

## **Template for residents to write to local councillors to raise concerns about the rise of hate in relation to people seeking asylum in our communities.**

### **How to use this template and how to email councillors - can take 5 mins max**

If you live in Cumbria you are either in Westmorland and Furness or Cumberland local authorities.

For W&F you can find your councillor/s by putting in your postcode on this link <https://westmorlandandfurness.moderngov.co.uk/mgFindMember.aspx?XXR=0&AC=WARD&WID=13169&sPC=Enter%20postcode>

For Cumberland, the link is here, though you need to select your ward <https://cumberland.moderngov.co.uk/mgFindMember.aspx>

If you are unsure which you are in, put in your postcode to the government site here and it will direct you <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors>

If you live outside Cumbria, then use the gov.uk link above to find your councillor/s.

- 1) Get the email address for your councillor which you will easily find via your council link above (when you click on the councillor name, it will show you their political party and correspondence address). It is useful to know which party they belong to, to help you anticipate their position on this matter. Some people have more than one councillor, write to all your councillors.
- 2) Send an email in your own words, or by using or adapting the template below.
- 3) Make it clear if you would like any action taken or would like a response. Councillors should respond to residents who email them. If you do not get a response, it is reasonable to chase them up after a couple of weeks.
- 4) It can sometimes feel that writing to MPs or councillors is a waste of time, but it is your right to hold them to account, and they should respond to you. When politicians receive a fair amount of mail on a particular issue, it does often combine to produce action. It is worth doing.

### **How to use this template to email your MP.**

If you don't already know your MP, you can find out here

<https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP> - their contact will come up. Or you can Google 'how to contact Neil Hudson' etc. if you already know the name.

The template below can be adapted, but we have done that for you if you scroll down.

## **Suggested template to write to Cumbria councillors (please adapt if you want to write to your councillor outside Cumbria)**

Dear Councillor XXXXX,

I am a resident in your ward (feel free if you want to say you voted for the councillor in the last election, that always gets things off to a good start!) and am writing to you to voice my concerns about the outpouring of hate and unsubstantiated accusations that we are seeing in relation to some people's responses to those who are seeking asylum in the UK. I am asking for actions from you in relation to these worrying divisions taking root.

There is a high level of scaremongering and scapegoating which is leading to serious community tensions. For example, on the Facebook page 'Save Our Streets CA', there is a recent post (1 Sept) showing the far right Patriotic Alternative leader speaking. The post of 22 August asks people to report 'recent incidents' in the city and there are photos and unsubstantiated allegations of perceived threats of crime. You will be aware this group organised a march on 4 Feb 2023 from Carlisle city centre to protest at the Hilltop Hotel. There are calls on the Facebook page for another march soon. (clearly this is specific to Carlisle, but can be used as an example for Cumbria more widely if you do not have a more local one)

Across the world, far right parties are seeing some electoral success. We need to learn from 20th century history that the tide of hate needs to be stopped. Vulnerable people should not be scapegoats for problems within our societies caused by wider socio-economic issues such as austerity/ the Cost of Living crisis, the housing crisis, international conflict.

History teaches us that we need our elected representatives (and other figureheads in our communities) to speak out against hate and division.

If councillors in Cumbria speak out as a force for good, and model understanding and tolerance, that will send an important message to people.

**Please would you consider taking the following actions and to use your platform to calm tensions in communities by talking about facts and not myths regarding people seeking asylum** - here is link to some resources that may be helpful

[https://www.cityofsanctuary.org/files/ne\\_mythbuster.pdf](https://www.cityofsanctuary.org/files/ne_mythbuster.pdf)

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/>

Here are some local organisations who can also provide support and information to you, and which will work with you to take these actions if that is helpful

### **Suggested actions for councillors in Cumbria**

- Write a press release or contact the local paper to give your views and to speak out
- Hold a residents' meeting to discuss these issues (see organisations above who can support)

- Speak with your political group in council to find out what the council's understanding of the issue is and to join forces and consider steps forward e.g. shaping policy; bringing a motion to council; making a speech in council.
- Particularly if your ward is in an area where community tensions are high, be proactive in speaking to your PCSOs to learn if they are aware of any incidents and talk about ways you can support the community in responding
- If residents raise concerns about this issue in your surgeries, take their concerns seriously, but seek to provide them with factual information. Follow up on any concerns raised. Talk with other councillors and your group office to see if there are 'hotspots' of tension.
- Ask your political group office and/or your council officers to seek out training for all councillors and council staff on how we can respond to the far right (**suggested contacts?**)
- Widen your own knowledge base through reading around this issue - **suggested resources**
- If you become aware of far right activity locally, report this to the council, and seek ways to challenge if appropriate e.g. the openly fascist group New British Union met earlier this year at a Cumbrian village hall. Even if people only learned about this after the event, this should be widely condemned. Nobody wants to see people wearing actual blackshirts and Nazi uniforms meeting in one of our village halls, and openly drinking in a local pub.
- When you are campaigning for future elections, if this issue comes up from residents, seek out information from the sources given above to equip you with facts to counter the myths.

When we look back on 20th century history, we all like to think we would have been one of the people who spoke out against the horrors. We need our elected representatives now to lead the way in showing that hate and division are not welcome in the UK in 2023. People may have legitimate concerns about the cost of living, crime, housing, support for veterans and many other issues, but blaming those in the most need is not the way to go about addressing those problems.

You may have other suggested actions of your own, which it would be great to hear about. Please let me know what actions you intend to take on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

### **Suggested template to write to MPs**

Dear **name**,

I am a resident in your constituency (**feel free if you want to say you voted for the MP in the last election, that always gets things off to a good start!**) and am writing to you to voice my concerns about the outpouring of hate and unsubstantiated accusations that we are seeing in relation to some people's responses to those who are seeking asylum in the UK. I am asking for actions from you in relation to these worrying divisions taking root.

There is a high level of scaremongering and scapegoating which is leading to serious community tensions. For example, on the Facebook page (Save Our Streets CA), there is a recent post (1 Sept) of the far right Patriotic Alternative leader. The post of 22 August asks people to report 'recent incidents' in the city and there are photos and unsubstantiated allegations of perceived threats of crime. You will be aware this group organised a march on 4 Feb 2023 from Carlisle city centre to protest at the Hilltop Hotel. There are calls on the Facebook page for another march soon. (clearly this is specific to Carlisle, but can be used as an example for Cumbria more widely if you do not have a more local one)

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### **Suggested actions for councillors in Cumbria**

- Write a press release or contact the local paper to give your views and to speak out
- Hold a residents' meeting to discuss these issues (see organisations above who can support)
- Particularly if your constituency includes area wheres community tensions are high, be proactive in speaking to the police, PCSOs, the local authority to learn if they are aware of any incidents and talk about ways you can support the community in responding
- If residents raise concerns about this issue in your surgeries, take their concerns seriously, but seek to provide them with factual information. Follow up on any concerns raised.
- Ask your political group office to seek out training on how we can respond to the far right (suggested contacts?)
- Widen your own knowledge base through reading around this issue - suggested resources
- If you become aware of far right activity locally, report this, speak out against it, and seek ways to challenge if appropriate e.g. the openly fascist group New British Union met earlier this year at a Cumbrian village hall. Even if people only learned about this

after the event, this should be widely condemned. Nobody wants to see people wearing actual blackshirts and Nazi uniforms meeting in one of our village halls, and openly drinking in a local pub.

- When you are campaigning for future elections, if this issue comes up from residents, seek out information from the sources given above to equip you with facts to counter the myths.

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