Knowledge Gateway

Practice Guidance and Information

Specialist Communications Guidance

Navigating Hostility and Intolerance: Practical Guidance for Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups

Last updated: October 2026

Contents

Introduction 3
How to Use This Guidance 4
Methodology 5
Acknowledgements 6
1. Countering False Narratives / Misinformation 7
   1.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers 7
   1.2. Core Set 8
2. Crisis Communications 10
   2.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers 10
   2.2. Core Set 11
3. Managing Press Enquiries 12
   3.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers 12
   3.2. Core Set 13
4. Planning Safe Social Media Use 14
   4.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers 14
   4.2. Core Set 15
5. Responding to Social Media Hostility 16
   5.1. Top Tips for Responding to Social Media Hostility 16
   Social Media Wellbeing (Microcard) 17
   5.2. Core Set 18
6. Protecting Organisational Reputation 19
   6.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers 19
   6.2. Core Set 20

Introduction

This guidance document provides volunteers, staff and managers with practical, evidence-informed tools for safe, accurate and resilient communication across Scotland's third sector. It supports organisations to counter misinformation, manage crisis situations, handle press enquiries, respond to social-media hostility and protect organisational reputation - particularly in public-facing, politically sensitive or high-tension environments.

Each topic includes two types of support: short "Top Tips" that offer quick, easy-to-use prompts, and a more detailed Core Set that provides fuller guidance, structured tools and practical resources drawn from Scotland-specific and UK-wide organisations.

The Top Tips act as rapid reference points that volunteers and staff can use before an activity, during moments of uncertainty or pressure, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future practice.

The Core Set offers deeper learning for training, planning or more complex situations, giving organisations a comprehensive set of approaches to safe communication, risk reduction and decision-making in dynamic environments.

Communication guidance is organised into five core skills that volunteers and staff rely on when navigating unpredictable or sensitive contexts:

- **Countering False Narratives / Misinformation** – recognising misleading claims early, responding safely and avoiding harmful amplification.
- **Crisis Communications** – coordinating calm, accurate messaging during high-pressure or fast-moving situations.
- **Managing Press Enquiries** – handling media interest professionally, protecting volunteers and staff, and maintaining consistent organisational messaging.
- **Responding to Social Media Hostility** – moderating safely, reducing harm and managing identity-based or hostility linked to misinformation and harmful narratives online.
- **Protecting Organisational Reputation** – maintaining trust, preventing misuse, and responding proportionately to reputational risks.

Together, these subtopics bring together practical, evidence-informed guidance on:

- structured misinformation response frameworks
- crisis communications planning and escalation models
- practical media relations and press handling tools
- safe moderation and digital hostility response
- governance-level reputation protection guidance
- awareness of misinformation, harmful narratives and hostility

This provides a practical foundation for safe, ethical and resilient communication across Scotland's third sector - supporting calm, accurate and confident responses in both everyday interactions and high-tension situations.

How to Use This Guidance

This guidance is designed to be practical, accessible and easy to use in real communication situations. Each topic includes two types of support:

- **Top Tips** – short, quick-reference prompts you can use before, during or after an interaction or situation that may involve uncertainty, misinformation, public pressure or reputational risk. These provide immediate, practical actions that help steady communication, reduce escalation and support calm, accurate responses.

- **Core Set** – structured tools and practical resources drawn from Scotland-specific and UK-wide organisations. These provide deeper learning for training, planning, supervision or more complex communication challenges, including crisis situations, media interest and digital hostility.

Together, the Top Tips and Core Set offer a clear two-step support structure: rapid practical advice when you need it, and more detailed guidance when you want to build skills, strengthen team practice or respond to complex, emotionally demanding or unpredictable contexts.

You can dip into individual sections as needed, or use the full set to support training, supervision, volunteer management, wellbeing planning or organisational development. The guidance is designed to be flexible - something volunteers and staff can use in the moment, and something organisations can use to build safer, more confident practice over time.

This guidance sits alongside, and does not replace, your organisation's own policies and procedures. Volunteers and staff should always follow local safeguarding, incident-reporting, escalation and wellbeing processes, and use this guidance to support safe, consistent practice within those frameworks.

Methodology

This project used a structured, systematic process to identify, assess, and categorise guidance for staff, volunteers and organisations dealing with hostility, misinformation, and community tensions. The NCVO framework (Protecting Our People and Protecting Our Work) provided the organising structure. A targeted web search and review of Scotland-relevant organisations, TSIs, equality bodies and specialist safety or communications groups was conducted, supported by topic-based and Scotland-specific keywords. All materials found were screened for relevance, clarity, and practical usefulness.

Each resource was coded and assessed using a consistent scoring framework covering reliability, evidence base, relevance to Scotland, practicality, and coverage of key risks. Metadata and scores were compiled into a filterable spreadsheet matrix to support comparison and gap analysis. The mapping highlighted strengths, weaknesses, and areas where further guidance was needed, including topics with limited coverage and areas where staff or volunteers were particularly vulnerable.

Once mapped, the resources were organised into topic-specific documents aligned with the core areas of the framework (sensitive conversations, differing viewpoints, conflict resolution, psychological safety, and inclusive/anti-racist dialogue). These documents brought together guidance identified as most relevant for each area and provided a clear structure for review.

The working group then reviewed each topic-specific document using a structured Hostile Environments Framework Review Form. The checklist guided reviewers through subtopic relevance, clarity of purpose, suitability of core set of resources, Scotland-specific applicability, accessibility, strengths, gaps, and overall usability for volunteers, staff, and small organisations. Reviewers identified broken links, highlighted any items that were weak or unsuitable, confirmed where guidance was strong and practical, and suggested minor edits to strengthen clarity and relevance.

Feedback from the checklist review was collated and actioned across all topic documents. Resources were updated, replaced, or removed where necessary; broken links were corrected; and framing was refined to ensure consistency, trauma-aware practice, and Scotland-specific relevance. This process strengthened the structure and accessibility of the final guidance.

Following this review, concise Top Tips were distilled from the core resources identified through the review process for each topic. These Top Tips provide quick, easy-to-use prompts that give readers an immediate entry point into safe and confident communication practice. The more detailed Core Set resources then offer deeper guidance, models, and Scotland-specific tools. Together, this two-step structure ensures that volunteers, staff, and managers can access both rapid practical advice and more comprehensive support when navigating hostility, tension, or sensitive conversations.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the working group for their collaborative review and valuable feedback. Their careful assessment of the core sets, identification of gaps and practical suggestions played a key role in shaping the final guidance and strengthening its usefulness for organisations across Scotland.

1. Countering False Narratives / Misinformation

Misinformation and false narratives can spread quickly, especially in community settings, online spaces and public-facing roles. Volunteers and voluntary sector staff need simple, structured tools to recognise misinformation, respond safely, avoid escalation and protect organisational credibility.

Effective misinformation-resilience supports organisations to:

- identify false or misleading claims early
- understand how narratives spread through communities and online networks
- respond calmly and factually without amplifying harm
- protect volunteers from hostile or manipulative interactions
- maintain trust with service users, partners and the public
- strengthen organisational reputation and resilience

Countering misinformation is not about winning an argument - **it is about responding safely, accurately and proportionately.**

1.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers

The following Top Tips offer practical actions volunteers and staff can use to recognise and respond to misinformation in community, organisational and online settings. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady communication, reduce escalation and support calm, accurate responses when misleading claims, rumours or false narratives appear. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady interactions, reduce escalation and support calm, accurate communication when misleading claims, rumours or false narratives appear. Volunteers and staff can use these tips before engaging with a situation, during moments of uncertainty or pressure, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future responses.

The tips focus on calm pacing, curiosity, factual correction, psychological safety and proportionate disengagement - the foundations of misinformation resilience that help volunteers and staff respond confidently without amplifying harm or increasing tension.

- **Slow the pace.** Calm tone and simple language reduce defensiveness.
- **Clarify the claim.** “Can you tell me more about what you heard?” helps identify the narrative.
- **Avoid repeating false claims.** Repetition can unintentionally amplify misinformation.
- **Use verified sources.** Refer to trusted and authoritative information wherever possible.
- **Focus on impact, not blame.** “I can see why that might be worrying…” supports psychological safety.
- **Correct gently.** Provide accurate information without shaming or confronting.
- **Know when to disengage.** Volunteers and staff should not debate hostile or entrenched misinformation.

- **Report harmful narratives.** Log emerging misinformation patterns for organisational awareness.
- **Protect volunteers online.** Use moderation tools, escalation pathways and clear boundaries.
- **Coordinate messaging.** Ensure volunteers and staff use consistent, accurate language.

1.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources provide authoritative, evidence-informed guidance on identifying, analysing and responding to misinformation. They offer practical fact-checking tools, Scotland-specific communication guidance and strategic frameworks that help volunteers and staff respond safely without amplifying harm.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
NCVO – How Charities Tackle Misinformation	Accessible guidance on how charities can identify, respond to and reduce misinformation in community and online settings.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Charity Digital – How to Combat Online Misinformation	Practical advice on spotting misinformation online, responding safely and protecting organisational reputation.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Full Fact – Counter Misinformation Toolkit	Evidence-based tools for fact-checking, verifying claims and responding to misinformation without amplifying harm.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Ofcom / Verian – Mis- and Disinformation Research	Insight into how misinformation spreads, who is affected and what interventions work. Strong for evidence-informed planning.	PDF	Managers, Policy Leads, Communications Staff
UK Government GCS – RESIST Counter-Disinformation Toolkit	Authoritative UK framework for identifying, analysing and responding to misinformation and disinformation.	Webpage	Managers, Communications Leads

D-Hub – Anti-Authoritarian Toolkit	Tools for understanding authoritarian behaviours, harmful narratives and misinformation dynamics.	PDF	Volunteers, Staff, Managers

2. Crisis Communications

Crisis communications is the structured, calm and coordinated response to unexpected events that threaten safety, reputation or public trust. For Scotland's third sector - where volunteers and staff often operate in public-facing, emotionally sensitive or politically charged environments - clear crisis-communications processes ensure organisations respond quickly, accurately and safely.

Effective crisis communications help organisations:

- protect volunteers, staff and service users
- maintain public trust during high-pressure situations
- respond to misinformation, hostility or reputational threats
- coordinate messaging across teams and partners
- avoid escalation or unintended harm
- meet governance and regulatory expectations
- support volunteers who may feel overwhelmed or distressed

Crisis communications are not about reacting fast - it is about **responding calmly, accurately and consistently under pressure**.

2.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers

The following Top Tips offer structured, calm and trauma-aware actions volunteers and staff can use during crisis situations. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady communication, reduce confusion and support safe decision-making when events feel fast-moving, high-pressure or unpredictable. Volunteers and staff can use these tips at the outset of a crisis, while coordinating information, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future responses.

The tips focus on verification, coordinated messaging, holding statements, misinformation monitoring and volunteer protection - the core components of safe, consistent crisis communication that help organisations respond accurately without escalating tension or creating additional risk.

- **Slow the pace.** Calm measured communication reduces panic and prevents escalation.
- **Confirm the facts.** Never communicate until information is verified.
- **Use one voice.** A single spokesperson or designated comms lead prevents mixed messages.
- **Acknowledge uncertainty.** "We are looking into this and will update shortly" builds trust.
- **Avoid speculation.** Stick to confirmed information only.
- **Prepare holding statements.** Short, neutral messages buy time while facts are gathered.
- **Coordinate internally.** Volunteers and staff should receive clear, consistent updates.
- **Monitor narratives.** Track misinformation, hostility or emerging risks online and offline.

- **Protect volunteers.** They should not respond to media, hostile messages or public enquiries.
- **Review afterwards.** Every crisis should inform future planning and training.

2.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources provide comprehensive, charity-specific and UK-wide guidance on crisis communications. They include structured frameworks, practical toolkits, trauma-aware messaging guidance and awareness of misinformation, harmful narratives and hostility - essential for responding safely and confidently under pressure.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
ChartyComms / NCVO – Crisis Communications for Charities	Practical guidance on preparing for, managing and recovering from crisis situations. Strong for third sector organisations.	Webpage / Report (email option)	Staff, Managers, Communications Leads
CharityComms / NCVO– Communicating in a Crisis	Accessible training on crisis communications principles, messaging and escalation. Useful for staff and managers.	Webinar / Video	Staff, Managers
CharityComms – Responding to Opposition	Guidance on handling public criticism, opposition campaigns and reputational pressure.	Webinar / Video	Staff, Managers, Communications Leads
UK Government GCS – Crisis Communications Planning Guide	Authoritative UK guidance on crisis communications planning, escalation and coordination.	Webpage	Managers, Communications Leads, TSIs
Emergency Planning Society – Crisis Comms Checklist	Concise checklist for crisis communications readiness, response and recovery. Useful for quick reference.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
IMIX – Crisis Communications Resource	Guidance for organisations working with migrants, refugees and diverse communities. Strong on trauma-aware crisis messaging.	PDF	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
D-Hub – Anti-Authoritarian Crisis Response	Tools for understanding authoritarian behaviours, harmful narratives and crisis-driven hostility.	Toolkit / Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers

3. Managing Press Enquiries

Press enquiries require calm, structured and consistent handling to protect volunteers and staff, maintain accuracy, and safeguard organisational reputation. Enquiries can arrive unexpectedly and place significant pressure on volunteers, staff and managers. Whether responding to local journalists, national media, online outlets or community reporters, organisations need clear processes that support safe, confident and professional communication.

Effective press handling supports organisations to:

- respond confidently and professionally to media interest
- avoid escalation, misquotes or reputational harm
- ensure volunteers and staff are protected from direct media contact
- maintain consistent messaging across teams
- prepare clear holding statements and key messages
- manage sensitive or politically charged enquiries safely
- uphold Scotland-specific charity governance and reputational duties

Managing press enquiries is not about saying more - it is about saying the right things, at the right time, through the right person.

3.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers

The following Top Tips offer practical, calm and professionally-focused actions volunteers and staff can use to manage press enquiries safely and confidently. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady communication, reduce pressure and support clear decision-making when journalists make contact unexpectedly or during sensitive situations. Volunteers and staff can use these tips before responding, while coordinating information, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future media-handling practice.

The tips focus on spokesperson control, fact-checking, written questions, holding statements, calm messaging and reputational protection - the foundations of safe media handling that help organisations respond accurately, avoid escalation and protect volunteers, staff and organisational credibility.

- **Use one spokesperson.** Volunteers and staff should never respond directly to journalists unless in a designated press communications role.
- **Pause before responding.** Gather facts, confirm details and check internal messaging.
- **Request questions in writing.** This reduces pressure and prevents misinterpretation.
- **Prepare a holding statement.** Short, neutral messages buy time while information is verified.
- **Avoid speculation.** Stick strictly to confirmed facts.
- **Stay calm and concise.** Clear, simple language reduces risk of misquotes.

- **Check tone and framing.** Ensure messaging is trauma-aware and avoids defensiveness.
- **Log all enquiries.** Record who contacted you, when, and what they asked.
- **Coordinate internally.** Staff and volunteers should receive consistent updates.
- **Know when to decline.** It is acceptable to say, “We cannot comment at this time.”

3.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources offer authoritative guidance on media relations, press handling and reputational safety. They provide practical tools for structuring messages, preparing spokespeople and managing sensitive enquiries in ways that protect volunteers and uphold organisational credibility.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
PR Academy – Media Relations & Press Releases	Clear guidance on media relations, press releases, journalist engagement and effective message delivery. Strong foundation for charity communications.	Webpage / Toolkit	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople
Active PR – Handling Media Enquiries	Step-by-step guidance on responding to media enquiries, managing pressure and protecting organisational reputation.	Blog	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople
UKRI – How to Do Media Relations	Practical tools for preparing spokespeople, structuring messages and managing interviews safely.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople
UK Government GCS – Handling Media Attention	Authoritative UK guidance on managing media attention during sensitive or high-pressure situations.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Leads, Senior Staff
Presspage – Managing Media Enquiries	Practical advice on managing inbound media enquiries efficiently, authentically and safely.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople

4. Planning Safe Social Media Use

Social media plays a central role in organisational communication, community engagement and public messaging. Planning safe social media use helps volunteers and staff communicate confidently, maintain clear boundaries and reduce the risk of harm, misinformation or escalation. Safe planning supports organisations to:

- maintain consistent, values-led messaging
- set clear moderation boundaries
- protect volunteers from emotional strain
- reduce exposure to high-tension online environments
- avoid accidental amplification of harmful narratives
- ensure governance-level oversight of digital activity

Planning safe social media use is about creating calm, structured and ethical digital practice before hostility arises.

4.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers

The following Top Tips offer practical, proactive actions volunteers and staff can use to plan safe, values-led social media activity. They are designed to support calm, structured and ethical digital practice before any hostility or misinformation emerges. By planning ahead, organisations can reduce risk, protect volunteers from emotional strain, and maintain consistent messaging across all platforms.
These tips help teams set clear boundaries, avoid reactive posting, and create predictable moderation processes that reduce the likelihood of escalation. They also support volunteers to feel confident and protected when using organisational accounts, ensuring that communication remains steady, trauma-aware and aligned with organisational values.

Volunteers and staff can use these tips when preparing content, scheduling posts, reviewing moderation plans or assessing emerging online narratives. They form the foundation of safe digital practice and help organisations communicate clearly, consistently and responsibly in fast-moving online environments.

- **Set clear moderation boundaries.** Agree who moderates, when moderation happens, and what actions are permitted.
- **Use scheduled posting.** Reduce reactive engagement by planning posts in advance and avoiding high-tension periods.
- **Define response roles.** Clarify who responds to comments, who monitors narratives and who escalates concerns.
- **Avoid late-night posting or moderation.** Fatigue increases risk and reduces judgement.
- **Keep messaging values-led.** Ensure posts reflect organisational values, tone and trauma-aware practice.

- **Use organisational accounts only.** Volunteers and staff should never use personal accounts for organisational communication or to continue disagreements, disputes or moderation activity.
- **Log emerging narratives early.** Record hashtags, accounts or themes that may require monitoring.
- **Review plans regularly.** Update posting schedules, moderation boundaries and risk assessments as contexts change.
- **Have a clear social media policy.** Ensure volunteers and staff understand expectations around posting, moderation, escalation and acceptable use of organisational and personal accounts.

4.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources provide guidance on safe social media use, moderation, messaging, governance and digital-communication planning. They support organisations to maintain clarity, reduce risk and uphold safe, ethical practice online.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
NCVO – Social Media Guidance	Practical guidance on safe social media use, moderation, messaging and protecting volunteers from online harm.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Charity Commission – Charities and Social Media	Clear expectations for charity boards and leaders on safe, ethical and compliant social media use.	Webpage	Trustees, Managers, Senior Staff
CultureHive – Charities and Social Media	Accessible guidance on safe social media practice, messaging and moderation.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Charity Digital – Combatting Online Misinformation	Tools for identifying misinformation, responding safely and protecting organisational reputation online.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
OSCR – Ready, Set, Go: Social Media Guidance	Practical guidance for Scottish charities on using social media safely, managing risk, protecting reputation and supporting effective governance.	PDF	Volunteers, Staff, Managers

5. Responding to Social Media Hostility

Social media hostility can escalate quickly, affecting volunteers, staff, service users and organisational reputation. Hostility may include misinformation, harassment, identity-based abuse, or attempts to provoke emotional responses. Volunteers and staff need clear, safe boundaries and organisations need structured moderation, escalation and response processes.

Effective hostility-response supports organisations to:

- protect volunteers and staff from harmful or distressing online interactions
- respond calmly and proportionately to hostile posts
- avoid amplifying misinformation or harmful narratives
- maintain consistent, trauma-aware messaging
- uphold governance-level responsibilities for digital safety
- identify patterns of hostility linked to wider community tensions
- safeguard organisational reputation and public trust

Responding to online hostility is not about winning arguments - it is about **protecting people, reducing harm and maintaining safe, ethical communication**.

5.1. Top Tips for Responding to Social Media Hostility

The following Top Tips offer practical, emotionally safe actions volunteers and staff can use when responding to social-media hostility. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady interactions, reduce harm and support calm, proportionate decision-making when online hostility emerges - whether identity-based, narrative-driven, or linked to wider community tensions. Volunteers and staff can use these tips before moderating content, during moments of escalation, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future digital-safety practice.

The tips focus on safe moderation, de-escalation, factual correction, proportionate restriction, volunteer protection and organisational consistency - the core components of responding to social-media hostility without amplifying harmful narratives or increasing risk.

- **Do not engage emotionally.** Volunteers and staff should never respond directly to hostile posts unless in a designated communications role
- **Pause before acting.** Assess the content, risk level and potential impact.
- **Use moderation tools.** Hide comments, limit replies or restrict accounts when needed.
- **Avoid public debate.** Hostile actors often seek escalation - do not provide it.
- **Correct misinformation gently.** Use calm, factual statements without repeating harmful claims.
- **Protect volunteers' wellbeing.** Exposure to hostility can be distressing - offer check-ins and support.

- **Log incidents.** Record patterns, accounts, hashtags or narratives for organisational awareness.
- **Escalate serious harm.** Hate crime, threats or targeted harassment must be escalated immediately.
- **Coordinate messaging.** Ensure staff and volunteers use consistent language and tone.
- **Review regularly.** Update moderation and response plans based on emerging risks.

Social Media Wellbeing (Microcard)

Social media can create emotional strain, especially during periods of hostility, misinformation or high-tension public discussion. Volunteers and staff can use these quick prompts to maintain wellbeing, reduce overwhelm and stay grounded while moderating or responding online.

Quick Prompts

- **Pause before responding** – take a moment to breathe, ground and assess whether a reply is needed.
- **Limit exposure during high-tension periods** – use short, timed moderation windows and step back when hostility increases.
- **Use grounding after distressing interactions** – apply simple grounding tools (breathing, sensory reset, posture check).
- **Avoid late-night moderation** – fatigue increases emotional load and reduces judgement.
- **Log incidents rather than engaging emotionally** – record harmful posts or patterns for managers to review.
- **Seek peer support after difficult content** – share concerns with a colleague or supervisor.
- **Protect personal boundaries** – never use personal accounts for organisational moderation.

Useful Supporting Resources

- Mind UK – Online Pressure & Mental Health
- YoungMinds – Social Media and Mental Health

For wider wellbeing, grounding and burnout-prevention tools, volunteers and staff should also use the wellbeing resources in Section 4 of the Trauma Informed Support resource.

5.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources provide comprehensive guidance on digital safety, moderation, identity-based harassment and hostility awareness. They offer governance-level standards, trauma-aware communication tools and narrative-based hostility analysis - essential for protecting volunteers and organisational reputation online.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
Pride Centre – Managing Online SOGIESC-Based Harassment	Trauma-aware guidance for responding to harassment targeting sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.	PDF	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
Healing Justice London – Anti-Oppressive Digital Communication	Tools for safe, anti-oppressive communication in digital spaces, including grounding and de-escalation.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
D-Hub – Hostility & Online Authoritarian Behaviour	Guidance on recognising authoritarian behaviours, harmful narratives and online hostility dynamics.	Toolkit / Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers

6. Protecting Organisational Reputation

Reputational protection is a core governance responsibility for charities and volunteer-involving organisations. Public trust is built through consistent actions as well as communications. Clear decision-making, values-led practice, effective risk management and proportionate responses to concerns all play a role in protecting organisational reputation**.** In a landscape shaped by misinformation, online hostility, political polarisation and heightened public scrutiny, organisations must ensure volunteers, staff and managers communicate safely, consistently and in ways that uphold trust.

Effective reputational protection helps organisations:

- prevent reputational harm caused by misinformation, hostility or miscommunication
- respond safely to extremist misuse, misrepresentation or targeted campaigns
- maintain consistent, trauma-aware messaging across teams
- protect volunteers and staff from public or media pressure
- uphold governance-level duties under UK charity regulation
- identify emerging narrative-based risks early
- strengthen organisational resilience and public confidence

Reputational protection is not about being defensive - it is about **maintaining trust, safety and clarity in how the organisation communicates and behaves**.

6.1. Top Tips for Staff and Volunteers

The following Top Tips offer practical, calm and values-led actions volunteers and staff can use to protect organisational reputation. They are designed as quick, easy-to-apply prompts that help steady communication, reduce risk and support consistent decision-making when the organisation is under scrutiny, facing misinformation, or navigating sensitive public-facing situations. Volunteers and staff can use these tips before responding, during moments of pressure, or afterwards to reflect and strengthen future reputational-protection practice.

The tips focus on consistent messaging, narrative monitoring, proportionate response, volunteer protection, governance duties and values-led communication - the foundations of resilient, trustworthy organisational practice that help teams maintain clarity, uphold public confidence and avoid escalating reputational harm.

- **Use one organisational voice.** Volunteers and staff outside of designated communications roles should not speak publicly on behalf of the organisation.
- **Monitor narratives.** Track misinformation, hostility or emerging risks across social media and community spaces.
- **Prepare clear messaging.** Use simple, consistent language across all teams.
- **Respond proportionately.** Not every hostile comment requires a public response.
- **Avoid escalation.** Do not debate hostile actors or extremist narratives.

- **Protect volunteers.** Provide clear boundaries and support when they encounter hostility or pressure.
- **Log incidents.** Record reputational risks, hostile narratives and media enquiries.
- **Review governance duties.** Boards should regularly assess reputational risk and mitigation plans.
- **Coordinate with partners.** Share intelligence with trusted networks when appropriate.
- **Stay values-led.** Anchor communication in organisational purpose, ethics and Scotland-specific charity standards.

6.2. Core Set

The following core set of resources provide authoritative guidance on reputational protection, media management, extremist misuse prevention and strategic communications. They support organisations to maintain trust, respond safely to hostility and uphold Scotland-specific charity governance standards.

Title (Linked)	Brief Description	Format	Audience
UK Government / Charity Commission – Protecting Charities from Extremist Misuse	Authoritative guidance on preventing extremist misuse of charitable platforms, safeguarding reputation and meeting regulatory duties.	Webpage	Trustees, Senior Staff, Managers
UK Government GCS – Handling Media Attention	Guidance on managing media attention, protecting organisational reputation and responding safely during high-pressure situations.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Leads, Senior Staff
UKRI – Media Relations	Practical tools for preparing spokespeople, structuring messages and managing interviews in ways that protect organisational credibility.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople
CultureHive – Charities & Social Media	Guidance on safe, ethical and compliant social media use, including reputational risk management.	Webpage	Volunteers, Staff, Managers
PR Academy – Media Management	Clear advice on media relations, press releases, journalist engagement and reputational protection.	Webpage	Managers, Comms Staff, Spokespeople
D-Hub – Organisational Protection in Authoritarian Contexts (	Tools for recognising authoritarian behaviours, harmful narratives and reputational risks in sensitive environments.	Toolkit	Volunteers, Staff, Managers

Knowledge Gateway

This resource was created in partnership with:

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The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

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This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**