

Staying Safe amidst Far Right violence

The UK is currently undergoing a spate of coordinated far-right violence, which is targeted at Muslims, racialised communities, migrants and people seeking safety in the UK. While the events of the last week were sparked by online misinformation about the tragic murders in Southport, far-right activity is not a new phenomenon. The last decade has seen an increase in political rhetoric and policies which have increased the risk to these communities, and have led to the current organised nature of the far-right.

This guide aims to pull together some basic principles/considerations for organisations and community groups to guide their thinking when making decisions about how to keep staff, volunteers and the people they are working with feeling safe and supported. It also offers our solidarity with the people who are most affected by far-right violence as we stand together as one community.

It was initially put together by NACCOM, Asylum Matters, Right to Remain, and Praxis, drawing on a number of resources, including from Hope not Hate, IMIX and Safer Foundations. This is not an exhaustive guide, and it will be updated as we continue to develop best practice.

The guide focuses on four groups/scenarios:

1. Information for organisations supporting people seeking asylum in Home Office hotels
2. Information for charities and community groups who provide centre and service based work
3. Information for charities and community groups who carry out community based work, including housing managed in the community
4. Information for people fearful of or at risk of being directly targeted by far-right violence

Information for organisations supporting people seeking asylum in Home Office hotels

- When discussing safety and security, and providing information to clients or service users it is important to strike a balance between making sure people have access to information and causing additional distress. Be conscious and aware of the trauma they are already experiencing, and ensure your communications are calm and clear.
- Emphasise that the point of security planning is to understand the risks in advance, and follow up by putting steps or plans in place to mitigate these risks. Give clear time frames so people are clear on how long to take precautions.
- Take steps to check that the hotel provider has clear, fire resilient, lock down procedures.
- Identify where there is a safe space for people to wait in case there is violent activity. It is useful to consider spaces which do not have windows or which have a far enough distance from windows to protect from entry or breakage. These spaces should ideally be lockable from the inside, have sprinklers, and clear, unblocked fire escapes.
- Check that there are clear routes of communication, escalation and accountability for safety measures in hotels. The critical incident plan should establish who's managing different aspects of the situation: staff, services users and emergency services amongst them. When it comes to communicating with service users, ensure that safety information is communicated to residents in relevant languages, both those on site and those who may be offsite.
- Check that hotel providers have increased their security measures, and that they have liaised with local police on the heightened risk. Ask hotel providers to explain what security measures they are taking.
- You may want to map high risk areas that are more likely to see a local Hotel attacked and contact them proactively
- [Contact HOPE not hate](#) to access their accommodation security guide, co-created with Safer Foundations, that covers how to deal with key stakeholders as well as safety advice for groups working in accommodation sites and for residents of accommodation.
- As well as thinking about safety for staff, volunteers and service users, it is also really important to consider wellbeing. Constantly assessing risk and worrying about security can take its toll. It is important you have wellbeing support measures in place.

Information for charities and community groups on centre and service based safety

- Identify where there is a safe space for people to wait in case there is a far-right presence near your service or centre. It is useful to consider spaces which do not have windows or which have a far enough distance from windows to protect from entry or breakage. These spaces should be lockable from the inside, have sprinklers, and clear, unblocked fire escapes
- Ensure that no one is working alone in the building and introduce a system which allows you to check on the location of staff members.
- Take steps to reduce or minimise travel to the location, and introduce a system for checking that people have arrived at their location safely - for example a buddy system. Take particular consideration for staff from marginalised communities.
- Introduce procedures for checking and opening post or mail. The safest way to do this is to physically feel any letters or parcels before opening with a letter opener or ruler, not with your hands, and not to open anything suspicious. Make sure that no staff member or volunteer is doing this alone and they are acting with caution.
- Cancel any large scale events or in person meetings which may be taking place outside of any space where you are unsure of the safety precautions they have taken or consider moving online with the appropriate security
- Encourage staff to work remotely from home wherever possible or consider closing the premises for a short period of time until safety can be guaranteed.
- Remove branding where possible outside sites where you are working so that your presence is not easily identifiable.

- Make sure you let voluntary and statutory sector partners, and people you're working with, know about the increased risk and your security plans.
- Liaise with your local authority Community Safety Teams.

Resources

- [For more guidance, Hope not Hate have a set of guides for organisations including a safety and security guide, and a guide on improving digital security in light of the online far-right threat.](#)
- HOPE not Hate recommends that someone in your organisation is responsible for searching your organisation's name, along with the name of any high profile colleagues. If you see your name on any list or the name of any colleagues, volunteers or clients, immediately reach out to the local police, provide them with the details, and request security.
- Send any photos or images of rioters or people you are concerned about to rightresponse@hopenothate.org.uk This should be done after it is clear that there is no threat of danger.
- You can also access some excellent resources from [IMIX](#) and [NEON](#) on messaging and working with the media - if this is something you feel safe and able to do - during times of heightened tension and risk.
- As well as thinking about safety for staff, volunteers and service users, it is also really important to consider wellbeing. Constantly assessing risk and worrying about security can take its toll. It is important you have wellbeing support measures in place.

Information for charities and community groups on community based work, including housing managed in the community

- Without raising undue alarm, ensure that people you work with or partner organisations are aware of the increased risks and what to do if they feel unsafe or are in danger
- Liaise with police and discuss placing a "Treat As Urgent" ("TAU") marker on houses in the

community, which would require a police response within a certain period of time should an alarm like a call to 999 be made.

- [Contact Safer Foundations](#) to access their excellent resources on safeguarding, including for staff, volunteers and individuals at risk.

Information for people fearful of or at risk of being directly targeted by far-right violence.

You have the right to be in and feel safe in your local community. You also have the right to carry out your usual, daily activities. No one has the right to treat you badly because of who you are or who they think you are, but at this time you might want to take precautions if you feel unsafe. We made some recommendations if you would like to think about additional safety measures if you feel these are necessary, and help in identifying places where you can find support and solidarity.

- Ask trusted people in your community about any recent risks. This could include whether there have been any local attacks or threats. This will help you to make good decisions about where it is safe and which places to avoid at certain times.
- Think about whether it might be better to go out with someone else, not alone where possible.
- Keep your phone charged or carry a charger with you, and make sure you have important numbers saved.
- It is a good idea to let people know where you are going and what time you expect to return, so that

they can check in with you or let someone know if they are not able to reach you.

- People in your local community may not be well informed, and a time of heightened far-right activity and violence, may be mistrustful of large groups of people. Large groups may also draw unwanted attention from both people with hostile intentions and from any authorities who are present. Make an assessment of whether it is safe for you to meet in a large group at this time.
- Stay connected to your community. Being connected to others is good for us in lots of ways and it is helpful to know that there are many places in your community which are thinking about and prioritising your safety. If you know of a group or charity that gives information, briefings, wellbeing sessions etc contact them and ask how you can join in. If you don't know, ask others, and look out for posters, notices etc. These can be good ways of getting information on all kinds of things and a good way to stay informed and safe.

If you are scared about an urgent risk, or if you have information to share, call 999 in an emergency or if you are concerned or in doubt, call 101 for non-emergencies.

Resources

- [Know your rights - bust card](#)
- [Healing and grounding](#)

This guide is kindly hosted by HOPE not Hate. Please contact HOPE not hate, NACCOM, Asylum Matters, Praxis or Right to Remain should you wish to add anything to this guide or share any further useful resources.

