

Standing Together

A rapid review based on conversations within racialised communities in Brighton and Hove

Thursday, 4th June 2026, 6-8pm

Hanover Room, Brighthelm, Brighton



Bridging Change Rapid Report

June 2026



Thanks to all the participants who gave their time, energy, passion and reflections on a wet and damp evening . . .



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Executive summary

This rapid review captures the voices of racialised communities in Brighton and Hove following an emergency Community Voices Group meeting held on 4 June 2026. Convened in response to planned far-right activity and a wider climate of anti-migrant and racist rhetoric, the meeting brought together 36 participants to discuss safety, wellbeing, solidarity and the actions needed from communities, Sussex Police and Brighton and Hove City Council.

- Participants described heightened fear, anger, anxiety and exhaustion, alongside a strong desire for collective action, care and solidarity.
- Communities called for visible, practical anti-racist action rather than statements alone, with clearer accountability for racism, hate incidents and harmful public narratives.
- There was strong emphasis on trusted, accessible reporting routes, including third-party and anonymous options, better follow-up, and support for people who face language, trust or confidence barriers.
- Participants wanted fair, visible and community-based policing, including reassurance during high-risk periods, community liaison, regular dialogue and transparent use of data.
- This review highlights the need for community safety planning, public education, stronger local networks, community ambassadors, and visible expressions of solidarity, belonging and resilience.

Overall, the findings show that racialised communities are asking for a response that is serious, practical, transparent and rooted in lived experience. The issues raised span immediate safety, emotional wellbeing, institutional accountability, public education and long-term community power. Participants were clear that no single response will be sufficient: effective action must combine grassroots organising; statutory responsibility; trusted reporting systems; preventative safety measures and sustained partnership. The recommendations therefore focus on building a clear community safety and solidarity plan, strengthening reporting pathways, investing in trusted community connectors, making solidarity visible, developing rights-based communications, and ensuring Sussex Police and Brighton and Hove City Council act with both reassurance and accountability.



1.0 Rapid review of racialised community voices in Brighton and Hove

Bridging Change's rapid review is a structured snapshot of community experiences and concerns, drawing on group discussions and interviews to identify key themes quickly and clearly. This report is based on an emergency Community Voices Group meeting held on the Thursday, 4th June 2026, 6-8pm at Hanover Room, Brighthelm, with 36 attendees. The conversations related to the upcoming demonstration on Saturday, 13th of June 2026 from far-right groups and wider concerns about the current climate of casual anti-immigrant/refugee/those seeking asylum and/or racist views being normalised in the media and politics.

The meeting was introduced by the directors of Bridging Change, who delivered a brief context and scene-setting introduction, reiterating the importance of creating a space where racialised communities could speak freely and as openly as possible. The structure involved breaking into smaller groups to encourage wider participation.

This was followed by a conversational-style presentation from Brighton and Hove Racial Harassment Forum on the importance of reporting racial and religious harassment and racist incidents. Participants discussed the best place(s) to report incidents and shared their experiences of reporting.

Vibrant and helpful discussions followed, including conversations about positive and negative experiences of reporting racist incidents to Sussex Police and better ways to connect with the council. There was also some discussion about the process itself. Due to the limited time available, the meeting focused on the facilitated questions to enable all attendees to have an opportunity to speak, write and express themselves within smaller groups. The groups were asked specific questions, and this report is based predominantly on their responses.

Question 1: How are you feeling currently? How have recent anti-migrant and far-right marches affected your feelings and sense of wellbeing/safety?

Question 2: What small actions can support one another locally and strengthen solidarity, helping you and your family to feel safer during these difficult times?

Question 3: What would you like to see happen after today? (Also, consider what we can ask of Sussex Police and Brighton and Hove City Council.)

Across the five group discussions, community members identified a range of practical, relational and structural responses to racism, fear and community insecurity. Community



members spoke across a broad range of issues and concerns and explored solution-focused approaches.

2.0 Checking-in with racialised communities

Question 1: How are you feeling currently? How have recent anti-migrant and far-right marches affected your feelings and sense of wellbeing/safety?

The facilitated discussions highlighted a significant level of concern, distress and vigilance among participants in response to the current climate of racism and the increasing visibility of far-right activity. Contributions reflected feelings of anger, anxiety, exhaustion, isolation and uncertainty, with many participants describing a heightened sense of risk for themselves, their families and wider communities. There was a clear perception that the planned presence of far-right groups in Brighton and Hove, combined with the amplification of divisive and dehumanising rhetoric in national media and political discourse, was contributing to an environment in which racism felt increasingly normalised and threatening. The word cloud below reflects these sentiments.



The word cloud was created to display participants' own words. The graphic highlights their frequency or significance, with the most frequently used words appearing larger.

Participants' reflections indicated that these developments were having a tangible emotional and psychological impact on racialised communities in Brighton and Hove. Anger, fear and frustration, alongside a sense of being unheard, unwelcome and under sustained pressure, were significant. However, subsequent discussions also revealed a strong commitment to collective action, mutual support and solidarity.



Overall, the responses to the first question about how people were feeling demonstrated both the serious emotional toll of the current context and, as the subsequent questions revealed, the continued resilience of communities determined to challenge racism and protect one another.

3.0 Strengthening local communities: Solidarity as visible, active and collective

Question 2: What small actions can support one another locally and strengthen solidarity, helping you and your family to feel safer during these difficult times?

A prominent theme across the groups was the need for solidarity to be made visible through shared public action and intentional collective presence. Participants described solidarity as something that must be actively demonstrated in ways that reassured, connected and mobilised communities. This was reflected in suggestions such as: **“solidarity gatherings – places to enjoy being together – call people in”**, **“solidarity, more interchange, national mobilisation”**, and **“marches from all races to show support, rapport and unity.”** These reflections indicate the need for acts of coming together, whether through public gatherings, celebrations or marches, which were seen as symbolic and demonstrative of the value racialised communities bring to the city. They also helped build a sense of solidarity within racialised communities and around wider community cohesion. These demonstrations of solidarity communicated shared commitment, reduced isolation and created spaces where support could be experienced directly.

The question, **“how do we build solidarity,”** asked alongside the reflection on **“how best to communicate our togetherness in a respectful way,”** further suggested that participants were concerned not only with unity itself, but with how it was organised, expressed and made meaningful across different communities.

3.1 Feeling safe and protected in the city

A second significant theme concerned the urgent need for safety and protection during periods of heightened hostility or uncertainty. Participants referred to practical concerns about how to remain safe, as expressed by one community member, **“how to keep safe?”** and the call for **“more police presence during troubled times.”** Safety was also framed as a “safeguarding” issue within families and communities. For example, participants asked how to talk to **“our children, friends and family to safeguard”** and emphasised the importance of **“honest conversations with our children to safeguard and protect.”** These comments suggest that safety was understood beyond physical protection alone, but also as emotional preparedness, awareness and informed family dialogue. The proposal for **“putting together**



a support guidance (community safety guidance)” reinforced the need for structured and accessible resources that helped communities respond proactively rather than reactively. Overall, the comments reflect a strong perception that safety must be actively planned for, communicated and supported across both public and private spheres.

3.2 Reporting, accountability and trusted response mechanisms

The conversations placed considerable emphasis on the importance of reporting incidents and ensuring that appropriate systems of response were visible, trusted and used consistently. Participants called to **“encourage reporting within our communities”** and to **“encourage local reporting and learning from good practice,”** suggesting that reporting was understood as both a practical response and a way of strengthening communities’ sense of agency. Several contributions focused on making reporting pathways more accessible, for example through better advertising of **“leaflets about RHF [Racial Harassment Forum] and other organisations at all the shops, especially ahead of 13 June,”** and **“leaflet all Black global majority establishments regarding reporting processes.”** One participant expressed the view that **“every single incident should be reported”** – there was a lot of consensus on this, in the room, indicating resistance to minimising or normalising racist behaviour, while **“report anonymously”** pointed to the need for safer and more trusted routes for disclosure. There were concerns among some community members about reporting directly to the police, alongside a recognition that there was clear under-reporting. It was clear from discussions that people often normalised or minimised their own experiences of racism and Islamophobia and did not report them. The discussions led to recognition that reporting was a necessary bureaucratic exercise that enabled accountability and provided a route to collective protection. There was mention of **“community ambassadors”** who could provide information about reporting and **“taking responsibility for incidents”** which further underlined the importance of both local leadership and shared responsibility.

3.3 Education, awareness and communication as tools of empowerment

A further theme concerned the importance of communication, awareness-raising and education as ways of equipping communities with the knowledge needed to respond effectively. Participants highlighted the need to **“raise awareness of support regarding far-right events”** and to focus on **“educating our communities about their rights.”** These comments suggest that information itself was seen as giving people agency and supporting protection, particularly where communities may be exposed to threat, misinformation or uncertainty. There was mention of **“publicity and digital presence”** alongside proposals for leaflets and support guidance, which were seen as essential especially for those who are not digital natives, indicating the importance of sharing information across multiple platforms and formats in everyday community spaces. Communication was also understood as relational and political, as reflected in the question of **“how best to communicate our**



togetherness in a respectful way.” This implies concern not only with what is communicated, but how messages of solidarity are conveyed so that they are inclusive, respectful and effective.

3.4 Community resilience, care and joy as forms of resistance

Participants referred to the **“importance of building community resilience,”** while also recommending that people **“encourage and share essential, practical self-care practices.”** Particularly striking was the statement, **“continue to practise joy and celebration as resistance,”** which framed joy as a meaningful part of resistance. The earlier quotation about **“solidarity gatherings – places to enjoy being together – call people in”** similarly suggested that connection, enjoyment and collective presence were themselves protective. References to the **“multicultural festival”** reinforced the idea that celebration and cultural visibility could strengthen belonging and communal confidence. Taken together, these comments indicate that participants valued approaches that sustain wellbeing, affirm identity and help communities endure difficult conditions through both care and collective affirmation.

3.5 Local networks and shared responsibility with statutory bodies

The final theme concerned the importance of local community infrastructure, mutual aid and partnerships with institutions. Community members proposed **“community cohesion connection with local communities/churches, religious places of worships, Sikh temple,”** **“mutual aid”** and **“funding to organise community regular meeting for update,”** all of which pointed to the value of, and need for, trusted local networks and spaces where relationships could be maintained over time. Participants also referred to **“events organised by the council”** and to **“police and council – community safety,”** indicating that institutional involvement was expected alongside grassroots action. At the same time, the call for **“accountability from police to create a safer zone”** spoke to the importance of going beyond institutional presence and requiring responsibility and trustworthiness from those institutions. The mention of **“community ambassadors”** highlighted the role of local community and voluntary-sector leadership in bridging formal services and community members. Discussions suggest that participants see effective responses as rooted in collaboration, where communities support one another directly, while public bodies contribute resources, visibility and accountability.



4.0 The day after: Next steps

Question 3: What would you like to see happen after today? (Also consider what we can ask of Sussex Police and Brighton and Hove City Council.)

The assembled group made many suggestions for moving forward. This final section sets out next steps identified by participants. Building on earlier discussions about safety, solidarity and the emotional impact of racism, community members called for practical action that is visible, accountable and sustained. The themes below highlight immediate priorities around safety and reporting, alongside longer-term calls for anti-racist accountability, public education, stronger community organising and closer partnership with Brighton and Hove City Council and Sussex Police.

4.1 Demand for stronger anti-racist action, not just statements

A central theme was frustration with symbolic commitments to anti-racism that were not matched by visible action. Participants questioned what anti-racism meant in practice and called for institutions to demonstrate how their commitments translated into change. One group asked: **“what does it mean - the people and council is anti-racist – what are they actually doing?”** This quote reflects a broader concern that anti-racism is a hollow label unless there are clear actions and outcomes behind it. The follow-up phrase, that people were looking for **“policies and procedures re: change”** suggests that participants were looking for structural reform rather than one-off initiatives or rhetorical support. A similar demand for action appeared in another group’s call for: **“more anti-racist support”**. Together, these responses suggest that participants wanted anti-racism to be active, enforceable and embedded in systems, rather than presented as a broad aspiration. Participants appeared to be asking public bodies not only to affirm anti-racist values, but to define them, implement them and be accountable for them. There was a desire for anti-racism to be visible in frontline practice, decision-making, enforcement and better public communication. These views also suggest that statutory bodies would benefit from communicating positive actions towards community cohesion and anti-racism and from maintaining closer and ongoing dialogue with communities.

4.2 Need for accountability and consequences for racism and hate incidents

Another major theme was the belief that racism and hate incidents must be treated more seriously, with clear consequences, stronger enforcement and visible accountability. One group called for, **“serious penalties punishment towards hate crimes and racism”** suggesting that some participants felt current responses were too weak, inconsistent or lacking deterrent effect. Another group similarly emphasised: **“zero tolerance of incidents”**. This phrase conveyed a desire for an institutional stance where incidents are not minimised, delayed or dismissed, but responded to firmly. There were also calls for accountability in



relation to specific individuals and public discourse. One group stated, **“Nigel Farage needs to be reported to the police for incitement to violence over his reaction to the Henry Nowak’s murder”** and **“report him [Farage] through the Prevent Channels”**. These comments suggest that participants were concerned not only with interpersonal racism, but also with the role of public figures and inflammatory rhetoric in legitimising or escalating harm. Even where wording was highly specific or emotive, the wider issue was the perception that incitement, extremism and racist provocation were not being adequately challenged. Community members described a need for a framework or structure within which racism is treated as serious harm and where institutions show they are willing to act decisively, including through sanctions, investigation and public accountability.

4.3 Desire for fair, trusted and community-based policing

Policing was one of the strongest recurring themes. Community members were not simply asking for more police; rather, they were asking for fair policing, visible policing, trusted policing and policing that understands racism and works with communities. One group articulated this explicitly, **“fair policing – arrest those causing the problems [and not the counter-protesters]”**, which pointed to concerns about who is targeted, who is protected and whether policing distinguishes fairly between those causing harm and those responding to it. It suggested a fear that policing can reproduce injustice if it is not underpinned by equal treatment under the law and proportionate responses. Another group focused on the visibility and accessibility of policing in communities, calling for, **“more policing within the community – walking in the neighbourhood”** and specifically, **“within racist hot spots”**. These comments suggest that attendees wanted police presence that is local, preventative and relationship-based, rather than reactive and detached. This group further added that it was important that the police **“have ‘community liaison officer’** and **“police to have regular meetings with organisations who have the data of hate incidents”**. These comments imply a wish to build trust through named roles, regular communication and ongoing partnership with grassroots and community organisations. Community members valued the idea of policing that is in **“dialogue with communities”**, especially those already gathering evidence on racism and hate incidents.

Another group raised a deeper concern about police understanding itself, **“do the police understand what anti-racism mean – what is it?”** This suggests that, for some community members, the issue was not only operational policing but also whether police had the knowledge, values and training needed to respond appropriately to racism and whether Sussex Police could articulate the work they are doing to address racism in policing.



4.4 Safer and more accessible reporting systems

Many community members' responses suggested that current reporting systems may be difficult to access, difficult to trust, or insufficiently responsive. Participants wanted mechanisms that made reporting easier and ensured reports led to action. One group called for, **"easier reporting systems for English as a foreign language"**, directly highlighting barriers faced by people for whom English is not their first language. This was also echoed by others, who together pointed to the need for reporting systems that are linguistically accessible, culturally aware and inclusive. The concern was not simply translation, but whether people could realistically navigate the system and feel heard within it.

One of the groups emphasised the need to build confidence and reassurance around reporting, **"help people feel more confident about what is happening and reporting"**, recognising that barriers to reporting were not only about the process but also emotional. Individuals may not report if they are uncertain about what will happen next, whether they will be believed or whether anything will change. Another group added that there was a clear expectation of a constructive institutional response, **"taking reports seriously and follow up"**. This is especially significant. It implies that reporting systems are judged not only by whether a report can be submitted, but by whether it is taken seriously, investigated and followed through.

4.5 Community safety and protection in relation to specific threats

Participants also voiced immediate concerns about safety, especially in relation to planned events and known flashpoints, with comments focusing on specific dates, locations and visible community spaces that were perceived as vulnerable. One group requested **"police protection for Afrori Bookshop around the days of the 13th June protest"**. This quote points to a need for preventative protection for spaces perceived to be at risk. It shows that participants were thinking not only in broad policy terms, but in very practical terms about who may need protecting and when. Responses expressed across the groups suggested fear about the consequences of a public mobilisation perceived as **"extremist"** or **"fascist"**, and a need for preventative action or reassuring demonstrations of prevention before escalation. People felt a need to act and to have a sense of agency, through **"organised action before, during and after 13th June"**. This broadens the need for coordination, support and strategy beyond isolated incidents such as on 13 June 2026.

4.6 Public education and narrative change

Another strong theme was the need to change public perceptions of racism, immigration and inter-community relationships. Community members saw education as central to prevention. One group called for "more opportunity for communities to learn about how racism affects other communities"; this is significant as it frames racism as something that



requires cross-community learning and empathy, not just awareness within directly affected groups. It implies that solidarity can be strengthened when communities understand each other's experiences. One member of this group stated that, **"I would like to see widespread public education on Britain [which] has totally depended on immigration for its population and economic wealth since humans first landed on these islands."** It suggests that misinformation and hostile narratives about immigration were seen as part of the problem and that education should challenge those myths. Another group explicitly identified the need for a **"narrative change,"** which implies going beyond isolated incidents to the broader social and media environment. This was also picked up by another group, which described **"the media[']s] need to be called out more for whipping up . . ."** Whilst the sentence is unfinished, the meaning is clear, participants believed media narratives could intensify hostility, division and fear. This suggests that anti-racist work must include not only enforcement and support but also challenging harmful narratives in public discourse.

4.7 Community organising, solidarity and collective power

Across the groups, there was a clear theme of wanting stronger community connection and collective action. Communities were not only asking institutions to respond; they were also imagining a role for communities themselves in building resistance and support.

Requests for **"more networking"**, **"organising"**, **"narrative change"** and a need for **"organised action before, during and after 13th June"** suggested a multi-layered approach to organising, from immediate mobilisation to wider cultural work and attention to everyday racism. This group also spoke about the need to **"build our power and campaign (from our discussions)"**. This suggests that this group saw consultation not as an endpoint, but as a starting point for ongoing campaigning, coalition-building and power-building.

4.8 Strategic, thoughtful responses rather than reactive conflict

Some comments suggested that participants were thinking carefully about strategy, not just about opposing racism, but about how to do so effectively. One group stated, **"don't give them what they want (conflict/violence)"**. This implied a strategic awareness that some extremist or racist actions may seek to provoke confrontation. Rather than responding reactively, participants appeared to be urging a more disciplined and intentional approach. Related comments included, **"focus on the real enemy"** and **"understand what they want"**. These phrases suggested a call for analysis, strategy and political clarity. This group of community members were encouraging communities and institutions to think beyond immediate outrage and instead respond in ways that reduce escalation and strengthen long-term effectiveness. How this might manifest could include **"boycotts"** which suggests interest in tactical responses that apply pressure without replicating violent dynamics.



4.9 Use of existing law, policy and evidence

A further theme was that participants did not necessarily believe new frameworks were always needed; rather, they wanted existing laws and recommendations to be applied. One group of community members said, **“let’s use the legislation already exists in the Equality Act”**. This suggests frustration that current protections may be underused or weakly implemented. The issue, then, is not only absence of policy, but a failure to trigger what already exists. The same group referred to the need for implementation of recommendations from the **“Steven Lawrence [inquiry] –implementation – how many?”** Although abbreviated, this comment invokes the legacy of Stephen Lawrence-related reforms and raises questions about implementation and follow-through. The implication is that recommendations may exist on paper, but participants wanted to know how much had been enacted and what impact it had had. Another group called for the **“outcome of police data and update [sic] data and to . . . [be] in the public domain”** which adds a need for further cascading of an evidence base and transparency to communicating police activity relating to disproportionality and hate crimes. This suggests that, whilst community members wanted action, they also wanted data in the public domain, visibility and measurable outcomes.



Key emerging recommendations

The recommendations that follow are grounded in the lived experiences and priorities shared during the meeting. They point towards a response that combines immediate safety planning with longer-term work to challenge racism, strengthen trust, support community leadership and ensure that racialised communities are not left to carry the burden of fear alone.

1. Create a clear community safety and solidarity plan

The voices contained within this report repeatedly point to fear, uncertainty and the need for practical reassurance. Community participants were asking for both emotional reassurance and practical preparedness. A short, accessible action plan could include communication of:

- what to do before and during high-tension events;
- who to contact for support;
- safe routes / safe community spaces;
- guidance for families on talking to children and young people and
- how to record and report incidents.

2. Strengthen and simplify reporting pathways

A major theme is that reporting matters, but many people still under-report because of mistrust, normalisation or uncertainty. Recommended actions include:

- improved visibility of reporting options beyond the police;
- providing and promoting anonymous or third-party reporting routes;
- distribute simple reporting guidance in community venues, shops, places of worship and online and
- use community ambassadors or trusted local connectors to explain how reporting works.

3. Invest in trusted community ambassadors / connectors

Establish and/or fund the training of a small network of trusted community representatives who can:

- share safety information quickly;
- signpost people to reporting and support;
- act as a bridge between communities, the council, and Sussex Police and
- gather feedback during periods of heightened tension.



4. Make solidarity visible, public and inclusive

Communities are not only asking for support behind the scenes, but also for visible demonstrations from statutory bodies and voluntary-sector organisations that racialised communities are valued and not alone. Ideas from groups included:

- regular solidarity gatherings and community events;
- cross-community public statements and actions;
- multicultural celebration events framed as belonging, resilience and resistance and
- coordinated messaging that shows unity across communities

5. Develop a rights, awareness, and communications campaign

There were direct calls for education, awareness and better communication, alongside a need for accessible information in multiple formats. Recommended actions include:

- a campaign on rights, safety and support;
- printed and digital materials;
- content tailored for different age groups and communities and
- messaging that is respectful, clear and non-alarmist.

6. Sussex Police providing visible reassurance, plus accountability

Community voices expressed in this report suggest that communities not only want police presence in difficult moments, but also trusted and accountable action such as:

- visible reassurance patrols during known periods of risk;
- improved communication with a broader group of racialised communities and organisations ahead of demonstrations or flashpoints;
- clearer follow-up after incidents are reported
- better engagement with community groups and trusted intermediaries
- transparent action on racist and religiously motivated harassment

7. Brighton and Hove City Council to use their role as community safety coordinators to hold space for a sustained partnership

The council could use its role within the Community Safety Partnership to convene a space that improves community cohesion, supports resourcing, and grows and sustains momentum for reducing fear and racist incidents. Suggested recommendations include:

- fund regular community meetings and updates;
- support local safety guidance and multilingual communications;
- coordinate with voluntary/community groups, faith groups and local venues;
- visibly back anti-racist solidarity work and
- support events and infrastructure that strengthen cohesion and belonging



8. Recognise joy, care and resilience as part of the response to hate

One of the themes expressed by communities was the importance of self-care and joy as part of resilience and resistance. Suggested recommendations include:

- embed wellbeing, peer support, celebration, and mutual care into response planning and
- treat community cohesion and mental wellbeing as central, not secondary.