Manchester town of Heywood, was co-founded by a man named Adam Farrell. Farrell had previously been jailed for racially aggravated grievous bodily harm after he left a man with life-changing brain injuries following an unprovoked racist attack outside a nightclub in 2022.

The people behind these groups may already be well known in your local community. Many of the groups have been ridiculed on their social media by locals who see right through them.

However, these groups can gain purchase in communities. It's understandable that as people are struggling, feeling helpless at the rising cost of living and increasing street homelessness, people may feel like these groups offer a solution. However, it's worth reminding people that there are already services that offer support - for example, PubWatch groups tackling alcohol-related antisocial behaviour, or local faith institutions supporting those dealing with homelessness. These services have processes in place already, and are accountable to other organisations and bodies.

If a group has started up in your area and you're unsure of its intentions or connections, feel free to get in touch with HOPE not hate by emailing communities@hopenothate.org.uk. We will take a look and let you know if those involved are known to us.