# Wife of Tory councillor jailed for inciting racial hatred tweets raising free speech debates



In a case that has sparked intense debate around free speech and incitement, Lucy Connolly, the wife of Conservative councillor Ray Connolly, has been sentenced to 31 months in prison for a social media post deemed to incite racial hatred. Her tweet, made shortly after the tragic murders of three young girls in Southport, called for 'mass deportation' and the burning of hotels housing migrants, garnering significant public attention and ultimately resulting in her arrest.

The incident took place on July 29 of the previous year when Connolly, responding to a surge of misinformation linking a Muslim immigrant to the stabbings, posted her aggressive remarks online. Despite deleting the tweet just hours later, it had already reached approximately 310,000 views. Connolly's actions led to a charge of inciting racial hatred, which she accepted in October after entering a guilty plea. The courts have since maintained that Connolly’s statements jeopardised public safety and contravened laws against online racism, an assertion strongly supported by the Crown Prosecution Service.

This ruling has drawn criticism from several quarters, with opponents arguing that the punishment is disproportionate compared to other criminal acts. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson has publicly expressed concern that Britain is "losing its reputation for free speech," particularly when individuals are imprisoned for online expressions. Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick echoed these sentiments, questioning how someone could serve a longer sentence for a tweet than for violent crimes or repeated offenders of domestic abuse.

Adding further complexity to the case, the political commentator Charlie Kirk, a known ally of former President Trump, has taken an interest in Connolly's situation. During a visit to the UK, he vowed to raise the matter with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Speaking on GB News, Kirk argued that Connolly's imprisonment was indicative of a broader issue concerning free speech in the UK, asserting, "As you guys [in the UK] have birthed free speech to the world, you are now becoming a totalitarian country."

While Connolly's defenders portray her as a victim of harsh sentencing, the legal framework under which she was prosecuted is clear. The indictment was not simply for offensive language, but for a deliberate call to action that authorities deemed dangerous and incendiary. The seriousness of inciting violence within online discourse was underscored by reflections from various community leaders and advocacy groups, highlighting the fine line between free expression and harmful rhetoric.

In her appeal, Connolly attempted to contextualise her actions, linking them to personal trauma surrounding the loss of her infant son and her emotional response to the horrific killings. Her husband has maintained that the post was a fleeting reaction to an emotional moment, insisting that it does not define her character or political beliefs. The couple's 12-year-old daughter has been particularly affected by the ordeal, facing the challenges of having a parent incarcerated over a controversial tweet.

As it stands, Connolly remains in HMP Drake Hall, Staffordshire, with little immediate hope of reprieve. She is currently set to serve at least two-fifths of her sentence before being eligible for release, which has led many to question the balance of justice in cases involving the often volatile intersection of online speech and racial sensitivities in Britain today. The case illustrates the ongoing tension within Western democracies regarding the boundaries of free speech, particularly in the digital age, where a single post can lead to serious legal ramifications.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745413/tory-councillors-wife-lucy-Connolly-southport-tweet-marco-rubio.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://news.sky.com/story/wife-of-tory-councillor-jailed-for-31-months-over-social-media-post-stirring-up-racial-hatred-13234756)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/uk-woman-jailed-inciting-racial-hatred-not-posting-hurtful-words-2024-10-29/), [[3]](https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/updated-sentence-childminder-admits-inciting-racial-hatred-over-social-media-post), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2910vrrygo)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp3wkzgpjxvo), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/tory-councillors-wife-lucy-connolly-jailed-for-31-months-for-inciting-race-hatred-b1188513.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745413/tory-councillors-wife-lucy-Connolly-southport-tweet-marco-rubio.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/uk-woman-jailed-inciting-racial-hatred-not-posting-hurtful-words-2024-10-29/> - Reuters reports on Lucy Connolly's conviction for inciting racial hatred after posting a social media message calling for 'mass deportation' and the burning of hotels housing immigrants. The article clarifies that her conviction was based on the intent to incite violence, not merely for posting hurtful words. Connolly's post, which garnered 310,000 views, was made in response to false information about a Muslim immigrant committing a knife attack in Southport. Authorities emphasized that her actions endangered lives and violated laws against promoting racism online.
3. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/updated-sentence-childminder-admits-inciting-racial-hatred-over-social-media-post> - The Crown Prosecution Service details the sentencing of Lucy Connolly, who admitted to inciting racial hatred through a social media post advocating for the burning of hotels housing asylum seekers following the Southport stabbings. The article highlights that Connolly's post, made hours after the killings, was based on false information and received significant attention online. The CPS emphasizes that using threatening language to incite racism online is unacceptable and illegal, leading to Connolly's 31-month imprisonment.
4. <https://news.sky.com/story/wife-of-tory-councillor-jailed-for-31-months-over-social-media-post-stirring-up-racial-hatred-13234756> - Sky News reports on the sentencing of Lucy Connolly, the wife of a Conservative councillor, who was jailed for 31 months after pleading guilty to publishing material intended to stir up racial hatred. Connolly's social media post, made on the day three young girls were killed in Southport, called for 'mass deportation now' and the burning of hotels housing asylum seekers. The article discusses the context of her post and the legal proceedings leading to her conviction.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2910vrrygo> - BBC News covers the case of Lucy Connolly, a 41-year-old childminder and wife of a Tory councillor, who pleaded guilty to writing a social media post intending to stir up racial hatred. The article details Connolly's post, which called for hotels housing asylum seekers to be set on fire and for mass deportations, made on the day three girls were killed in Southport. The BBC provides insights into the legal proceedings and the implications of her actions.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp3wkzgpjxvo> - BBC News reports on the sentencing of Lucy Connolly, the wife of a Conservative councillor, who was jailed for 31 months after calling for hotels housing asylum seekers to be set on fire. The article discusses the context of her social media post, made on the day three girls were killed in Southport, and the legal proceedings that led to her conviction. The BBC also covers the reactions to the case and the broader implications for free speech and online conduct.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/tory-councillors-wife-lucy-connolly-jailed-for-31-months-for-inciting-race-hatred-b1188513.html> - The Evening Standard reports on the case of Lucy Connolly, the wife of a Conservative councillor, who was jailed for 31 months after posting a hate-filled social media message to stir up racial hatred against asylum seekers on the day of the Southport attacks. The article details Connolly's post, which called for 'mass deportation now' and the burning of hotels housing asylum seekers, and discusses the legal proceedings leading to her conviction.