

# CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT



WELCOME TO THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT NEWSLETTER



## JO COX CIVILITY COMMISSION

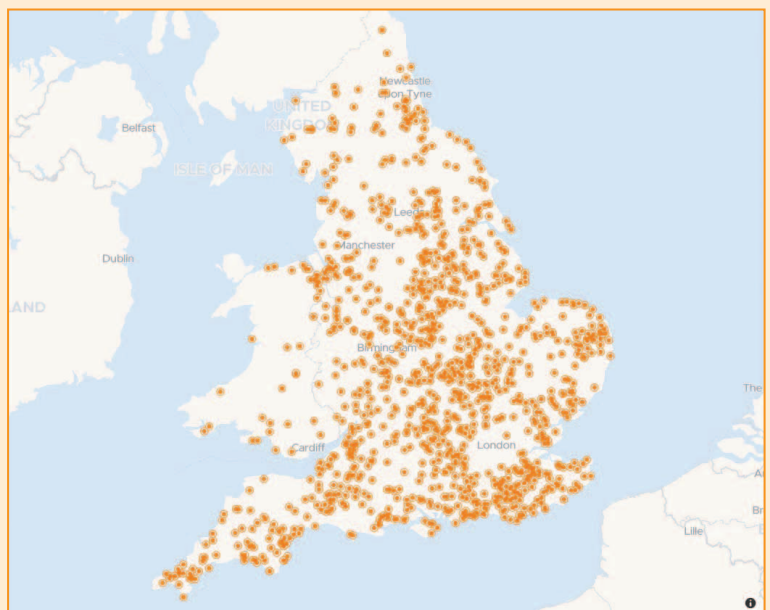
The Jo Cox Civility Commission was set up following the murder of British MP Jo Cox. Their aim is to find practical recommendations to address the problem of violence, abuse and intimidation of elected representatives. They recently put out a call for evidence and included local councils. The aim is to develop support, guidance, resources, best practice etc. The Commission has already engaged with over one hundred stakeholders and is very aware that local councils are also affected. A Local Government Association (LGA) survey of local councillors in 2022 found that 88% of them had experienced abuse and intimidation in fulfilling their roles. Their aim is to draft a set of recommendations which they plan to publish in January 2024. We advised them about the work done by the Civility and Respect Project and the aims for further improvement work that we would like to see included in their report.

## 1414 LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE NOW SIGNED THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

Towns and villages are demonstrably and immeasurably improved by what local council councillors, clerks and other employees do in their communities day in and day out.

The pledge is a public declaration that in what they do, town, parish and community councils are committed to civility and respect. It outlines what they do/will do as part of that commitment. Research has found that taking a voluntary pledge of this nature can impact (for the better) on behaviour and co-operation.

If your council has not yet signed-up to the pledge they can find out more about it at [www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/civility-and-respect-project](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/civility-and-respect-project).



## Toxic behaviour, personal safety and stalking awareness

**The Civility and Respect Project has led on setting up the following:**

Worknest is running a webinar on 'Tackling Toxic Behaviour in local councils' on 15 January 2024, starting at 2.15pm. This webinar is open and free to anyone involved in a town or parish council as a councillor or as an employee. You can register for the webinar by going to <https://worknest.com/training/tackling-toxic-behaviours-in-town-and-parish-councils/?v=NALC>

If you can't make the above time/date please register anyway and you will receive a copy of the recording and accompanying resources.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust are hosting two webinars. Both are open and free to anyone involved in a town or parish council as a councillor or an employee. They are limited to 50 attendees each.

Personal Safety - 25 January 2024, 2pm to 3:30pm

Register here: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/878eeb84-824b-41ae-b6f5-b1da290a8e36@c4c81213-ca91-4529-8733-6d9b3e273f81>

Stalking Awareness - 15 February 2024, 2pm to 3:30pm

Register here:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/230ce801-b1ae-465c-b369-60857d771d77@c4c81213-ca91-4529-8733-6d9b3e273f81>

## Survey of monitoring officers

Monitoring officers are responsible for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints about local councillors. The survey included a question about what they felt would make a difference.

The headline result from the survey was that 50% said that better trained councillors would make a difference. This was based on their experience of dealing with Code of Conduct complaints. NALC produces several guides for councillors as well as other resources, and training is normally available from county associations. The councils who have signed up to the the Civility and Respect Pledge have said that they will have a training programme in place for councillors. Ensuring councillors undertake training for their role should be relatively easy to implement and based on this survey has the potential to reduce Code of Conduct complaints and improve civility and respect.

However, the other 50% of the monitoring officers who responded felt sanctions were needed. NALC continues to promote the need for sanctions (which would require new legislation) as far as possible. All the local councils who have signed up to the pledge state as part of that process that they "support the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate". However,

lobbying for sanctions is very challenging and not a quick fix. Has your council taken any action around lobbying for sanctions? If it has, the Civility and Respect Project Manager would be interested to hear about it. Has it, for example, decided to lobby its local MP?

## Internal Audit Forum (IAF) proposals for change

Proposals for change were discussed at the Civility and Respect Intervention Workshop. Evidence from the Civility and Respect Project was that there was a close link between good governance and good civility and respect. Since the workshop, this has been discussed further at the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG). The proposals for change are now being explored in more detail with reports going back to JPAG.

## Review of The Good Councillor's Guide

Deborah White, Avon Local Councils Association (recently retired), has been appointed to lead the review and rewrite of The Good Councillor's Guide. The target is to have the revised version ready for local elections in May 2024. Deborah is consulting with a range of stakeholders on an ongoing basis. If you have any suggestions for improving the guide please email [Hazel.Broatch@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:Hazel.Broatch@nalc.gov.uk) and she will forward them to Deborah.

## Resilient governance in the Netherlands

A team from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (who are looking into civility and respect in the Netherlands) visited NALC and attended the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) National Conference in October 2023. They advised that aggression and intimidation against local politicians are increasing, and so is online hate and intimidation. The team from the Netherlands were very interested to learn more about the Civility and Respect Pledge and the resources that had been produced by the Civility and Respect Project. They explained that they too were actively increasing awareness, preparedness and signaling, and they had put out a call for civility and respect. They had identified that unacceptable behaviour was impacting on the attractiveness of political office and that their clerks were needing to feel that they could speak out and know that they would get support.



Please visit our dedicated civility and respect pages for lots more information and support

[SLCC](#) | [Civility and Respect Project](#) and [NALC](#) | [Civility and Respect Project](#)



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS