

Charities against hate - How to respond to racism

By Directory of Social Change

Background

The UK is experiencing an unacceptable rise in racist, xenophobic and sectarian hate. Extremist groups, and in some cases politicians, are targeting racialised people and marginalised communities with racist language and narratives, violence, threats, intimidation and harassment.

This is also directly affecting charities and voluntary organisations, targeting the people charities serve, as well as charity leaders, staff, and trustees. It is increasingly evident that the effects are not limited to organisations helping people who have been displaced but extend to many different types of organisations and causes, especially those working with or representing marginalised communities.

This resource aims to provide practical actions that charities can take to ensure their own safety and continued operation, to help them reevaluate their strategic planning, and to join in solidarity with others to push back against racism and other forms of bigotry and discrimination.

Responding to crisis situations

When there is a racist or other discriminatory incident involving your charity, you should first follow your own safeguarding and health and safety policies, and consider the following steps, especially if a crime has occurred. This is important regardless of whether you're a large organisation with many staff and complex systems, or a small organisation run by volunteers.

Ensure immediate safety

In emergency situations, especially involving criminal activity or violence, you should dial 999 or 111 and ensure people's immediate safety. Different organisations may have distinct policies and protocols, but managers should ensure the charity's safeguarding, health and safety, and disaster / emergencies policies are followed. In the current environment, managers should regularly re-brief these policies to staff and volunteers, even if there is no imminent threat.

Escalate to directors and trustees

Governance structures may differ in other voluntary organisations, but in the case of charities, trustees are legally liable for what happens to the charity and its people and resources. Trustees need to be informed and briefed by leaders or managers in the case of serious threats to the charity or its staff, volunteers or beneficiaries.

Depending on the severity of the incident and your charity's policies, trustees may need to hold an extraordinary board meeting to evaluate and decide next steps. It's vital to keep written notes and formal minutes which clearly document the actions taken and agreed, because subsequent police investigations or regulatory reporting will need them.

Report criminal activity

Criminal activity such as violence, threats of violence, harassment, vandalism, or hate speech needs to be reported to the police. Once people are safe, you should take photo evidence (where possible) of any criminal activity and make notes about what happened to assist any police investigation.

If your organisation isn't comfortable dealing with the police, there may be other local organisations that can advise you. For example, your local resilience forum, local infrastructure organisation, or other membership or representative bodies that align with your charity's work.

Report to the regulators

The charity regulators have official processes and guidance for reporting serious incidents, which are in place to protect people associated with your charity and its assets. Normally, reporting covers serious safeguarding incidents, instances of fraud or other criminal activity within the charity, or serious problems with a charity's governance.

The Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) has a different system in place than the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI). Especially in the current context, it's important that charities report serious incidents involving racism or other attacks on marginalised communities related to the charity. Regulators need this information to best advise your charity and to record and understand what is happening more widely, so they can share data with the police and other authorities about the bigger picture.

Ensure people's well-being

In this environment, it's crucial to support each other and monitor staff's well-being. This is especially true for racialised staff and volunteers, even when there isn't an imminent or direct threat to their safety. People need space to articulate and process how incidents in the wider community are affecting them and what support they might need.

Actions for leaders to support staff and volunteers

- Ensure people's immediate safety
- Report incidents to authorities
- Provide extra 1:1 sessions with managers or HR, offer time off
- Create safe spaces for people to discuss
- Find an alternative workspace or role for a period of time
- Facilitate access to specialist support

Resources

Responding to crisis situations

Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW)

[How to report a serious incident in your charity](#)

[Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees](#)

[Charity Commission statement in response to riots and public disorder](#)

The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

[Raise a Concern](#)

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI)

[Serious incident reporting: a guide for charity trustees](#)

Protect UK

[Evacuation, invacuation, lockdown, protected spaces](#)

Local resilience forums

[Local resilience forums: contact details](#)

Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)

[Bringing a co-ordinated response to emergencies](#)

Reviewing strategic plans

Moving beyond the immediate crisis and direct impact on people, charity leaders and trustees need to think about how the current hostile environment threatens marginalised communities across the UK. On top of this, leaders must consider the impact on their ability to carry out charitable purposes such as the advancement of human rights and the promotion of racial harmony or equality or diversity. All of this needs to be reflected in charities' own governance and strategic planning.

Consider future strategy

Charity trustees are responsible for the strategic planning of the organisation. In other words, what your charity plans to do in the future, what it will prioritise, what resources it will allocate where and how, and so on.

Trustees need to consider how the current environment may have affected the existing plans and strategies. For example, by dedicating substantial time at the next board meeting to review and discuss the organisation's current strategy, and whether that needs to be modified. Consider whether you need to find a way to finance additional security or safety equipment for your premises. Could you go back to funders and ask about this?

Organisational reporting and data

Charity trustees are expected to manage risks to the charity, and charities above the financial audit threshold have a legal duty to annually report on how they manage risk in the trustees' annual report. The risk profile for many organisations, especially those representing racialised people, has likely changed recently. This needs to be part of your board discussion and annual reporting, but also the systems you have in place to gather data related to risk.

Charities can have different mechanisms for dealing with risk but trustees must ensure risks are identified, reported and evaluated within the charity's risk management framework, typically through a risk register. Threats (such as security threats, hoax threats, or harassment) fall under operational and reputational risks and should be added to the register if they could impact your charity's staff, beneficiaries, property or reputation. A record should include the nature of the threat and its potential impact, as well as mitigation actions, responsibility and monitoring procedures.

Prioritise diversity

The lack of diversity on charity boards and in charity leadership is a long-standing problem, and progress has been far too slow. However, the current crisis means charities should redouble efforts to increase diversity, not row back from or shelve them. Part of pushing back against racist narratives and political attacks on equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) involves charities modelling what diverse governance and leadership looks like.

Rethink communications

The rise in racist and other discriminatory hate is being enabled by social media companies that have allowed and even facilitated the spread of racist narratives and the organising of racist political activity. However, communications across social media can reach a wide audience, so consider using social media as a tool to spread messages of solidarity and to raise awareness.

Trustees should review your charity's existing social media policy and practices, including what platforms you participate in, and adapt strategies accordingly so that they are ethical

and effective for the current environment. You can also use social media to counter misinformation, which spreads like wildfire, by providing dependable information.

Practical steps for charity leaders to support communications staff

- Have a strong social media policy that supports staff - review and brief it regularly
- Champion dependable information across your communications channels
- Have a process to tackle offensive messages and hate speech - your team should know to delete comments, block users or report threats
- Prioritise your team's well-being by encouraging regular breaks and check-ins
- Organise work patterns to provide staff time off from social media

Resources

Reviewing strategic plans

Charity Commission for England and Wales

[Charities and social media](#)

[Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees](#)

[Charities and risk management \(CC26\)](#)

CharityComms

[A wellbeing guide for comms professionals](#)

[Social media policy template](#)

New Ways

[When hate spills into workplaces a leaders guide](#)

THINK Consulting Solutions

[Protecting your staff on the digital frontline: practical tips for charity leaders](#)

Board Racial Diversity UK

[Increasing racial diversity on trustee boards](#)

We are stronger together

As charities, we should stand strong for equality, defending human rights and safeguarding the systems that protect them. The sector's response must be transformative and built on the understanding that eradicating racism needs not just legal but structural, institutional and cultural change. We can help to reshape society by confronting racism and

discrimination within our own organisations. But we also need collective action – we're stronger when we reunited.

To build a future grounded in fairness and equality, we must look beyond individual acts of discrimination, and challenge the systems and culture that allow them to persist. Now is the time to stand together, with courage, solidarity and a shared commitment to real change.

Join anti-racism networks

Being part of a collective brings benefits. You can gain access to helpful resources and knowledge, because we all have unique perspectives and ideas. You may also encounter others who have had similar experiences. Many charities will be members of umbrella or membership bodies that can offer specialist help and advice. Check if your organisation is a member of one already and whether you should join others.

Support campaigns

One way leaders can demonstrate solidarity is by writing and signing collaborative joint letters to the government or by sharing public statements on social media. By taking courage to speak out, you may encourage other organisations to take similar action. If your organisation is a registered charity, ensure that your public statements do not promote a specific political party or candidate.

It's important to be proactive. Signing up to newsletters or email alerts from campaigning organisations can be a good way to find out about anti-racist and anti-hate activities. These provide updates on upcoming events, such as webinars or conferences, and actions that charities can take against racism and hate.

Embed and practice anti-racism

Trustees have a moral responsibility to go beyond words and actively commit their organisation to being anti-racist and anti-hate. And they need to ensure their charities have policies in place that promote equality and support people with protected characteristics.

Your charity can be anti-racist by using positive action provisions stipulated in the Equality Act 2010. These allow employers to treat any group with a certain protected characteristic more favourably to help overcome or reduce disadvantage. For example, you might fast-track opportunities to graduates or apprentices from racialised backgrounds who want to enter the charity sector.

Consider encouraging staff and volunteers to establish anti-racism and equity networks where members can raise issues and put them on the agenda. Similarly, anonymised surveys to gauge colleagues' experiences of racism could facilitate important conversations, and highlight where they have experienced racism, without making racialised staff feel put on the spot or at risk of harming their careers.

Charities should also listen to their service users experiences through anonymised surveys. Service delivery may perpetuate racist norms and behaviours. We are becoming more aware of the need to transform relationships between charities and those who use them. Involving the people that you serve in decision-making is one way to achieve that.

Use inclusive language

The language that charities use in their marketing, articles and blogs, policies, resources and services can both reflect and influence societal norms and dynamics. What we say and how we say it can either perpetuate or challenge structural forms of hate, including racism.

Inclusive language creates a respectful environment for both employees and people using charity services. Trustees should make sure that staff and volunteers are aware of where they can source inclusive language guidance, either internal or external. It might also be worth enshrining inclusive language in an equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) policy.

By increasing the use of inclusive language, the charity sector can influence how the rest of civil society uses language. How we talk about others is constantly evolving, so it is important to be an active part of the evolution.

Support human rights legislation

There are several organisations and campaign groups dedicated to protecting human rights both in the UK and internationally. One important organisation is the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), an independent statutory body responsible for promoting equality and diversity, eliminating unlawful discrimination, and protecting and advancing human rights across Britain. The EHRC has the authority to enforce the Equality Act 2010, conducts reviews of the UK's compliance with the Act every five years, and offers both guidance on the legislation and a whistleblowing service.

In addition to the EHRC, various campaigning organisations work to support and advocate for human rights and equality laws. These include initiatives like Amnesty's Save the Human Rights Act campaign and Just Fair, which works across the UK to achieve positive social change using human rights.

What funders can do to support change

- Integrate anti-racism into your organisation's strategy
- Consider providing additional funds for security to affected grantees
- Ringfence grants for activities and/or charities that support racialised people
- Fund work to diversify leadership and governance in charities
- Review bias in communications and grant-making practices
- Diversify leadership and decision-making roles internally

- Establish participatory decision-making and grant-making

Resources

Solidarity and campaigning for change

ACEVO

[An anti-racism companion journal](#)

[Creating a safe organisational culture - Leading-with-values](#)

Voice4Change

[Voice4Change HomeTruths2](#)

British Future

[Calling out hatred and prejudice](#)

Charity Comms

[Keeping up to date with inclusive language](#)

Directory of Social Change

[Language Guidance Sept 2024](#)

Gov.uk

[Positive action in the workplace](#)

Involve

[Community cohesion and participation - a practical framework](#)

Coalitions, networks and organisations

End Violence Against Women

[Members](#)

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

[Become a Member](#)

Funders for Race Equality Alliance

[Membership](#)

Muslim Women's Network UK

[Muslim Women Network](#)

Race on the Agenda (ROTA)

[ROTA membership](#)

Together with Refugees - win a fair plan for displaced people

[Campaign organising](#)

Asylum Matters

[About Asylum Matters](#)

British Future

[About us](#)

Equally Ours

[About us](#)

Hope not Hate

[About us](#)

Race Equality Foundation

[About us](#)

Right to Remain

[About Right to Remain](#)

The Runnymede Trust

[About us](#)

Voluntary and Community Sector Emergency Partnership

[Riots to resilience: five ways to turn lessons into action](#)

BEMIS Scotland

[About us](#)

Race Council Cymru

[About us](#)

About Directory of Social Change

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) is a charity that exists to help make other charities stronger, creating an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change. We help over 35,000 charities a year to be the best organisations they can be.

We've been providing information, support and training to our beneficiaries for over 50 years, helping them with their governance, fundraising, management, leadership and many other critical organisational skills.

In terms of the difference we make, 90% of the charities we help say the support they got from us helped them to carry out their role better, 88% say we've helped make their organisation stronger, and 97% of them rate the help we've given them as good or excellent (April July 2023).

Over 50 years of making charities stronger

From September 2025 to March 2026, DSC is marking over 50 years of making charities stronger. Throughout the last 50 years our purpose has remained clear: to help charities become stronger, so they can make the biggest possible difference in the world around them.

More information about DSC

www.dsc.org.uk

Our vision is of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change.

Our independent status and well-respected research mean we can challenge and create debate around government policy, trust funding and other issues which threaten the independence of charities.

Our mission is to be an agent connecting givers, influencers and service deliverers
We believe that the activities of voluntary and community organisations are crucial, both to the causes they serve and the social environment in which they operate.