

*Supporting Communities to Be Resilient Against Hate And Division*



# Something To Fight For

NARRATIVE RESEARCH & GUIDANCE

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

As community workers, youth workers, volunteers, teachers, workers, neighbours and family members we are uniquely placed to tackle the rise of growing narratives of hate in our communities and workplaces. Whether it be through social media or heightened Government rhetoric, those from minority backgrounds in our communities are being targeted and used as a deliberate tool of division, which harms us all.

Hope and Courage Collective works with a wide ecosystem of people and groups – including community development and youth workers, trade unions, teachers, local volunteer solidarity and welcome groups – who believe in a better Ireland; one where everyone has what they need to thrive no matter who we are or where we come from.

We all work hard for our communities, taking on big fights around housing, health, education and dignity for all.

But the growth of hate organisers with far right worldviews – who believe that only white, straight people belong in Ireland – in local communities, has led to division, making it more difficult to hold those in power to account as a unified and collective force. The playbook that they follow deliberately spreads lies designed to provoke fear, anger and division.

The people we work with often report feeling intimidated, unsure of what to say and where to start conversations, or how to navigate the sometimes overwhelming noise and misinformation that the online haters create at a local level.

That's why we have conducted this piece of narrative research in both 2024 and 2025, in order to develop an evidence base for what types of conversations work best to break through division, helping people to think critically about the systems under which they live, and see the haters' motivations for what they really are.

We have rigorously tested the words that cut through hateful noise and actually move people. This resource is designed to support communities in local areas, workplaces, schools, youth and volunteer spaces to have confident conversations, one to one, in groups, and through local and social media.

# 2 METHODOLOGY



## Sampling and Segmentation

Hope and Courage Collective (H&CC) carried out a survey of 3,000 using polling company Dynata. The sample is broad and nationally representative across age, gender, region, class, and race. Each person was asked a series of questions on key issues such as migration, housing, LGBTI rights, and class inequality. Based on these answers, people were coded into our base, opposition and persuadables.

- **Our Base:** The people who agree with a worldview that celebrates equality and diversity along race, class and gender lines.
- **Our Opposition:** The people most likely to be aligned with a far right worldview who favour exclusion along the lines of class, race, and gender.
- **Our Persuadables:** The largest and most important group – those who don't have a fixed worldview, who believe in conflicting things in immigration, gender, race and class and who can be persuaded by different messages and messengers, including us, and our opposition.



## Message "Dial" Testing

- Each person listened to two short messages. One reflected our voice and one reflected our opposition's. We do this because in the real world people hear both messages, and in order for us to know ours is a winner, we have to be able to beat our opposition. So we play people both.
- While listening, people use a small dial on their screen to show how the message made them feel in real time, from zero to one hundred. We asked people to dial up when they agreed and dial down when they disagreed.
- Before and after, they answer questions on how they feel on things like housing, health and community.
- We compare the results to see what messaging actually shifts people to dial up for agreement – particularly our persuadables.



## Messages

Narrative	Description
Extreme far right message	A message that sounds like <b>what hate organisers share online</b> and in local communities. Exclusionary and filled with fear based messaging and conspiracy.
Softer right wing message	A toned down right wing message, but still focused on <b>making people afraid and unsure</b> about minorities.
A strong, race, class, gender inclusive message	A strong message from us that focused on <b>bread and butter issues</b> like fixing housing, affording food and heat, and rejecting division over skin colour, gender identity or sexual orientation as a tool to divide.
A softer, community values focused race, class, gender inclusive message	A message that focused on <b>inclusion, community values</b> and showing that the Government is responsible for creating a system of accommodation for people seeking asylum that is inhumane, poorly planned, and divisive.



## Testing Environment

Because people hear multiple messages in the real world, we needed to ensure that our sample heard both our opposition's message, and our own.

This way, we can test which of our messages is more persuasive – making sure our winning message beats both the extremists and those who soften their rhetoric in order to appeal to a more persuadable audience.



## Message Pairings

	Message 1	Message 2	Explanation
1	Far Right Opposition	Punchy race, class, gender inclusive narrative	<b>Far right messaging</b> is set against our strongest, values led frame. Shows how our bold response performs in a high contrast test.
2	Softer Opposition	Softer race, class, gender inclusive narrative	<b>A calmer right wing frame</b> set against our gentler community message. Shows how people react when both sides sound softer.
3	Far Right Opposition	Softer race class gender inclusive narrative	<b>Far right messaging</b> followed by our softer frame. Tests whether reassurance holds up when the opposition comes in strong.
4	Softer Opposition	Punchy race, class, gender inclusive narrative	<b>Softer anti immigration messaging</b> followed by our stronger message. Tests whether the punchy frame still cuts through when the opposition tone is mild.



## Sentiment shift measurement

Before people heard both sets of messages, they were asked a series of questions to measure how they felt along the areas of;

- LGBTI inclusion.
- Attitude towards migration.
- Racism and discrimination.
- Class inequality.

The same group of people were then asked the exact same set of questions after hearing the message combinations. In this way – we can measure if our message beats our opposition’s message in terms of moving people to be more open and inclusive along the lines of race, migration, class, gender identity and sexual orientation.

# 3 FINDINGS

In 2025, we found that people respond most when we speak to the real pressures in their lives and name what is actually going wrong. Messages that focused on housing, health care, rising costs and the sense that ordinary people are being pushed to the edge performed strongest across almost every test.

When we paired this with a clear warning about scapegoating and a hopeful vision for what Ireland could be, persuadable audiences moved firmly in our direction. **The research shows that people are not drawn to hate or division, they are drawn to messages that recognise their struggles, tell the truth about who is responsible and offer a future where communities can thrive together.**

## Population Findings

**30%** **BASE**

This group consistently responded positively to questions on LGBTQI rights, class equality, gender equality and inclusive community values. This is a significantly large group.

**6%** **OPPOSITION**

This group responded negatively across most of these areas and is already strongly aligned with far right narratives. They are small in numbers.

**64%** **PERSUADABLES**

This is the largest group and their responses showed a genuine mixture. They held some positive views and some positions that mirror far right talking points, their positions can be shifted depending on the messages they hear.

## Narrative Findings



Our strong, confident message that focused on bread and butter issues worked best overall.

*Across Ireland most of us are just trying to build a decent life with those we love. No matter where we're from or the colour of our skin. The wages we work hard for should cover the essentials; a home we can afford, a week's shop or seeing the doctor.*

*But, many of us are **being pushed to the brink**. Current **Government parties let the wealthy rake it in**, while we live off scraps. Now, the far-right are **feeding on our anger on social media**, scaring people into blaming migrants and LGBTI people for all our problems – a divide and rule distraction, that lets the politicians with real power off the hook.*

*Irish people aren't fools – we know what we need. Progress won't come from hate or division over who we love or the colour of our skin, it will come from standing together and demanding what **we deserve – housing, health and hope – for all of us, no exceptions**.*



This message had the highest dial result of all messages, confidently beating both our opposition's messages.

This message did three things very well:



It named that there is a problem and what is really going wrong; in housing, health and Government choices.



It warned about the motivations of the haters, showing that they deliberately scapegoat blame migrants and LGBTI people to stir up fear and distraction.



It gave people a vision for what Ireland could be. The message became particularly popular when the message spoke about our vision for housing, health and hope for all of us.



## Sentiment Shift

After hearing this message, alongside either of the opposition messages, people answered more positively in the direction of openness and positive sentiment on the issues of LGBTI rights and class equality – with migration either dipping slightly or staying the same.

LGBTI inclusion	More positive
Attitude towards migration	Same/slight dip
Racism and discrimination	More positive
Class inequality.	More positive



## What persuadables liked about this message:

*"It recognises it is getting much harder for middle class people to live comfortably. And immigrants are the scape goats for the other issues that are not being addressed"*

*"It was a positive message in general stating that all Irish people strive towards a decent standard of living that allows them to be able to pay their bills and live in their own homes. Also that immigration does not contribute to problems but can enhance our country with extra diversity"*

*"It didn't blame immigrants for our problems but the mismanagement by the government"*

*"I liked that it was not trying to blame immigration for the problems that Ireland is facing. Finished on a positive note saying we all want health and hope."*

*"The message is balanced. It looks at the desire of migrants to work, earn and take care of their family and also across the working class who also want a decent home. It also highlights the alternative views which are widespread by politicians painting immigrants as the problem while they enrich themselves. It's a well constructive message for further conversation."*



## Narrative Findings

The softer message also beat the opposition by a lesser margin, but was especially useful at shifting people on migration

*In Ireland, we look out for each other. Whether we were born here or came here to build a better life, most of us are working hard, raising families, and getting stuck in. When we have what we need – we welcome each other, build community, and put down roots.*

*But this **Government sold off homes and health to private contractors**, then let private companies **profit off accommodation for people seeking asylum**. Instead of building communities, they created chaos, leaving space for far-right voices to spread fear and hate online, targeting anyone who doesn't look, live, or love like them.*

*If we're **divided over race, or gender, we can't fight together** for affordable homes, GPs, and services that work. Our communities don't want scapegoats to hate – we want brave leaders that will deliver real solutions for us all – no matter who we are or the colour of our skin.*



This message did some things well, but failed to illicit high agreement or enthusiasm from persuadables in dial results.



The message did make people more likely to have more favorable views on migration for two reasons;



It acknowledges that there is a problem with the profiteering in the system of accommodation and integration for people seeking asylum, but pointed out **who is actually responsible** i.e. private contractors and government decision makers, while including people seeking asylum in “our communities”.



It reflected back the **values of our communities** to people and actively **pointed out scapegoating**.



## Sentiment Shift

After hearing this message, alongside either of the opposition messages, people answered more positively in the direction of openness and positive sentiment on the issues of LGBTI rights and class equality – with migration either dipping slightly or staying the same.

LGBTI inclusion	Slight improvement
Attitude towards migration	Same/slight improvement
Racism and discrimination	Slight improvement
Class inequality.	Slight improvement



## What persuadables liked about this message:

*“I think it is an accurate and fair depiction of the situation and also realigns the situation so that people can start to think that we are all in this together and it is for those who are in charge that need to make changes rather than this being about me vs you.”*

*“We need to build a community that everyone can live in”*

*“Very clear informative addressing the government to stop private contractors making profits at the back of people in needs for accommodations and affordable housing”*

*“It's the closest to honesty, we need migrants to help our country, so stop with the blanket statements and rash solutions like taking over hotels etc.”*

## Narrative Findings



**People are far more positive that the national narrative would have us believe. But, migration has been weaponised and is a hard - not impossible - topic to shift people on.**

Migration is a wedge issue that has been used to scapegoat, blame and distract. It is a hard topic to shift people on. Not because people are naturally hostile, but because communities are exposed to the most rumours, misinformation and social media noise. And government rhetoric and policy have moved on it. Despite this, the public is far more positive than the national conversation suggests.

### **Across our four message tests:**

- Two pairings showed a very small dip.
- One stayed almost the same.
- One showed a small positive movement.

Even with this mixed pattern, attitudes remain broadly warm. In this research, 66 percent agreed that immigrants contribute to our culture and we are better for having them here as a starting position. Where movement becomes difficult is when people feel unsure about the system that manages asylum and accommodation.



**Immigration attitudes improved in just one pairing. When people heard fear based messaging first, the softer community message helped bring them back and reduced support for scapegoating.**

### **This combination worked because the softer message:**



Acknowledged real problems with how the asylum accommodation system is run, including poor government decision making, deliberate exclusion and heavy reliance on private contractors.



Clarified responsibility, pointing to Government decisions and profiteering, rather than the people seeking protection.



Re-grounded people in shared community values, reminding them that most people simply want safety, stability and a fair chance.



Offered a vision for how things could work better for everyone.

## Narrative Findings



### What this tells us:

People become more open when we:

- Name that the **current system for accommodating people seeking asylum is poorly run.**
- Explain how **Government decision makers and private companies** have shaped these pressures.
- Frame this within shared values of **fairness, welcome and community.**
- Start with **values rather than arguments** lets people set down fear.
- **Name the tactic of scapegoating** helps people recognise when they are being pushed toward division.
- **Place responsibility where it belongs and build trust.**

**The best approach is a mixture of both messages.**



People respond to messages that **speak to the struggles in their everyday lives.** When we name housing, food costs, heating, and bills, people feel understood and seen.



It matters when we **say out loud that scapegoating migrants or LGBTI people is done on purpose.** People can sense something is off, and naming the tactic helps them recognise how division keeps all of us weaker.



**A strong, punchy message builds clarity about who is benefiting from the crisis and why.** People are looking for someone to tell the truth and point to real solutions.



When we combine that strength with **honesty about how the asylum system is poorly run, inhumane, and driven by private profit,** we help people connect the dots. The problem is the greed and the political choices behind the system.



This blended approach makes it easier for people to see that the **solutions lie in building something bigger together** across race, gender, and class. We can hold those in power responsible, instead of turning on each other.



It activates **both defiance and hope.** Defiance toward the systems that are failing communities, and hope in collective action and solidarity.



## Summary

Pairing	Dial Results	Pre and Post Data	What this tells us
Far right <b>vs</b> Stronger race, class gender inclusive message	Stronger message lifted the base up into the seventies and eighties. Persuadables rose into the high sixties. Opposition dropped sharply. The far right message collapsed with our base and did not persuade undecided people.	Positive movement on sex ed, LGBTI issues, community empowerment, housing and misogyny. Small decline on immigration.	The stronger message is our most persuasive overall. It improves support for fairness and inclusion across most issues. Migration remains the toughest topic and dips slightly here.
Far right <b>vs</b> Softer race, class, gender inclusive message	Far right message did well with our opposition only. Softer message more popular than far right message, but did not energise persuadables significantly.	The only pairing where migration sentiment improved. Also lifted housing, empowerment and trans rights slightly but not as much as stronger race, class, gender inclusive message.	Softer message is most effective on migration after people hear far right fear tactics. Naming Government failures and profiteering helps people shift blame away from migrants.
Softer opposition <b>vs</b> Stronger race, class, gender inclusive message	Softer opposition message created little energy. Stronger message lifted persuadables into the high sixties and strengthened base support. Opposition cooled.	Strong positive movement on housing, misogyny, empowerment and LGBTI issues. Migration stayed mostly the same.	Stronger message again performs very well. It gives people clarity, defiance and hope. It does not worsen migration sentiment even when paired with a softer fear based message, but does not move them positively either.
Softer opposition <b>vs</b> Softer race, class, gender inclusive message	Softer opposition didn't move persuadables. Softer race, class gender inclusive narrative beat the opposition message, but didn't energise persuadables.	Slight positive movement on international protection, empowerment and housing. Small declines on migration and LGBTI rights due to lack of strength.	Softer message reassures but does not persuade strongly. Movement is gentle and not as transformative but still beats the opposition message.

# 4 MESSAGING GUIDANCE



## Core Messaging Principles



### What you fight you feed

- Organised haters want us to repeat their messaging and pull us into arguments that are designed to divide and distract.
- When two sides are locked in open conflict, most people back away, so engaging directly with haters or their talking points does not help us.
- The more we repeat their framing, even to refute it, the more power we hand to them.



### Lead with values, not facts or problems

- We must name our problems only after naming what we believe in – this gives people a chance to reflect and reinforce what values they believe in, before they assess the problems we face.
- Leading with values and then naming who is standing in the way activates confidence and determination.
- Most people make sense of issues by checking in with their values before they look at facts
- Values like fairness, dignity, safety and the simple belief that everyone should have what they need are strong places to begin.
- When we start with values, people settle and stay open.



### Speak to the persuadables, not the haters

- Most people have not fully decided what they think about many of the issues being stirred up.
- We know that most people want fairness, respect and safety for everyone in their community.
- People are more likely to connect with a message that reflects their own values and helps them make sense of what is happening around them.



## Core Messaging Principles



### Link to the wider threat to communities

- It is important to show how attacks on one group eventually lead to attacks on many others.
- History shows that people who push hate often start by targeting those with less power, and then expand their reach.
- If any one group loses dignity and protection, it puts all of us at risk in the long run.



### Broaden the “We”

- Be clear about who we are talking about and who is included in our vision. Name people across race, gender, class and background as part of the same community.
- Speak from shared values that cut across our differences.
- Assert our strength as a broad group of people coming together for fairness.
- Show how efforts to divide us in one area are linked to attempts to limit our freedoms in other parts of life.
- Always paint the future. Describe the Ireland we are building together and the kind of community we want to live in.





## Do Say/Don't Say Guide

Do	Don't	Reason	Sounds Like
Name the real pressures people face, like housing, food prices, and the cost of heating their homes	Avoid or soften the issues that shape people's everyday lives	People feel recognised when we talk about what they are actually dealing with.	"Most of us are just trying to keep a roof over our heads and cover the shop, the bills, and the heating. Life should not feel this hard."
Spell out what Government could fix if they chose to, and that it takes public pressure	Don't pretend Government failure is accidental or unavoidable	Naming choices motivates people to act together rather than blame each other.	"If this Government wanted to, they could build homes we can afford, hire enough nurses, take on the energy companies, and bring down the cost of the weekly shop. They will only make the right choices if we push them to."
Start with what people have in common	Don't start with arguments or facts	People open up when they feel understood first.	"Across Ireland, most of us want the same things. A safe home, a fair wage, and a bit of security for our families."
Talk about neighbours, families, and everyday life	Don't jump straight into identity or political differences	Community language feels real and safe.	"In every town you will meet people working hard, raising kids, helping out in the community. That is what keeps us going."
Say clearly what is going wrong and who is responsible	Don't talk vaguely about "the system" or use passive language	Clear explanations reduce fear and misplaced blame.	"Government decision makers handed housing and services over to private companies. They created the chaos we are all living in now."



## Do Say/Don't Say Guide

Do	Don't	Reason	Sounds Like
Say clearly what is going wrong and who is responsible	Don't talk vaguely about "the system" or use passive language	Clear explanations reduce fear and misplaced blame.	"Government decision makers handed housing and services over to private companies. They created the chaos we are all living in now."
Name division as something that is created on purpose	Don't repeat rumours in order to correct them	Naming the tactic helps people spot manipulation without spreading the rumour.	"There are people online who stir up fear on purpose. They want us to fight each other so we never demand better from the ones in charge."
Include racialised people as part of "We"	Avoid talking about race, gender, or sexuality	Inclusion lowers defensiveness and builds belonging.	"No matter who we love, or our genders, most of us are just trying to get by and look out for each other"
Explain that scapegoating is used deliberately to divide and distract	Don't treat far right talking points as neutral concerns to debate	People already sense something is off. Naming it helps them resist the pull.	"Blaming migrants or LGBTI people is a distraction. It lets the people with real power off the hook."
Offer a hopeful, practical vision grounded in homes, health, and fairness	Don't frame it as us versus them or get stuck in abstract debates	People want solutions, not sides.	"We can build communities where everyone has a home they can afford, a GP they can see, and a bit of hope for the future."



## Do Say/Don't Say Guide

Do	Don't	Reason	Sounds Like
Connect the IPAS system to poor management, profit motives, and bad political choices	Don't blame "the system" without showing who benefits	People understand the crisis more clearly when greed is named.	"The asylum system doesn't work because private companies are making money from it and this government makes choices that deliberately exclude people from having a chance to become part of their communities. That is a political choice, not the fault of people seeking safety."
Blend strength and warmth in your tone	Don't use only hard hitting or only soft messaging	The blend activates defiance and hope while keeping people steady.	"We can be honest about how tough things are and still stand together. Division will not fix housing. Solidarity might."
Repeat our own narrative	Don't repeat the opposition's frame even to debunk it	Repeating rumours strengthens them.	"The real issue is not who moved into the area. It is the lack of investment, planning, and proper services."





## Using This Narrative in Local Public Relations, Local Media and Social Media



### Local Media

- Local **journalists are often under pressure** and working with limited time. They respond best to clear values, a grounded message and real examples from the community.
- Use the narrative to **lift up what your community cares about**. Talk about housing, safety, local services and the ways people support each other. Share stories of solidarity, cooperation and community wins.
- When you speak to **local papers or radio**, keep the focus on shared values and the bigger picture. **Avoid repeating any hateful framing**. Instead centre fairness, dignity and the idea that strong communities look out for each other.
- Local media conversations should always show who is working to bring people together and who is trying to divide them.



### Social media

- Social media **moves fast and rewards outrage**, so use it to **slow things down** and ground people.
- Post messages that remind your community of what they already believe in, for example everyone deserving a safe, warm home, care when they are sick, food they can afford, a community that supports and uplifts them, and everyone having what they need to build a good life.
- Share short stories about local wins, acts of solidarity and the positive ways people show up for each other. These stories help people feel part of something bigger and counter the false impression that division is everywhere.
- If you address harm or hateful content, do not quote it. State what you stand for, name the real pressures people face and show how scapegoating gets in the way of real solutions.



## Using This Narrative in Local Public Relations, Local Media and Social Media



### Public messaging at community level

- Incorporate this narrative into your way of talking and use it when speaking at public meetings or community gatherings. Start with shared values and local realities.
- Name what people are already feeling, for example the pressure of housing, the cost of keeping a home warm and the strain on services.
- Show how organised haters try to twist these real pressures into fear and resentment. Then redirect the conversation toward the people who have the power to fix these issues.
- Always close with a sense of possibility and a vision for the future. Remind people that when communities come together – no matter who we are, where we were born or who we love – we can win real changes that improve everyday life.





# One To One Conversation Examples



## Principles

- The following offers narrative guidance on how to bring people away from a special talking point.
- We cannot predict an entire conversation, but we can persuade people using a certain language and approach
- This is not the way we are used to talking, we often jump to fact checking or mythbusting rather than having values based conversations – this is a muscle that needs to be practiced.
- We want to talk to people's values, help them lean into empathy, and show them that we are on the same side.

### The “Unvetted Males” Conversation

**Background:** The term unvetted males is used very deliberately by those who wish to spread fear and hate online, because it speaks directly to our fears about community safety. It deliberately places men who come to Ireland to seek safety as outsiders – other than human, devoid of human needs for community, shelter or compassion. Men, especially young men, tend to make journeys to safety so that they don't have to risk the lives of their families or young children, then once they have put down roots and started working, they often help their family make their way to safety too.

**Why are we hearing it?** The reason why we hear the terms “unvetted males”, “men of military age”, “invasion” and “great replacement” so often in conversations with our communities, is because persuadable people have been made afraid and uneasy by people online who deliberately want to manipulate the conversations we have as neighbours, friends and family.

**Why facts won't work:** When people are in a heightened state of fear, all the facts in the world won't work. In fact, it will just cause people to double down on their original claims and become more set in a position that they may not have a huge commitment to initially. Lean into empathy, and showing we are on the same side is key to persuading people.



## The “Unvetted Males” Conversation

**Person:** What about all these unvetted males coming in?

**You:** It sounds like you feel really uneasy. Life feels very strained at the moment and that makes everyone more on edge – but I do think we are being manipulated via social media into blaming an entire group of people.

**Principle: Acknowledge how someone is feeling, but help move them to see the manipulation at play.**

**Person:** I don't know, it just seems unsafe.

**You:** Everyone wants to feel safe in our own communities, including people who come here to seek protection. And unfortunately there are groups who spread rumours about people seeking asylum, they focus on really rare incidents and ignore all the good, because it turns people against each other.

They aren't interested in us being safe, and that type of fearmongering, scapegoating and hate makes us all really unsafe. It divides us and makes our communities weaker.

**Principle: Acknowledge their need for safety. Expand the frame of safety to what actually keeps communities safe.**

**Person:** But do we even know who is coming here?

**You:** Most people coming here are just looking for safety, the same way any of us would if we had to flee danger. I think there should be much more effort to help communities get to know people who come here to seek safety. When we build relationships, we are all safer.

A safe community is one with enough homes, and doctors, school places and places where we can come together to build community. You've always been a welcoming and open person – I'm sure you'd want to get to know people and make up your own mind?

**Principle: Don't get sucked into mythbusting “unvetted” or talking about crime instead focus the conversation on the values of community safety and what we all need to be safe.**



## The “Unvetted Males” Conversation

**Person:** I am welcoming, but I’m still scared.

**You:** I totally understand that you’re scared. But I also think we need to be careful about people who want to stir up fear online. A lot of what you see are just rumours and lies. I think you get to know the truth about people by getting to know them and making up your own mind.

**Person:** So what do we do then?

**You:** To start, I think, we don’t let ourselves be manipulated by fear and those who want to spread it. Then, we fight for homes we can afford, GP care and cheaper food for everyone in our communities, because when we all have what we need – it makes life easier for everyone.

**We also need to make the system for people seeking asylum actually work –** so people who come here for safety get a real chance to know new neighbours, get a decent job, and live amongst a community where they feel they can belong, not in a random hotel or office block. That means getting rid of the profit making, and making this Government build communities instead of creating chaos.

**Principle: Give people hope and a shared vision. Make the solutions as tangible as possible.**





## Break Glass Sentences

Phrases to use if you think the conversation is going off the rails.



**I hear that you're worried, but a lot of what we're seeing online is designed to make us scared of each other, not safer."**

- *Why it works:* Acknowledges fear, recentres manipulation, pulls people back into "us".



**"Most people coming here want the same things we do, and our real safety comes from strong communities, not from turning on each other."**

- *Why it works:* Moves the frame from "dangerous outsiders" to shared human needs and community strength.



**The real problem isn't the people seeking safety, it's the mess the Government and private companies have made of the system."**

- *Why it works:* Redirects blame upward, not outward. Matches what persuadables responded to most strongly in the research.



**"Fear makes all of us easier to manipulate, and I don't want any of us being played."**

- *Why it works:* Activates defiance, one of your strongest narrative levers. People hate feeling manipulated.



**"If we had proper housing, decent services and a system that treats people fairly, none of this would feel half as chaotic."**

- *Why it works:* Grounds the conversation in real life struggles, which is exactly what our strongest message did.



## The “Gender Ideology” Conversation

**Background:** The term gender ideology did not grow out of everyday conversations. It was created by well funded groups who wanted a simple phrase that could spark fear and confusion. It suggests that trans people and those who support gender diversity are part of something hidden or dangerous, rather than ordinary neighbours, friends, or family members. It also erases the long history of gender diversity across cultures. By presenting trans lives as something sudden or extreme, it leaves people feeling unsure and unsettled. In moments of confusion, a phrase like gender ideology can feel like a shortcut to certainty. The aim is to create fear and to turn communities against a small minority who already face significant discrimination.

**Why are we hearing it?** Gender ideology appears so often because it has been tested to trigger strong reactions. It taps into worries about rapid social change and plays on a sense of overwhelm. The language makes people feel that something important is slipping away.

This messaging did not originate in Ireland. It comes from US and UK organisations that have used the same tactics against gay people and reproductive rights. It feeds cultural fear while attention shifts away from the real pressures people face like housing, health care, and stretched community resources. When neighbours repeat the phrase, it is usually because they have encountered emotional and misleading content online that is designed to provoke unease.

**Why facts won't work:** When someone feels anxious or confused, factual information is not what they reach for. They are looking for steadiness and reassurance. Facts offered in that moment can feel confrontational and may push people further into their original position.

Most people who use the term are not deeply attached to it. They are trying to make sense of something unfamiliar. They respond best to calm conversations that connect with their own values of fairness, respect, and community care. Once someone feels settled and heard, they become more open to new information without feeling threatened.



## The “Gender Ideology” Conversation

**Person:** What is all this gender ideology? A man is a man and a woman is a woman.

**You:** I get why it feels like things are changing very fast. A lot of people are trying to make sense of it and that can feel overwhelming.

**Principle: Acknowledge their feeling of fear and being left behind. Don't assume they have a commitment to exclusionary position.**

**Person:** It is too much. It's gone too far.

**You:** What most of us want, no matter what we believe about gender, is for our families and our neighbours to feel safe, respected, and able to live our lives without hassle, whether we are transgender or not. We are all part of our community and deserve to feel like we belong.

**Principle: Centre values, rehumanise the people affected.**

**Person:** I just do not understand it.

**You:** That is completely fair. You do not have to understand every detail to treat people with dignity. You've always been a person who believed that people deserve the best, no matter who they are. Most trans people are simply trying to get on with their lives in peace, the same as the rest of us.

**Principle: Encourage decision making based on values, not the need for comprehensive knowledge.**

**Person:** But why is it becoming such a big topic?

**You:** Because there is a small minority who push fear about gender to divide people, and the noise is everywhere. They know that if we are busy fighting each other over who is who, we are not focused on the real pressures affecting everyone, like housing, bills, and the health service.

**Principle: Show the motivations of those who are trying to divide us.**



## The “Gender Ideology” Conversation

**Person:** So what do we do then?

**You:** We look after each other. We support people to live safely and happily as themselves, and we keep our attention on the things that actually shape daily life in this country. When we stand together across all our differences, we are much stronger at demanding the changes we need.

**Principle:** Vision forward, connect to material needs and shared fights.





## Break Glass Sentences

Phrases to use if you think the conversation is going off the rails.



**“A lot of people online work very hard to spark fear about gender ‘issues’, because fear keeps us divided.”**

- *Why it works:* Names manipulation without mirroring the frame.



**“Most of us want a community where everyone feels safe, supported and able to live their lives in peace.”**

- *Why it works:* Puts values first.



**“It’s ok to not understand everything, and it’s ok to have questions, but most of us agree that most people deserve to be themselves, be happy, and live with dignity”**

- *Why it works:* Positive, forward frame.



**“When misinformation spreads about LGBTI people, it limits freedom and safety for all of us.”**

- *Why it works:* Broader, shared impact.



**“A good place to start is asking how we support everyone in our community to feel safe.”**

- *Why it works:* Moves to a shared goal.



## The “Ireland is Full” Conversation

**Background:** The idea that Ireland is full works like a simple container metaphor. It imagines the country as a box with a fixed amount of space and anyone new arriving as someone who will spill the box over. It feels neat and intuitive, which is why it spreads so quickly. The phrase was pushed heavily on X (formerly Twitter) by coordinated hate accounts and white nationalist influencers who wanted to tap into real frustrations about housing shortages, long waiting lists, and pressure on services. Instead of focusing attention on the systems that created these problems.

The container metaphor guides people toward blaming migrants. It also suggests that there is only a set amount of room, opportunity, or care to go around. In reality, communities grow and change all the time and people contribute in ways that build and strengthen services and local life all the time. The metaphor removes all of this and reduces people to burdens.

**Why are we hearing it?** Ireland is full shows up so often because it connects directly with how strained life feels. People see rising rents, overcrowded emergency departments, and a lack of school places. When daily life feels tight, the metaphor offers an instant explanation. Online influencers understand this emotional entry point. They amplify the phrase at moments of crisis or uncertainty, knowing it will stick. Their goal is to redirect frustration away from decades of policy failure and toward people who come here to seek safety. When neighbours repeat the phrase, it does not usually come from malice. It comes from feeling squeezed and being shown a simple but misleading story about who is to blame.

**Why facts won't work:** The container metaphor has a powerful emotional pull. It creates a clear mental picture of a country overflowing, which makes facts about population levels, empty housing stock, or workforce needs feel distant or irrelevant. An image that feels true in the gut often outweighs data.

When people feel insecure about their own access to housing or services, facts can also feel like a dismissal of their experience. They are not rejecting information; they are speaking from fear and frustration. Most people who repeat the phrase are not fixed in that position. Conversations that recognise how tight things feel make it easier to gently widen the frame and show that the pressure comes from policy choices, not from people seeking safety.



# The “Ireland is Full” Conversation

**Person:** Ireland is full. We cannot take any more people.

**You:** It really does feel like everything is stretched. Housing, food, energy, people are worn out. But I honestly think we’re being pushed to blame each other instead of the people who let things get this bad.

**Principle: Acknowledge pressure, name deliberate scapegoating.**

**You:** And that pressure is real. But it is not caused by people seeking safety, or people who’ve moved here to work. It comes from years of Government decisions that left us without enough homes, too few nurses, long GP waiting lists, and rising costs. But, anytime the Government is put under pressure on housing or healthcare, they repeat the line “Ireland is full.” It shifts blame instead of fixing the problem. These people want to build themselves up, get a social media following and aren’t actually interested in fixing any of the real issues this community faces.

Like all of us, migrants are a huge part of running the country – nursing in hospitals, teaching in schools, caring for older people, putting food on our tables, and working on the building sites we desperately need.

If we let ourselves be divided over race, the people making the decisions are laughing. Division protects them from accountability.

**Principle: Acknowledge real system failures without reinforcing far right frames. Reinforce that migrants are part of “us” and the systems and services we all use.**

**Person:** So what is the answer then?

**You:** We need to push for real solutions. That means building homes people can afford, hiring and keeping more nurses, expanding GP services, and tackling the big companies driving up bills and the weekly shop.

This Government could do all of this if they chose to. They will only choose it if we actually organise to put pressure on them, and ignore the culture war distractions. Solidarity gets results. Divide and conquer leaves us all worse off.

**Principle: Vision forward based on shared needs and shared future.**



## Break Glass Sentences

Phrases to use if you think the conversation is going off the rails.



**“The real problem is the decisions that got us into this housing mess. And we need politicians to make better decisions that benefit us all”**

- *Why it works:* Re-directs blame upward, not outward.



**“If we let them divide us over race or nationality, or shift the blame to migration, the ones causing the crisis are laughing.”**

- *Why it works:* Calls out the strategy of division directly.



**“Every time housing or services comes up, someone tries to make it about migrants. That is not an accident, it’s to distract us and let those responsible off the hook.”**

- *Why it works:* Names manipulation.



**“We can fix the crisis, but only if we stop fighting each other and start holding power to account.”**

- *Why it works:* Activates defiance and hope.



**“A good place to start is asking how we support everyone in our community. This country works because of people working hard in our hospitals, schools, and construction. Without those of us rolling up our sleeves – whether we were born here or moved here – I think you’d agree we’d all be worse off.”**

- *Why it works:* Grounds the conversation in shared interest of keeping the country going.



## After Your Conversations



Don't worry if the person doesn't change their position straight away. Some people are open to change, and some aren't. One conversation won't change everything but introducing a perspective they haven't heard because of the online noise will have an effect.



Many people may still have their fears, and that's ok. Most people have seen a huge amount of propaganda online to make them fearful. You won't undo that in one conversation. What's important is that you give people a space to talk things through, and think for themselves, without feeling judged or shouted down.



Say that you're open to keep talking, and give people actions they can take, think about what they can do locally, what is in their control and orbit, such as – talking to a local politician, joining a local solidarity group, a housing action group, a group looking for a new playground or pitch – or other ways for them to participate in building the safety and prosperity of their communities.





## Group Work Exercises

In an education, community or youth work setting, we can often find ourselves waiting for conversations around migration or LGBTI rights to come up, sometimes bracing for what we feel will be awkward conversations.

However, as a community or youth worker or educator, our role is to facilitate space for critical thinking, and to support people in communities to be resilient to the harms caused by misinformation and hate organising.

Here are some short exercises that can be adapted depending on the group you are working with, to open up conversations in a way that encourages people to reflect, think critically and build the power of their own communities.





### Exercise 1: The Algorithm Trap

**Time:** 10 minutes

Purpose: Help people notice how platforms push emotional content to keep us scrolling, which then shapes what we think is happening in the world.

**How to run:**

1. Ask participants to think of a time online when something made them feel worried or annoyed.
2. Ask:
  - *“How did this post make you feel? Did it make you pause?”*
  - *“What kind of posts did you see afterwards”*
  - *“Did it start to feel like everyone was talking about that one issue”*
3. Explain gently how algorithms work.

On social media, content that makes us afraid or angry gets promoted more.

There is very little regulation on social media to make sure that content is true. Once you engage, by pausing, sharing, reading comments, the algorithm takes that as you wanting more of that content, and before you know it your feed is full of content designed to make you afraid and angry, mostly blaming a small group of people, like people seeking asylum or LGBTI people for everything that’s wrong.

Simple answers to our problems, divide and rule tactics. They do this so you stay on social media longer so that you see more adverts, and they make more money.

The more you’re focused on blaming your neighbours, the less focused you are on actually changing things for the better, like making our politicians build affordable homes, hire more GPs and make the weekly food shop more affordable.

**Narrative link:**

“When we understand how the system pulls our attention, it becomes easier to stay grounded in our real shared struggles and harder for anyone to turn neighbour against neighbour.”



### Exercise 2: Spot the Frame

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Purpose:** Help people recognise when a message is designed to trigger emotion or point blame away from those in power.

**How to run:**

Use two fictional headlines. One factual and calm. One emotional or blaming.

**Example:**

- **A: "Local hospital services under pressure after politicians choose to cut funding 10 years in a row."**
- **B: "Town thrown into chaos as outsiders overwhelm our hospital services."**

1. Read both.

2. Ask:

- *"Which one hits you faster"*
- *"What feeling does each headline encourage"*
- *"What is missing from each version"*
- *"What kind of actions does this message encourage?"*

3. Explain how framing can decide how we think about things:

"Manipulative messages try to get a rise out of us before we have time to think. They invite us to blame ordinary people instead of asking why services are under pressure in the first place. When we spot the frame, we take back control. We should be able to make up our own minds about what our communities need, not be manipulated into blaming our neighbours, when we know that local politicians are the ones responsible for making sure we have what we need. If we put the pressure on them, we can make sure they have to listen."

**Narrative Link:** "Our communities are strongest when we refuse to be pulled into fear and instead look honestly at the choices that have shaped our lives."



### Exercise 3: Emotion Before Manipulation

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Purpose:** Help people recognise the moment their emotional brain switches on so they can slow down rather than get swept into a narrative that divides the community.

**How to run:**

1. Read two short fictional statements, one calm and one dramatic.

**A: Calm:** "People in the area want clear updates about housing, healthcare and how decisions are being made."

**B: Emotionally provocative:** "Everything is out of control and the community cannot trust anyone to keep us safe."

2. Ask people to notice how their body reacts.
3. Discuss what that reaction means.

**Facilitator language:**

*"When a message hits you in the chest before it reaches your head, it is usually designed that way. Emotional shock is often used to push us into quick reactions. Slowing the pace helps us see the full picture and stay connected to what is really happening in our own communities."*

*"When we take that pause, we can name the pressures that are genuinely shaping our lives. Housing costs, the weekly shop, the cost of heating a home and access to healthcare are the things that matter to people. Staying steady keeps us focused on these real issues rather than the distractions."*

*"That pause also gives us space to recognise who is trying to turn neighbours against each other and who actually has the power to fix the problems we face."*

**Narrative Link:** When we hold that steady ground, we can choose connection and clarity instead of fear, and that gives our communities real strength.



### Exercise 4: Who Benefits?

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Purpose:** Help people see that division is not an accident, and that scapegoating protects those who already hold power.

**How to run:**

Choose a topic, not a rumour. For example: housing, bills, GP access, or local services.

**Ask:**

- "Who do people often end up blaming?"
- "Who actually makes the decisions in this area?"
- "Who are we told to blame on social media?"
- "Who gains when ordinary people turn on each other?"

Make a simple map of the answers.

**Facilitator language:**

*"When blame is pointed at the people around us, based on where they were born, or the colour of their skin, it takes pressure off the people with real power. If they can blame a small group of migrants, then they don't have to answer for their failures on housing and health and everything else."*

**Narrative Link:** Division keeps us busy fighting each other while those in charge avoid responsibility for housing shortages, rising costs and crumbling services.



### Exercise 5: The Three Step Pause Tool

**Purpose:** Give participants a practical way to protect themselves from misinformation in daily life.

**Teach the tool:**

1. **Pause:** "What emotion did I feel first"
2. **Redirect:** "Who does this message want me to blame"
3. **Refocus:** "Who makes the decisions in this area of life"

**How to run:**

1. Ask participants to think of a moment online that made them react quickly.
2. Ask them to silently apply the three steps.
3. Discuss how it changed their sense of the situation.

**Facilitator language:**

*"A short pause is sometimes all we need to step out of fear or confusion and back into our own judgement. None of us want to be manipulated by big social media companies, and we definitely don't want to let those with real power off the hook for delivering affordable homes in this area, making sure we have GPs and hospital beds and that we can afford a week's shop."*

**Narrative Link:** "When we stay grounded in our everyday lives and the struggles we share, we can see more clearly who benefits from division and who is responsible for fixing what is broken."

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# Luminare

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