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# **But what can I do?**

**Beating Reform in your community**

Mark Rusling, March 2026

With a foreword by David Blunkett

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# Foreword

David Blunkett, Lord Blunkett of Brightside and Hillsborough

We are in the fight of our lives. Communities that have returned Labour MPs and councillors for decades are disillusioned to the point where they are being tempted by the far right. This is a fight that we have to win.

We have to win it for the types of communities I grew up in, and represented, in north Sheffield. The hardworking families; the men and women with a work ethic – often with craft skills – have experienced frozen living standards and deteriorating public services, through the coalition and Tory governments through to 2024. Solidarity and community have been eroded, firstly by Thatcher’s government and then by the acceleration of globalisation.

The government I was proud to serve in for eight years responded with unprecedented investment in public services, including building new social housing, refurbishing existing homes, the NHS, and schools. The improvements that resulted – including drastically reduced NHS waiting times – were the consequence of choices by the same Labour government that brought in the national minimum wage and opened up opportunity through apprenticeships and universities for young people. This was practical action, demonstrating how mutuality and reciprocity can work in practice, making real the commitment to our values of greater equality and social justice.

But the last two decades – which saw deep divisions left by the referendum on EU membership, the debilitating impact and aftermath of Covid, and above all, the years of austerity – have dealt a tremendous blow to confidence in democratic politics.

In 2026, working communities are again searching for stability, and too many are tempted by Reform UK’s superficially plausible solutions to deep-rooted problems. Nigel Farage has identified grievance, disillusionment and resentment, and has built a platform shaped by the pretence that “they” can offer immediate solutions and the illusion of instant change.

Over the last 18 months, this Labour government has, once again, begun the task of building homes for the future, reducing those waiting lists,

introducing employment rights for workers so often exploited, and investing in education. While individuals alone cannot stem the tide of support for Reform UK, a Labour government demonstrating competence, coherence and connectivity can go a long way to refuting the nonsense that “Britain is broken”.

Every Labour representative understands the gravity of the threat we face. But Labour and trade union members also have a pivotal role to play. If the threat of Nigel Farage running our country doesn’t rouse us to action, what will?

That is why I welcome this guide, and I have been very happy to make my contribution. Mark Rusling represents Shiregreen and Brightside, a city council ward in my old constituency, next to where I grew up. These communities are at the heart of Labour’s struggle against Reform and its false promises.

The guide’s practical suggestions can be taken up by any Labour or trade union member. They have all been tested by some of the best campaigners in the Labour movement. They worked for them, and they’ll work for you!

I wish you all the very best in your campaigns. The fight against Reform is the most important political struggle that most of us will ever face. It is a battle that we, our communities, and our country cannot afford to lose.

*David Blunkett*

# Introduction: What is this pamphlet for?

For over a year now, Reform UK has been riding high in the opinion polls. But the waves they are surfing have been building for much longer. Like all far-right parties, Reform benefits from (and therefore encourages) a sense of decline – a feeling that things have been going wrong for too long – and that mainstream parties are responsible.

We cannot deny the difficult moment our country finds itself in. We see it in our own families: a third of Brits born in 1980 (as I was) are poorer than our parents. We see it, too, in our streets and communities: the ward I represent in North Sheffield used to have over 10 pubs; now it has one.

Reform feeds off these anxieties, telling us that we are helpless, and that those of us in Labour are useless. The current system cannot make anything better, so it must be smashed up. Reform leaders, in other words, have a deeply pessimistic worldview. On the left, we must continue to reject this pessimism – we can make things better! And in contrast to Reform's leader-worship, we will do it together.

Our socialism is practical – nobody should have to worry about turning on the heating, getting ill or being robbed. Everybody should be able to look forward to their children doing better than they have done. And everybody should be able to enjoy a holiday, go to the theatre, or watch the football. This message is hopeful, optimistic – perhaps even joyful.

This booklet is a contribution to our fightback. It is aimed at ordinary Labour and trade union members who want to keep Reform and the far right out of our communities. Because these *are* our communities – just as the St George's cross and the union jack are our flags. We will cede none of them to the far right.

The approaches in this booklet have been suggested by experts in fighting the far right – Campaign Lab and the Co-operative party. They are intended to be practical solutions to real problems, and we hope that many readers will have tried many of them already. Of course, nothing will work all the time, or in every place – but everything here has worked somewhere. Choose the section which most closely reflects your situation

and follow the suggestions. Some of the suggestions are repeated, as they are relevant to anybody fighting Reform; there is no need to read them twice.

I want to thank Hannah O'Rourke, Noam Herberg and Gareth Dowling for all their help in putting this together. I am also very grateful for the generous support provided by my own trade union, Community, and by David Blunkett. We all hope you find these ideas useful.

Good luck!

*Mark Rusling*

# Why are Reform UK so dangerous?

Reform is bad for everyone:

1. When you elect a Reform MP or councillor, past experience suggests you might not have one for long. Two of the five MPs elected in July 2024 have since left the party. A full 45 councillors elected in 2025 have been kicked out, defected, suspended or resigned.
2. Reform politicians have a history of support for authoritarian leaders. Their former leader in Wales has been jailed for 10 years for taking bribes from Russia. Nigel Farage once said that Vladimir Putin was his “most admired” foreign leader. And, unlike most Brits, Reform often expresses support for Donald Trump, who calls Farage “a prophetic leader”.
3. Their economic policy is simple – slash public spending and use it to fund tax cuts for the super rich. The beneficiaries would be their own donors, including hedge fund managers and crypto-currency magnates.
4. The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies said that their policies “would almost certainly require substantial cuts to the quantity or quality of public services”. This includes the NHS, which – whatever their manifesto says – they want to end in its current form, based on past comments by senior figures.
5. They have let some deeply unsavoury characters represent them – including an MP who had previously been imprisoned for beating up his ex-girlfriend, and a council leader who was expelled from the party following allegations he racially abused politicians.
6. Their immigration policies – which I would characterise as racist – would deport hundreds of thousands of people who have been in the UK for years.
7. Only 1 in 5 of their councillors, and two of their eight MPs, are women.
8. They want to scrap clean energy projects and allow fracking, putting nearly a million British jobs at risk.
9. They want to scrap the Employment Rights Act, removing rights to paternity and sickness pay and bringing back zero hours contracts and fire and rehire.

10. There is more! Add your own reason here:

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# What does a local Reform campaign look like?

Reform are assembling a new coalition on the right, including a substantial minority of voters who have voted Labour in the past. This coalition will look different in different parts of the country, but the 2025 Reform campaign for the Doncaster mayoralty provides a guide.

In 2025, Reform nearly won in Doncaster. Labour's Ros Jones received 23,805 votes, just 698 ahead of Reform. According to my own analysis, the Reform vote was divided into four groups:

- i. around 2/5 were new voters;
- ii. around 1/5 were ex-Labour voters;
- iii. around 1/5 were ex-Tory voters;
- iv. around 1/5 were voters who had previously voted for other far-right parties.

From experience in Yorkshire, a typical local Reform election campaign adopts this approach:

1. A quick announcement of the candidate, typically with an A5 leaflet containing very little information. There may be little evidence of a ground campaign at this stage.
2. They may rebrand their social media channels as seemingly-neutral news outlets. In Sheffield, the local Reform Facebook page became 'Steel City News'. This gives them an echo chamber, as well as luring in some non-Reform supporters. It provides an opportunity to highlight "local people fed up with mainstream politics". Other parties' content is shared into these groups, allowing local people to watch other parties' candidates and supporters get piled on by Reform activists.
3. Before postal votes drop, there may be another leaflet announcing the candidate. This will be very mild and non-controversial, emphasising local roots and policies. Any policy announcements at this stage will be vague and non-committal. Online messages will mirror this careful and

local approach, generally avoiding an explicit focus on immigration or cultural issues. They attempt to present a reasonable, calm approach to wavering postal voters.

4. After most postal voters have returned their ballots, the message hardens, particularly online, with a focus on immigration to turn out a narrower base of voters on election day. This may also be accompanied with a further leaflet setting out a clearer set of policies.
5. In Sheffield, Reform have led with seven 'pledges': (i) bring in Doge (a local government efficiency team, modelled on the chaotic work of Elon Musk in the US); (ii) zero tolerance on crime; (iii) end the woke agenda; (iv) scrap the clean-air zone; (v) fix the potholes; (vi) social housing for local people; and (vii) protect our countryside.
6. On election day, large numbers of volunteers will be highly visible, particularly around polling stations. They will be wearing Reform-branded clothing and rosettes and may have cars driving around with Reform placards and flags.

# Whom are we targeting?

We have to be clear about which voters may be receptive to Labour at this stage. We should assume that voters who chose Reform in 2024 will have remained with Reform for now.

We will certainly want to appeal to many of them in the medium-term, although some of these voters may not be attracted by any left wing party. Nearly 20 per cent say that the summer 2024 rioters were not responsible for their actions<sup>1</sup>; it is difficult to conceive of a Labour message which could appeal to these voters and plausibly come from a progressive party.

Instead, for now, our focus should be on two groups:

- i. Keeping Labour's 2024 coalition.
- ii. Growing that coalition with three groups who are motivated by keeping Reform out of power, locally and nationally:
  - a. Previous Lib Dem, Green and Tory voters who are motivated more by keeping out Reform than by dislike of Labour or support for their previous parties.
  - b. Previous non-voters who are motivated by dislike of Reform.
  - c. New voters who have come of age since the 2024 general election (remembering that 16 year-olds will soon be able to vote).

To attract these new voters, we need to be visible in our communities, showing that we are the local alternative to Reform, and therefore not a wasted vote.

Retaining the Labour coalition will mean appealing to Reform-curious voters who voted Labour in 2024. These voters differ from their more convinced peers who voted Reform in 2024. In some ways, this offers Labour a chance to appeal to them:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://redfieldandwiltonstrategies.com/reform-voters-view-recent-riots-and-protests-differently-than-general-public/#:~:text=Voters%20generally%20disapprove%20of%20the,20%25%20among%20the%20general%20public>

- i. They tend to be younger, and are more likely to be in social rented housing, than Reform's 2024 voters.
- ii. They are culturally conservative, but not in an intense way. Their social views mirror those of many of our traditional voters in the North and Midlands.
- iii. They are more likely to be economically left-wing. Over half of Reform-curious voters think that government should do more to redistribute wealth. They are particularly concerned about utility companies' failures to keep costs down and to protect the environment.

These may point towards a potential receptiveness to a Labour message. However, a note of caution: voters who chose Labour in 2024 and are now Reform-curious are the angriest of any voting group. They feel deeply and personally let down. If we cannot address that feeling, we will not convince them to vote for us.

# How do we beat them on the ground?

We have to start by genuinely wanting to listen to Reform-curious voters. On a recent podcast, a London-based commentator suggested that Labour faces a choice between its “natural supporters – graduates and ethnic minorities” or “white working class reactionaries”. This moral superiority is wrong and is patronising to voters of all ethnicities.

Every Reform voter is different, but we must understand why many see hope in Nigel Farage’s party:

1. Reform voters (especially those who voted Reform in 2024) are the most likely group to say that everything in Britain is getting worse and the least likely to feel that they can do anything about it.
2. They feel that contribution into the system has become out of sync: they contribute but get nothing back; others do not contribute but receive all the benefits.
3. They are convinced by a narrative of ‘decline-disorder-degeneracy’ which takes the following form: Britain used to be great – Farage is a master-manipulator of nostalgia – but has been in decline for years. This has created disorder on the streets of Britain. And this is all the fault of the degeneracy of the traditional parties – Labour and the Tories – who fail to recognise the problems that ‘real people’ face.
4. We cannot ignore the sense of excitement that Farage is able to create, especially among new voters.

To address these feelings, we have to be visible and optimistic:

1. We are the champions of people who rely on their wages and public services, and who play by the rules. Our values are your values.
2. We speak normally, dropping meaningless phrases like ‘going further and faster’ and ‘delivery’. Where something isn’t right, and voters are angry, we’re angry too.

3. We get things done and focus on the things that matter to local people. For most Reform-curious voters, that means the cost of living and public services.
4. We don't label Reform supporters as 'fascists'. However, we point out where Reform has failed, and where its focus on cultural issues like flags masks an inability to solve the problems that matter to voters.
5. We champion our communities – we live here; it's our community too. We want our community to succeed and understand the deep sense that our streets, parks and town centres are 'going downhill'. We don't instinctively defend the status quo.

The next four sections all follow the same pattern: practical solutions for social media, community and face-to-face activity which will raise Labour's local profile, and advice for holding local Reform representatives to account. Some advice is duplicated, so only read the section that is relevant to your situation.

# There is only me – help!

Even if you feel like you are on your own, there are still ways that you can spend a couple of hours each week fighting Reform in your community.

## Social media

The most effective uses of social media come from engaging in local online forums such as Facebook community groups and Nextdoor. Twitter/X, Instagram and TikTok are less useful forums. A few minutes spent online can reach hundreds of potential Reform voters, showing that Labour people are active and concerned about local issues, without being overtly party-political.

- Start by mapping your local groups using place names, estates, landmarks, and community identities rather than ward boundaries. Join those groups as a local resident.
- Before posting, spend time listening: what issues keep coming up? What do people think about the local council and MP? Are politics discussed openly? What tone do people use?
- Campaign Lab's research shows that local news stories are shared around five times more often than national political news in neighbourhood Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Make your posts hyper-local, focussed on sharing local news: everyday issues, local pride, and practical concerns rather than party-political broadcasting. Highlight successes where they are obviously about recognisable places, services or decisions.

## Community activity

Community groups play a key role in effective campaigning and are often targeted by Reform. Residents involved in community groups are disproportionately likely to be involved in other civic activity. Community engagement also provides an excellent opportunity to listen to other local residents.

- Identify the most active groups in your local area: religious groups, charities with volunteering components such as food banks, residents' associations, friends of local parks, sports clubs. Start with groups that are not already politicised.
- This tool can help you identify local groups: <https://campaign-lab-constituency-explorer.c6digital.dev/>

- Attend community events and get to know the key residents and organisers. Start by listening to get a sense of the community, and don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and help out if you can. It is through ongoing engagement that you'll build a relationship with organisers. Don't focus on national politics – instead, prioritise local issues.
- As a single activist, it's better to spend time getting to know a small number of groups than flitting through lots of communities.
- If volunteers are interested in working with you, invite them to join you in Labour activity. Soon you'll start building a team!

### **Face-to-face activity**

As a single activist, you're unlikely to be knocking on doors in your community. However, you can still speak to your neighbours, friends and family about the threat Reform poses to your community.

Research from the US has found that people are 20-30 per cent more likely to take political action when asked by someone they know. Reform knows this: evidence from the 2024 general election shows that Reform supporters were significantly more willing than Labour supporters to advocate to their friends and family.

- When starting a conversation, start with the concerns shared by your friend or family member – not with your own concerns. These are more likely to be local issues than national politics.
- Where appropriate, use the talking points on page 7 to discuss the danger posed by Reform. Try to link these to things happening in your community.
- If your friend or neighbour agrees with your concerns about Reform, ask them to speak to their own friends and family about it.

### **Holding local Reform officials to account**

If you have local Reform representatives, you can use social media and face-to-face conversations (and possibly conversations in community groups) to hold them to account.

Reform's electoral appeal rests heavily on presenting themselves as outsiders and disruptors in a political system that many voters distrust. That image quickly collapses when their incompetence, hypocrisy and poor performance is exposed.

- Look at local Reform candidates or councillors, checking for patterns such as embarrassing or deleted tweets or posts, controversial

statements, poor attendance records, or dubious claims. Before using any material, always check the full context and think carefully about how it will land with undecided voters. What feels shocking to activists won't always persuade less politically-committed residents.

- If you have local Reform councillors or candidates, email a question to them. If they do not reply, post this in local Facebook groups, asking how committed they are to the community and to accountability.
- If Reform isn't standing locally or candidates are hard to pin down, look at neighbouring wards or councils and draw comparisons that highlight risks, incompetence, or recurring behaviour. Be local and specific in what you are saying.
- If you are happy to do it, write a letter to your local newspaper as a local resident, highlighting a local issue. Post your letter on local Facebook groups when it is published.
- Here are some tools to help with your research:
  - WardWatch (<https://wardwatch.uk/>): AI-powered reports analysing councillor activity, attendance and council records.
  - Council Attendance Tracker (<https://councillor-attendance-tracker.vercel.app/>): tracks attendance patterns for elected councillors, highlighting absenteeism and neglect of duties.
  - Reform Exposed (<https://campaignlab.uk/project/reform-exposed-near-me/>): searchable database of reported controversies involving Reform councillors, compiled from the @ReformExposed account on X.
  - Reform Watch (<https://www.reformwatch.org/>): dedicated platform tracking far-right political actors across every level of government.

# **I have a small group, little money and no local elected Labour officials. Surely there isn't anything we can do?**

## **Social media**

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- If you are looking to raise awareness of local Labour candidates, make your first posts simple, human, and varied. Start with a relaxed introduction explaining who you are and asking what issues matter locally. Share a photo of something in the area (parks, cafés, high streets) to build familiarity. Ask genuine questions for recommendations or opinions. Use a "listen, act, communicate" loop by

responding to concerns with visible action (like reporting fly tipping to the council) and then sharing the result.

### **Community activity**

Community groups play a key role in effective campaigning and are often targeted by Reform. Residents involved in community groups are disproportionately likely to be involved in other civic activity. Community engagement also provides an excellent opportunity to listen to other local residents.

- Identify the most active groups in your local area: religious groups, charities with volunteering components such as food banks, residents' associations, friends of local parks, sports clubs. Start with groups that are not already politicised.
- This tool can help you identify local groups: <https://campaign-lab-constituency-explorer.c6digital.dev/>
- Attend community events and get to know the key residents and organisers. Start by listening to get a sense of the community and don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and help out if you can. It's through ongoing engagement that you'll build a relationship with organisers. Don't focus on national politics – instead, prioritise local issues.
- It's best not to all focus on the same group, since you can cover more ground if you join different groups. Trusted members of community groups who happen also to be Labour members can then introduce Labour candidates to other group members.
- If volunteers are interested in working with you, invite them to join you in Labour activity. Soon your small team will grow!

### **Face-to-face activity**

- Start by having conversations with neighbours, friends and family. Research from the US has found that people are 20-30 per cent more likely to take political action when asked by someone they know. Reform knows this: evidence from the 2024 general election shows that Reform supporters were significantly more willing than Labour supporters to advocate to friends and family.
- With a small team, you can also start to engage residents on the doorstep. Initially, identify streets where people might be most sympathetic. Engage residents with hyperlocal issues and try to identify key problems in each area. The most effective conversations begin by finding quick common ground (the area, a shared experience, even the weather) and then asking open questions that invite people to

talk about how things feel for them. Listening without judgement, acknowledging emotions (such as frustration, worry, or anger) and reflecting back what you've heard helps people feel understood. This is particularly important for residents who may not previously have spoken to a Labour representative.

- When you have identified an issue, post about it in local Facebook community groups and write a letter to the local newspaper. Invite your local councillors and MP to meet with your group. If possible, publicise this meeting and invite other concerned residents. Do not be confrontational in this meeting – the important thing is to show your concern and to get the issue fixed.
- Every door has a potential future activist, so don't be afraid to ask people to help you campaign if you have a really positive interaction. Try to sign supporters up to postal votes (turnout is far higher among postal voters than among those who vote on the day).

### **Holding local Reform officials to account**

If you have local Reform representatives, you can use social media and face-to-face conversations (and possibly conversations in community groups) to hold them to account.

Reform's electoral appeal rests heavily on presenting themselves as outsiders and disruptors in a political system that many voters distrust. That image quickly collapses when their incompetence, hypocrisy and poor performance is exposed.

- Look at local Reform candidates or councillors, checking for patterns such as embarrassing or deleted tweets or posts, controversial statements, poor attendance records, or dubious claims. Before using any material, always check the full context and think carefully about how it will land with undecided voters. What feels shocking to activists won't always persuade less politically-committed residents.
- If you have local Reform councillors or candidates, email a question to them. If they do not reply, post this in local Facebook groups, asking how committed they are to the community and to accountability.
- If Reform isn't standing locally or candidates are hard to pin down, look at neighbouring wards or councils and draw comparisons that highlight risks, incompetence, or recurring behaviour. Be local and specific in what you are saying.
- If you are happy to do it, write a letter to your local newspaper as a local resident, highlighting a local issue. Post your letter on local Facebook groups when it is published.

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# **I have a small group, some money and at least one local elected Labour official. What can we do?**

## **Social media**

The most effective uses of social media come from engaging in local online forums such as Facebook community groups and Nextdoor. Twitter/X, Instagram and TikTok are less useful forums.

A few minutes spent online can reach hundreds of potential Reform voters, showing that Labour people are active and concerned about local issues, without being overtly party-political. Messages from local residents who happen to be Labour members are more likely to be believed than similar messages from Labour representatives.

- Start by mapping your local groups using place names, estates, landmarks, and community identities rather than ward boundaries. Join those groups as a local resident.
- Before posting, spend time listening: what issues keep coming up? What do people think about the local council and MP? Are politics discussed openly? What tone do people use?
- Campaign Lab's research shows that local news stories are shared around five times more often than national political news in neighbourhood Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Make your posts hyperlocal, focussed on sharing local news: everyday issues, local pride, and practical concerns rather than party-political broadcasting. Highlight successes where they are obviously about recognisable places, services, or decisions.
- Host a Facebook survey focusing on your area's strengths. Questions like: Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to our area? What places or people in our community deserve more recognition? What's one small change that could make a big difference in our community? Take respondents' contact details and follow up with them.

- If you are looking to raise awareness of local Labour candidates, make your first posts simple, human, and varied. Start with a relaxed introduction explaining who you are and asking what issues matter locally. Share a photo of something in the area (parks, cafés, high streets) to build familiarity. Ask genuine questions for recommendations or opinions. Use a “listen, act, communicate” loop by responding to concerns with visible action (like reporting fly tipping to the council) and then sharing the result.
- Mix in local news, whether that’s challenging opponents’ decisions or highlighting positive developments led by Labour. Connect Labour actions and decisions to improvements in people’s day-to-day lives.
- Encourage trusted local activists to post positively about Labour work: hearing good things from others is often more powerful than saying it yourself. Encourage Labour activists to like and comment on each other's posts to boost engagement and create a sense of organic support for content. You could set up a WhatsApp group to alert members when there is a new post.
- Facebook ads are a cheap way of reaching hundreds of residents and obtaining the contact details of potential supporters. Campaign Lab’s research shows that people are far more likely to respond when they can act without leaving the platform they are already using. Ads work best when they are hyperlocal (using recognisable local images and issues) and paired with a simple, low-friction ask.

### **Community activity**

Community groups play a key role in effective campaigning and are often targeted by Reform. Residents involved in community groups are disproportionately likely to be involved in other civic activity. Community engagement also provides an excellent opportunity to listen to other local residents.

- Identify the most active groups in your local area: religious groups, charities with volunteering components such as food banks, residents’ associations, friends of local parks, sports clubs. Start with groups that are not already politicised.
- This tool can help you identify local groups: <https://campaign-lab-constituency-explorer.c6digital.dev/>
- Attend community events and get to know the key residents and organisers. Start by listening to get a sense of the community and don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and help out if you can. It’s through ongoing engagement that you’ll build a relationship with organisers. Don’t focus on national politics – instead, prioritise local issues. It's

best not to all focus on the same group, since you can cover more ground if you join different groups.

- Publicise every community visit undertaken by Labour representatives through Facebook community groups. Ask the groups themselves to post about a visit (this is more likely to be seen positively by residents).
- Trusted members of community groups who happen also to be Labour members can then introduce Labour candidates to other group members.
- If volunteers are interested in working with you, invite them to join you in Labour activity. Soon your team will grow!

### **Face-to-face activity**

With a larger group, you should be engaging residents on the doorstep, including in areas which may have larger numbers of Reform supporters.

- Tailor conversations to your situation. Longer, more involved conversations which prioritise listening to residents can be more persuasive, but if you don't have a lot of data, it will make it harder to get out the vote on polling day.
- When you have identified a local issue, post about it in local Facebook community groups and write a letter to the local newspaper. Invite your local councillors and MP to meet with your group. If possible, publicise this meeting and invite other concerned residents. Do not be confrontational in this meeting – the important thing is to show your concern and to get the issue fixed.
- Pass on local issues to Labour councillors to allow them to deliver casework wins and follow up on successes through doorstep conversations. Use a “listen, act, communicate” loop by responding to concerns with visible action and then sharing the result. Consider using hyper-local tailored leaflets or direct mail letters about an issue in a particular street.
- Every door has a potential future activist, so don't be afraid to ask people to help you campaign if you have a really positive interaction. Try to sign supporters up to postal votes (turnout is far higher among postal voters than among those who vote on the day).
- Simple reminder texts sent close to polling day have been shown to increase turnout, particularly among people who have already engaged once. Text reminders work best when they are short, framed as a reminder rather than persuasion, and sent by a trusted source. Whenever someone signs a petition, responds to a survey, attends a local event or raises an issue, respectfully ask for their phone number.

- Campaign Lab’s election experiments suggest the following guidelines for print materials:
  - Voters respond more strongly to local messengers than to national figures. Messages attacking or praising national politicians and policies have little impact.
  - Messages framed around personal connections to the local area, how long you’ve lived there and what you contribute are better received than messages framed in overtly political language.
  - People are far more likely to engage with issues they can physically recognise in their immediate communities (a specific street, crossing, school gate, park, or local service) than with abstract or national debates. When people can point to the problem and see what changed, they are more likely to listen, engage and respond.
  - Simply putting a local spin on national issues does not work. Hyperlocal campaigning only works when the issue is concrete, visible and directly connected to a specific place that people recognise in their immediate locality.
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# **I have a larger group, a functioning local Labour party and local elected Labour officials. (Well, what's stopping you?!)**

## **Social media**

The most effective uses of social media come from engaging in local online forums such as Facebook community groups and Nextdoor. Twitter/X, Instagram and TikTok are less useful forums.

A few minutes spent online can reach hundreds of potential Reform voters, showing that Labour people are active and concerned about local issues, without being overtly party-political. Messages from local residents who happen to be Labour members are more likely to be believed than similar messages from Labour representatives.

- Start by mapping your local groups using place names, estates, landmarks, and community identities rather than ward boundaries. Join those groups as a local resident.
- Before posting, spend time listening: what issues keep coming up? What do people think about the local council and MP? Are politics discussed openly? What tone do people use?
- Campaign Lab's research shows that local news stories are shared around five times more often than national political news in neighbourhood Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Make your posts hyperlocal, focussed on sharing local news: everyday issues, local pride, and practical concerns rather than party-political broadcasting. Highlight successes where they are obviously about recognisable places, services or decisions.
- Host a Facebook survey focusing on your area's strengths. Questions like: Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to our area? What places or people in our community deserve more recognition? What's one

small change that could make a big difference in our community? Take respondents' contact details and follow up with them.

- If you are looking to raise awareness of local Labour candidates, make your first posts simple, human and varied. Start with a relaxed introduction explaining who you are and asking what issues matter locally. Share a photo of something in the area (parks, cafés, high streets) to build familiarity. Ask genuine questions for recommendations or opinions. Use a “listen, act, communicate” loop by responding to concerns with visible action (like reporting fly tipping to the council) and then sharing the result.
- Mix in local news, whether that's challenging opponents' decisions or highlighting positive developments led by Labour. Connect Labour actions and decisions to improvements in people's day-to-day lives.
- Encourage trusted local activists to post positively about Labour work: hearing good things from others is often more powerful than saying it yourself. Encourage Labour activists to like and comment on each other's posts to boost engagement and create a sense of organic support for content. You could set up a WhatsApp group to alert members when there is a new post.
- Where you can, reply to comments on your posts which are not abusive, even if they are critical. This will drive more engagement and will show non-committed residents that you are listening to feedback.
- Facebook ads are a cheap way of reaching hundreds of residents and obtaining contact details. Campaign Lab's research shows that people are far more likely to respond when they can act without leaving the platform they are already using. Ads work best when they are hyperlocal (using recognisable local images and issues) and paired with a simple, low-friction ask.
- It's important to carefully consider who the appropriate messenger for a post might be. Elected Labour representatives will be more official and it's important to drive their recognition. However, their messaging can come across as transactional, which can lower trust, so some messages should come from local Labour-supporting residents.

### **Community activity**

Community groups play a key role in effective campaigning and are often targeted by Reform. Residents involved in community groups are disproportionately likely to be involved in other civic activity. Community engagement also provides an excellent opportunity to listen to other local residents.

- Identify the most active groups in your local area: religious groups, charities with volunteering components such as food banks, residents' associations, friends of local parks, sports clubs. Start with groups that are not already politicised.
- This tool can help you identify local groups: <https://campaign-lab-constituency-explorer.c6digital.dev/>
- Attend community events and get to know the key residents and organisers. Start by listening to get a sense of the community and don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and help out if you can. It's through ongoing engagement that you'll build a relationship with organisers. Don't focus on national politics – instead, prioritise local issues. It's best not to all focus on the same group, since you can cover more ground if you join different groups.
- Publicise every community visit undertaken by Labour representatives through Facebook community groups. Ask the groups themselves to post about a visit (this is more likely to be seen positively by residents).
- Work out if there is anything your representatives can do to support community groups. Are there small funding pots that you could apply for on their behalf?
- Trusted members of community groups who happen also to be Labour members can then introduce Labour candidates to other group members.
- If volunteers are interested in working with you, invite them to join you in Labour activity. Soon your team will grow!
- The English devolution & community empowerment bill will give community groups first right of refusal on listed 'assets of community value', enabling them to purchase assets without competition. The list of buildings which can be purchased by community groups includes shops, pubs, village halls, community centres, cultural venues, music venues, and more. Work with your council to identify and register buildings in your community.
- The Pride in Place funding programme will facilitate long-term regeneration of 250 places across the UK. For the most-deprived areas, this will mean receiving £20m in funding over the next decade. The programme's proposed interventions will focus on enabling communities to invest in and own local assets which may be disused or derelict, reviving both social spaces and green spaces. The Pride in Place plans will be developed by neighbourhood boards, composed of local people working with their MP, councillors and wider community. Work with your community groups to make sure they are represented on these boards.

## Face-to-face activity

You should be engaging residents on the doorstep across your ward or constituency.

- Tailor conversations to your situation. Longer, more involved, conversations which prioritise listening to residents can be more persuasive, but if you don't have a lot of data, it will make it harder to get out the vote on polling day.
- When you have identified a local issue, post about it in local Facebook community groups and write a letter to the local newspaper. Invite your local councillors and MP to meet with your group. Publicise this meeting and invite other concerned residents.
- Pass on local issues to Labour councillors to allow them to deliver casework wins and follow up on successes through doorstep conversations. Use a “listen, act, communicate” loop by responding to concerns with visible action and then sharing the result. Consider using hyperlocal tailored leaflets or direct mail letters about an issue in a particular street.
- Every door has a potential future activist, so don't be afraid to ask people to help you campaign if you have a really positive interaction. Try to sign supporters up to postal votes (turnout is far higher among postal voters than among those who vote on the day).
- Simple reminder texts sent close to polling day have been shown to increase turnout, particularly among people who have already engaged once. Text reminders work best when they are short, framed as a reminder rather than persuasion, and sent by a trusted source. Whenever someone signs a petition, responds to a survey, attends a local event, or raises an issue, respectfully ask for their phone number.
- Campaign Lab's election experiments suggest the following guidelines for print materials:
  - Voters respond more strongly to local messengers than to national figures. Messages attacking or praising national politicians and policies have little impact.
  - Messages framed around personal connections to the local area, how long you've lived there and what you contribute are better received than messages framed in overtly political language.
  - People are far more likely to engage with issues they can physically recognise in their immediate communities (a specific street, crossing, school gate, park, or local service) than with

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- If you are happy to do it, write a letter to your local newspaper as a local resident, highlighting a local issue. Post your letter on local Facebook groups when it is published.

- Be visual in your online posts – a photo of an empty seat when a Reform councillor has failed to attend a meeting is powerful.
- Here are some tools to help with your research:
  - WardWatch (<https://wardwatch.uk/>): AI-powered reports analysing councillor activity, attendance and council records.
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# **I am a councillor, CLP official or work in an MP's office – how can I organise other activists to beat Reform?**

First, make sure that your activists have a copy of this guide! You could then signpost them to the following resources:

- Campaign Lab Library contains tools, training and academic research on campaigning that is tailored to help progressives win: <https://campaignlab.uk/library/>
- Hope Not Hate are a movement researching and campaigning against the far right and standing up for stronger, more united communities: <https://hopenothate.org.uk>
- The Co-operative Party are committed to building a society in which power and wealth are shared: <https://party.coop>
- Labour Learn is Labour's online training platform: <https://learn.labour.org.uk>

Also:

- Contact the local and regional branches of affiliated trade unions to ask them to support your fight.

- Set up a local WhatsApp group of activists who will share and comment on each other's online posts.
- Establish twinning arrangements. This will ensure that Reform-threatened areas with Labour councillors but small branches are supported by larger branches.
- Make sure your list of community endorsers is up to date. Is there somebody in each community who will independently and publicly support your work?
- Establish a 'Labour in the community' programme, in which Labour members volunteer in the community (painting community buildings, gardening in communal areas, litter picking etc).
- Make sure every local Reform elected representative is monitored for attendance at meetings and social media postings. You could use volunteers in your CLP to do this.
- Use MPs' platforms over the summer to highlight local heroes: people going out of their way to shape and support the community. This is a positive way to demonstrate the value of community leadership and raise the profile of local community groups.