

CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

ISSUE 3 | JUNE 2022

PROJECT UPDATE

The project approval board has recently signed off on an initial programme of support for councils, councillors, and officers. The programme has documented a sliding scale of progressively worsening behaviours and the impacts that result for councils, members, and officers (the civility and respect continuum), and we are focused on delivering solutions which span the entire continuum, see page two for more information.

Our delivery programme will be headed up by the Civility and Respect Pledge, which we will be launching very shortly. We are offering bespoke training support which starts to address behavioural issues; develop critical skills to handle difficult situations; provide an environment where participants can discuss current difficulties; and receive expert advice on how to manage, avoid, and prevent escalation. Details and dates for training are on pages three and four.

In addition, we are working on specific ways to strengthen governance to minimise opportunities for bullying and harassment. More information and updates will follow throughout the summer and autumn.

RESPONSE TO THE CPSL REPORT

On 18 March 2022, the government published its response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) Review and recommendations on local government ethical standards. The review, presented in Jan 2019, contained 26 recommendations, including introducing sanctions and mandatory training councillors and qualifications for clerks.

Both NALC and SLCC have released statements expressing their bitter disappointment that the government's 12-page response simply fails to properly address the recommendations.

Chair of SLCC's Board of Directors, Steve Trice, said: "After so much work by the CSPL which produced its clear, evidence-based report in January 2019 identifying much needed improvements to standards of behaviour in local government, the government's response, three years later, is very disappointing (especially to those in the town and parish council sector) that most recommendations are unlikely to be taken forward."

Cllr Keith Stevens, NALC chair said: "I am bitterly disappointed by the government's light touch, totally inadequate response to the CSPL report on local government ethical standards. It will do nothing to help stamp out poor behaviour in councils at all levels where it exists, and I would strongly urge ministers to have a rethink."

NALC and SLCC will work with the government on the areas, where they have committed to further work, to support local government and will continue to press for the changes needed to strengthen the standards regime and to tackle poor behaviour where it exists.

What can you do? Please continue to lobby your MPs to press for the legislative changes, needed to promote and uphold the high standards of conduct we all expect and to tackle poor behaviour. Sample letters can be found here: [SLCC](#) and [NALC](#).

[Read the government's response to the CSPL report.](#) | [Read the chair of the CSPL's statement on the government's response.](#)

WELCOME TO THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM THE JOINT PROJECT ASSURANCE BOARD

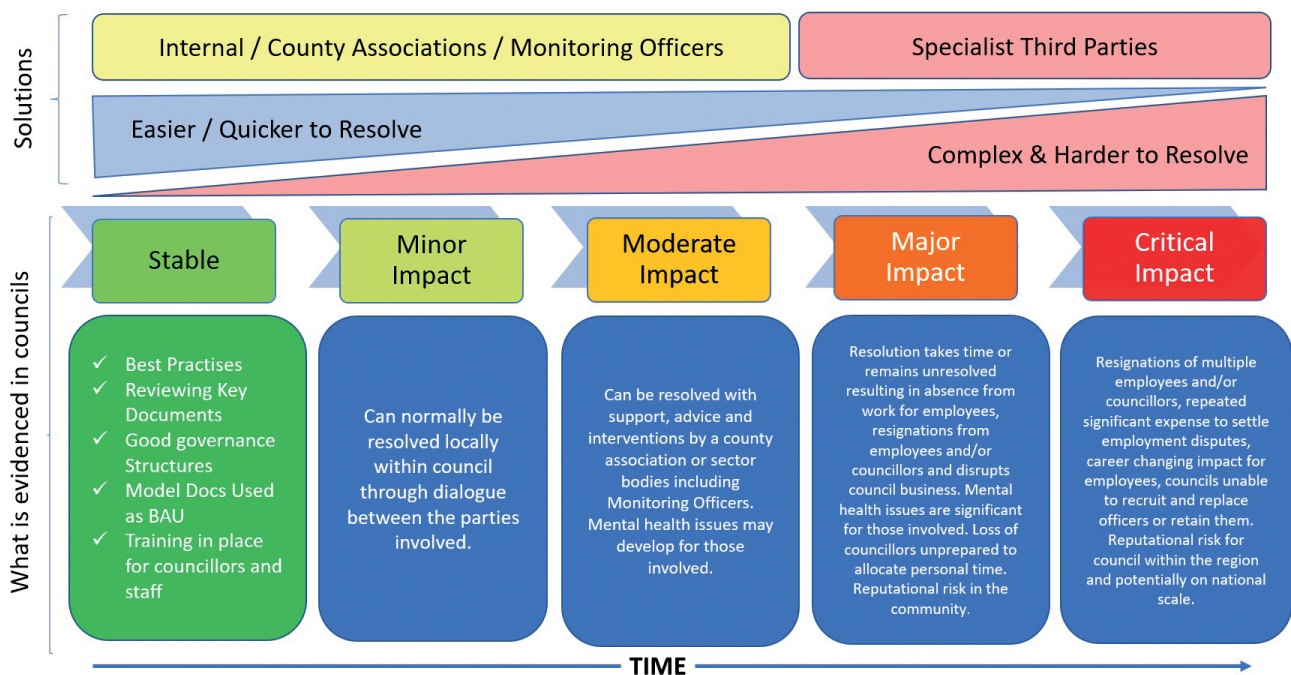
The project team are doing some great work and in April we approved an initial suite of governance and bespoke training to support you.

We recognise that bullying and harassment can be extremely destructive for everyone involved and for the reputation of a council. The project is fully committed to equipping you with the necessary tools and skills to create a zero-tolerance environment and to better deal with it where it does happen.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT CONTINUUM

The Civility and Respect Continuum illustrates how issues escalate over time. Our research has indicated that councils experiencing poor conduct or vexatious demands/complaints often experience problems repeatedly over a significant period of time. The longer an issue is permitted to continue, unaddressed, the more complex, time consuming, and expensive the resolution becomes. This can eventually result in damage to the reputation of the council and health issues for those involved, eventually ending with multiple resignations of staff and councillors.

Councils that have up to date policies and procedures and well-trained councillors and employees, can often manage and mediate issues with or without advice and support from county associations and/or monitoring officers. Where councils become overwhelmed, or fail to draw upon the resources available, matters can escalate and come under significant strain and pressure. In these situations the solutions are often beyond the existing support offered and invariably best resolved by third parties; a costly and time-consuming challenge.



The project is identifying solutions to support councillors, officers, councils, and county officers at every stage of the civility continuum, however whilst governance and training solutions may help with minor and moderate issues, the options for support at the 'major' end of the scale become more limited. Support from monitoring officers and county associations may provide resolution in some instances, but often issues have become too complex to resolve without costly interventions from specialist third parties. Every attempt should be made to prevent escalation by addressing potential behavioural issues as soon as they arise, calling out bullying and harassment at the earliest opportunity, and standing up for civil and respectful behaviour.

If the issues within a council have escalated to critical, then the options for resolution are still further limited, with costly external resolution and legal support often being required to reach resolutions. Potential action/intervention at this stage is being piloted with a town council struggling with chronic issues. It is being overseen by the joint SLCC/NALC Internal Development Board. If the solution proves successful it may be possible to expand the support programme, but much depends on the councils' willingness to make a positive change.

Early intervention to head off chronic issues is a far more effective mechanism to handle poor behaviour.

The project team is committed to finding ways to support all councils, councillors, and officers.

MAINTAINING A STABLE COUNCIL

There is already a huge amount of support available which will help to maintain a 'stable' council or reduce poor behaviour within councils with minor issues. Here are some examples:

QUALIFICATIONS

A parish clerk is a professional role and councils can support their clerks to attain industry recognised qualifications such as the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA), Certificate in Local Councils Administration (CILCA), or Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration (FILCA). These qualifications demonstrate that you have a sound understanding of local councils, increase confidence, and help officers to better support their councils.



LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

Councils can build their governance and improve their reputation in the local community by taking part in the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS). It has been designed both to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. It provides the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journey, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector.



PUBLICATIONS

Many good publications already exist which will help councils and councillors improve understanding of the role of a councillor, help councillors to better support the community, and reduce incidences of poor behaviour. There is a whole series of Good Councillor publications available on the NALC website including the 'Good Councillors Guide'. They will help you navigate the role and understand the associated law. Take a look at the guide to Being a Good Employer which gives practical guidance on recruiting and managing employees effectively.



For Clerks there is the SLCC Clerks' Toolkit, an incredibly useful resource updated in 2021, it provides information on a range of issues including governance, roles and responsibilities, public engagement, managing information and elections, along with template policies, protocols, and forms. The publication is a benefit of SLCC membership and only accessible to logged-in SLCC members on the website. It also contains numerous live links to SLCC advice notes and external websites and documents, permitting direct access to further information sources.

See [NALC](#) and [SLCC](#) websites for more information.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT TRAINING PROGRAMME



One of the key aims of the project is to deliver training packages to support councillors, clerks, and employees who are experiencing difficulties with bullying and harassment. We have worked with key partners to create a brand new series of packages covering local council and councillor communications and engagement and are now pleased to share the first range of this training. Cost for attendance will be supplemented by the project and they are being offered at a 50% discount to the full price until the end of 2022. If we have a high demand for places we will schedule additional dates.

Breakthrough Communications has created a suite of bespoke workshops and resource packs for local council clerks, officers, and councillors as part of the Civility & Respect Project. Each package comprises useful guides and custom designed toolkits as well as access to an on-demand and live virtual training event. We have designed separate packages for clerks/officers and councillors, covering the themes of emotional intelligence and resilience, leadership in challenging situations, and how councils and councillors can avoid negative engagement on social media.

Resilience and Emotional Intelligence, what it means in practice for Clerks and Council Officers-Breakthrough Communications. Delegate fee £30

The learning content, live workshop, and toolkits will enable participants to develop a better understanding of where our behaviour comes from, consider what resilience means for us in the context of our different local council roles and will provide an opportunity to explore role-focused scenarios and how we might respond to those different scenarios. We'll consider strategies to manage and deal with different situations effectively, provide guidelines and suggestions based on worked through scenarios. We'll also lead the user through a set of exercises, input and self-reflection and a resource pack for building our own resilience and emotional intelligence.

Leadership in Challenging Situations - dealing with challenging situations and working with others effectively - Breakthrough Communications. Delegate fee £30

The learning content, live workshop, and toolkits will enable participants to deal with a range of role-focused challenging situations as well as exploring how we can work with others more effectively. We will consider different leadership styles and approaches in the context of your role, exploring which styles we personally 'default' to and which styles can work effectively for different situations. We will explore scenarios of challenging situations we might face in our role, and discuss how we might deal with these effectively and appropriately. We'll also consider how to build, support and get the most from an effective and motivated team.

Respectful Social Media - how to deal with attacks and negative engagement - Breakthrough Communications. Delegate fee £30

The learning content, live workshop, and toolkits will enable participants to explore different methods and strategies for dealing with negative attacks on social media and ways in which you can keep control of our social media output. We will consider how we come across on social media as councils, as well as individually, what our personal 'digital tone of voice' sounds like, as well as considering our use of language and its role in positive two-way communication and explore the type of content we can post on social media, depending on our role. For councillors we will provide suggested social media do's and don'ts: how to be effective on social media, whilst bearing in mind issues around Code of Conduct. For clerks and officers will explore how the council can de-mystify the role of the council and showcase its people in order to help pre-emptively deal with negative engagement and attacks.

Civility and respect - Uncovering the issues for public sector (60 Minute webinar) – Becky Walsh. Delegate fee £15

Condescending comments, demeaning emails, disrupting meetings, reprimanding someone publicly, talking behind someone's back, silent treatment, not giving credit where credit is due, rolling eyes, and being yelling at. This webinar looks at the issues we face in our council roles and the impact on individuals involved and the organisation as a whole.

What makes people become challenging? (60 Minute webinar) – Becky Walsh. Delegate fee £15

Dive into human psychology, neuroscience and power dynamics. What triggers people to behave from the worst of themselves? How as leaders can we create environments with fewer trigger situations and more safety? Discuss real-life situations and how to turn them around when they start to get out of hand.

Personal resilience and self-protection (60 Minute webinar) – Becky Walsh. Delegate fee £15

Having a good understanding of yourself means you'll know what to do when someone tries to push your buttons. We discuss emotional resilience and emotional intelligence and how this applies to specific council situations.

Understanding psychopathic and narcissistic behaviour (60 Minute webinar) – Becky Walsh. Delegate fee £15

Both psychopathic and narcissistic people generally lack empathy and tend to have unrealistically high opinions of themselves. They often exploit and manipulate others, and can be hard to spot as they can also be superficially charming. How to spot them and monitor your own behaviour to lessen their impact on you and your organisation.

Code of Conduct (120 Minute webinar) – Hoey Ainscough. Delegate fee £15

This course is aimed at councils who have either adopted the new LGA Code of Conduct for members, as endorsed by NALC and SLCC, or who are considering adopting it. It looks at the guidance which sits alongside the code, and addresses practicalities such as dealing with requests for dispensations and making arrangements for Councillors who have declared an interest and need to leave the room, the complaints process and range of sanctions available for breaching of the Code. Questions about any aspect of the code are encouraged as we aim to help participants understand how to make the code work most effectively at a local level.

DATES AND BOOKING FOR CLERKS/EMPLOYEES TRAINING (CLICK LINK BELOW TO BOOK):

Resilience and Emotional Intelligence | Multiple dates
Leadership in Challenging Situations | Multiple dates
Respectful Social Media | Multiple dates
Uncovering the issues for public sector | 8 September
What makes people become challenging | 22 September
The New Code of Conduct | 28 September
Personal resilience and self-protection | 6 October
Understanding psychopathic and narcissistic behaviour | 20 October

DATES AND BOOKING FOR COUNCILLOR TRAINING:

TITLE	DATES	CONTACT/LINK
Resilience and emotional intelligence	Multiple dates available	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect
Leadership in challenging situations	Multiple dates available	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect
Respectful social media	Multiple dates available	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect
Civility and respect - uncovering the issues for public sector	12 September 1.30pm	Contact sue@haptc.org.uk to book
What makes people become challenging?	26 September 1.30pm	Contact sue@haptc.org.uk to book
Personal resilience and self-protection	3 October 1.30pm	Contact sue@haptc.org.uk to book
Understanding psychopathic and narcissistic behaviour	17 October 1.30pm	Contact sue@haptc.org.uk to book
Code of Conduct	19 October 7pm	Contact sue@haptc.org.uk to book

For more information about the training, please contact michelle.moss@nalc.gov.uk.

Please visit our dedicated Civility and Respect pages for lots more information and support at [SLCC](#) and [NALC](#).