Civility & Respect

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What was the problem?

- Too many Councillors and Clerks were leaving the sector due to being treated with disrespect / bullying and worse.

- Impacted well-being of all involved

- The problem was hidden – nobody talked about it.

- Councillors left

- Clerks paid off with NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement)

- Detrimental to the local community

What do we mean by Civility & Respect?

Definition of Civility & Respect:
Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech and in the written word.

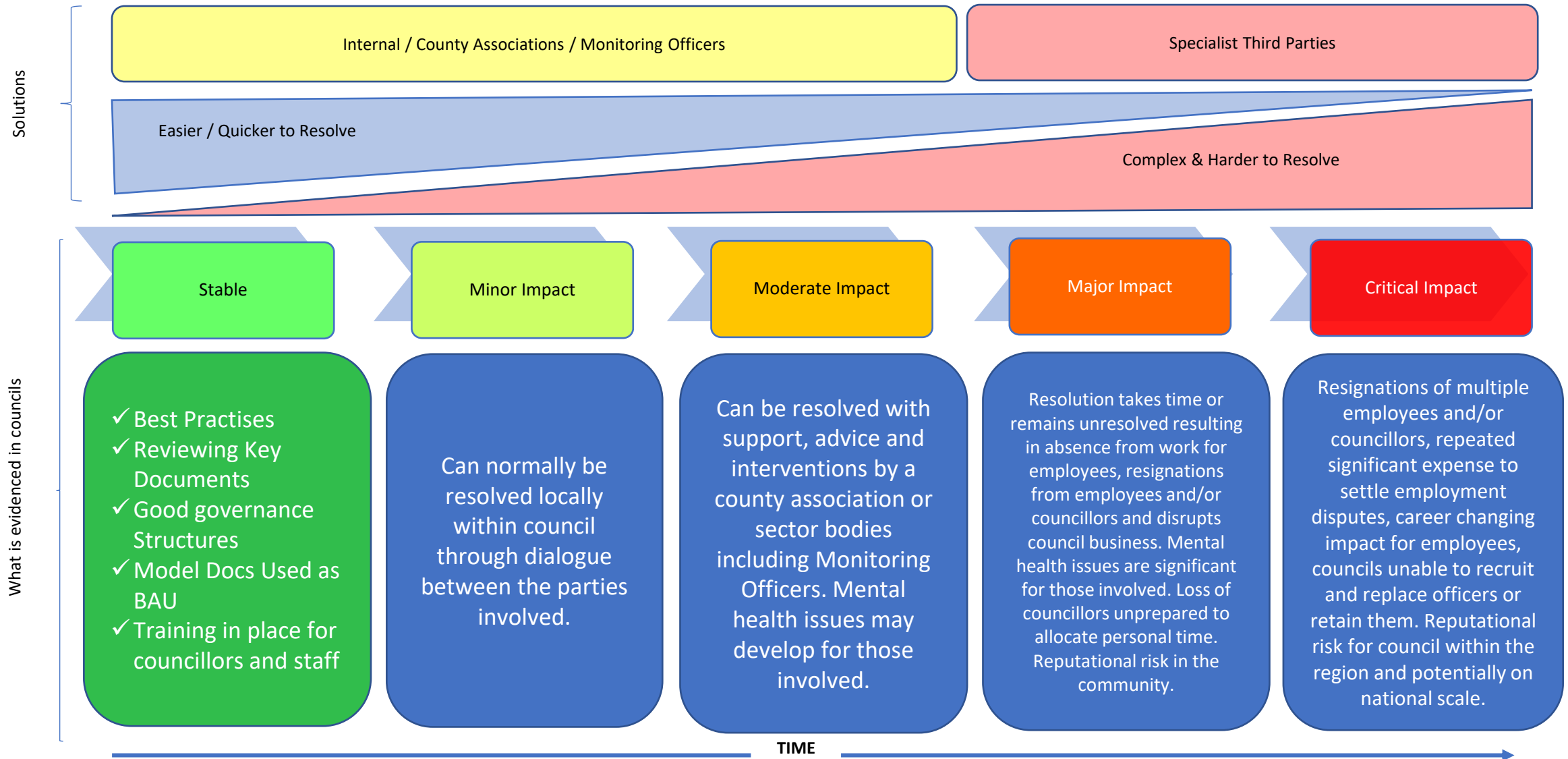Examples of ways in which you can show respect:
By listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

The Civility and Respect Project

NALC, SLCC and OVW believe now is the time to put Civility and Respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

Civility & Respect for the local council sector

– IS top of the agenda

Scale of issues

Solutions

| Internal / County Associations / Monitoring Officers | Specialist Third Parties |

Easier / Quicker to Resolve

Complex & Harder to Resolve

What is evidenced in councils

| Stable | Minor Impact | Moderate Impact | Major Impact | Critical Impact |

Stable
- ✓ Best Practises
- ✓ Reviewing Key Documents
- ✓ Good governance Structures
- ✓ Model Docs Used as BAU
- ✓ Training in place for councillors and staff

Minor Impact
Can normally be resolved locally within council through dialogue between the parties involved.

Moderate Impact
Can be resolved with support, advice and interventions by a county association or sector bodies including Monitoring Officers. Mental health issues may develop for those involved.

Major Impact
Resolution takes time or remains unresolved resulting in absence from work for employees, resignations from employees and/or councillors and disrupts council business. Mental health issues are significant for those involved. Loss of councillors unprepared to allocate personal time. Reputational risk in the community.

Critical Impact
Resignations of multiple employees and/or councillors, repeated significant expense to settle employment disputes, career changing impact for employees, councils unable to recruit and replace officers or retain them. Reputational risk for council within the region and potentially on national scale.
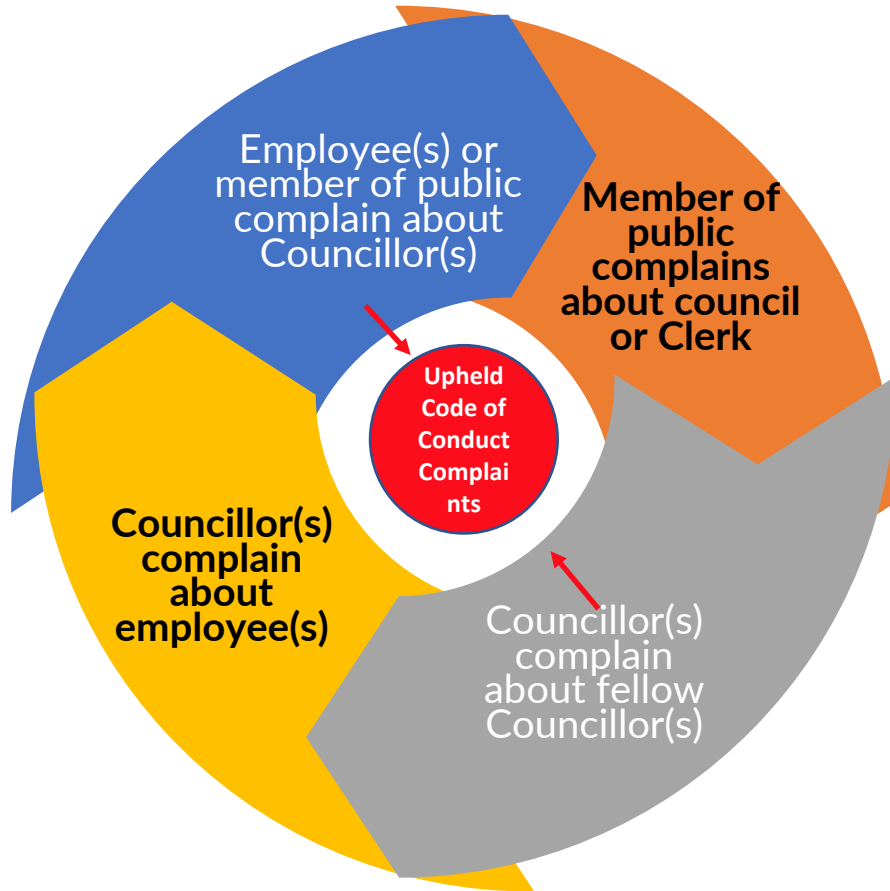
TIME

Project Team Deliverables

The Civility & Respect Project Team have been putting in place 'deliverables', including support for struggling councils, lobbying to strengthen the standards regime, training for Clerks and Councillors, tools to support good governance.

Workstream 1 - Training
- For both Councillors and Staff
- Including leadership, HR, team building and conflict management
- Variety of training mediums

Workstream 2 - Governance
- Governance and enabling documentation
- HR policies
- Disciplinary and grievance toolkit

Workstream 3 - Intervention
- How to identify struggling councils
- Support package
- Performance strategy

Workstream 4 - Legislative
- Monitor and influence relevant legislation such as introduction of sanctions, online abuse and enhanced role of the MO
- Make a change campaign

Workstream 5 - Collaboration
- Work closely with LGA and other similar organisations to share best practices, documents and processes to maximise support available to Councils, Councillors and staff

Workstream 6 - Enabling
- Enhanced websites to include Civility and Respect
- Sign posting to further support on member websites
- Drive to promote membership to relevant organisations

COMPLAINTS THAT AREN'T UPHELD OR NEVER REACH FORMAL COMPLAINT STAGE ARE THE SIGNIFICANT TIME STEALERS (95%+)

Complaints about council or officers are not Code of Conduct issues

THINKING ABOUT THE ISSUES WE SEE:

❖ The scale of issues outside of those being determined by Monitoring Officers often goes unquantified, costed and avoid scrutiny.

❖ Conflict and issues surrounding conflict are avoided by many key roles.

❖ A small minority of individuals are often at the centre of repeat issues.

! OFFICER & COUNCIL TIME (COST & RISK)

The hidden damage poor conduct creates can and does mean councils incur significant costs in terms of diverted officer time and potential reputational damage.

! CORROSIVE NATURE

From the initial issue to the point of resolution (often many aren't), this can take months and in some cases years. During this time council activities are disrupted, employees are lost and so are community servants i.e. councillors.

! SOME COUNCILS FAIL TO RECOVER

Typified by a revolving door scenario of employees, councillors and a profile in the community that taints any good work delivered for the electorate. This becomes a permanent state.

! CULTURE AND BEHAVIOURS DEEPEN

Leaders don't emerge or if they do any successes are targeted to discredit progress and improvements. There is a reluctance for Chairs to continue or potential Chairs to take up the challenge.

THOSE COMPLAINTS NOT UPHELD CONTINUE TO RUMBLE ON AND EAT INTO COUNCIL TIME, THAT OF ADVISERS AND THE MONITORING OFFICER

TRAINING

One of the key aims (deliverables) of the Civility & Respect project is to deliver training packages to support Councillors, Clerks and other employees who are experiencing difficulties with bullying and harassment.

The new custom-made training therefore includes the following initial topics, delivered in a variety of formats:
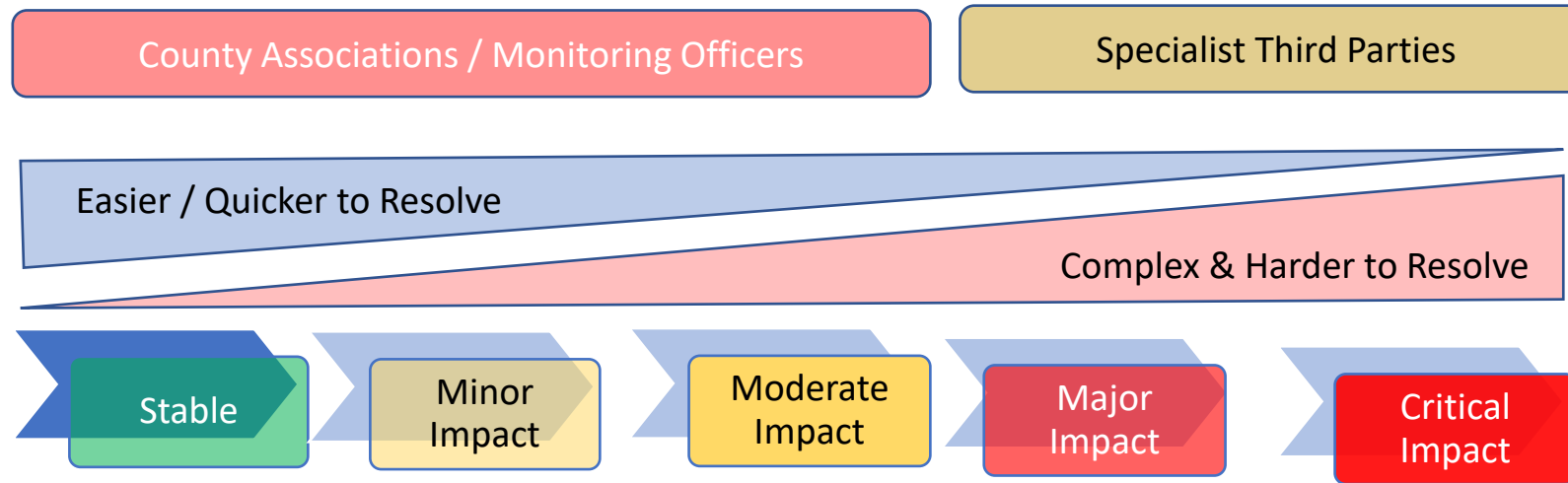
- Resilience and Emotional Intelligence – what it means in practice for Clerks and Council Officers
- Leadership in Challenging Situations – dealing with challenging situations and working with others effectively
- Respectful Social Media – How to deal with the attacks and negative engagement
- Civility and Respect – Uncovering the issues for the public sector (Councillors only session) (Clerks only session)
- What makes people become challenging?
- Personal resilience and self-protection
- Understanding psychopathic and narcissistic behaviour
- The new Code of Conduct
- Managing Conflict and Difficult Conversations.

INTERVENTIONS

Another key aim (deliverable)

Returning to our original slide we need to review how appropriate interventions can be offered at different stages.

INTERVENTIONS / SOLUTIONS

County Associations / Monitoring Officers

Specialist Third Parties

Easier / Quicker to Resolve

Complex & Harder to Resolve

| Stable | Minor Impact | Moderate Impact | Major Impact | Critical Impact |

Governance
- Staffing Committee with clear terms of reference and full authority to act
- Induction guide for members and staff
- Officer Member protocol
- Dignity at Work
- Equalities, Diversity and Respect (hate speech)

Training
Roles and responsibilities, Induction, HR basics, Leadership and Chairmanship, Code of - Conduct for members and code training for staff, Budget to support training and CPD for staff and members

Council Action Plan for the year

Code of Conduct

Employment policies
- Complaints procedure
- Vexatious and persistent complainant
- Disciplinary and Grievance
- Capability
- Sickness and absence management
- Safeguarding and lone working

Supportive personnel management

Consistency across accreditation schemes

Functional Council

Early evaluation tool

Establishing the truths

Reset framework and timetable

Role of CALC SLCC

Resolution framework (TCM)
Trained support (TCM)
Resolution portal (TCM)

Review of council governance
Resolution plan

Role of MO, CALC, SLCC
External HR advice
Framework
Use of employment support panel
Trained advisors and mediators

Code of Conduct – bespoke to tie in with reset framework/recovery plan

Governance

We also need to produce easy to understand, relevant governance documents for all councils, clerks and councilors to use. The following new documents have been produced in this project to date:

- Recruitment Guide
- Councillor – Officer Protocol
- New Guide to Social Media
- Roles and responsibilities

Governance – new in progress

- Better communication – addressing conflict
- Conflict Resolution – legal issues
- Hybrid – Home Working

How did we promote the project?

- We created the Civility & Respect Pledge

- Encouraged Councils to publically sign up to the following at their meetings.

- When signed up Council receives a numbered certificate and is added to a digital map

Civility & Respect Pledge

Civility & Respect Pledge

Changing the culture in local councils

When signing the pledge, the Council must agree the following statements.

That the Council:

✓ has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff

✓ has signed up to the Code of Conduct for Councillors

✓ has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts

✓ will Seek professional help at early stages should civility and respect issues arise

✓ will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens

✓ will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to Being a Role Model / Champion Council e.g., via Local Council Award Scheme

✓ supports the continued Lobbying for change in Legislation to support the Civility and Respect pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

Will the Civility & Respect Project make a difference?

- Only time will tell

Civility & Respect

IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

1221 councils have signed the Civility & Respect Pledge

- Over 1200 councils discussing the topic in public, not hidden
- Empowering people to 'call out' disrespectful behaviour
- Next challenge is to see beyond the Pledge – engage with all the training, governance and interventions being made available
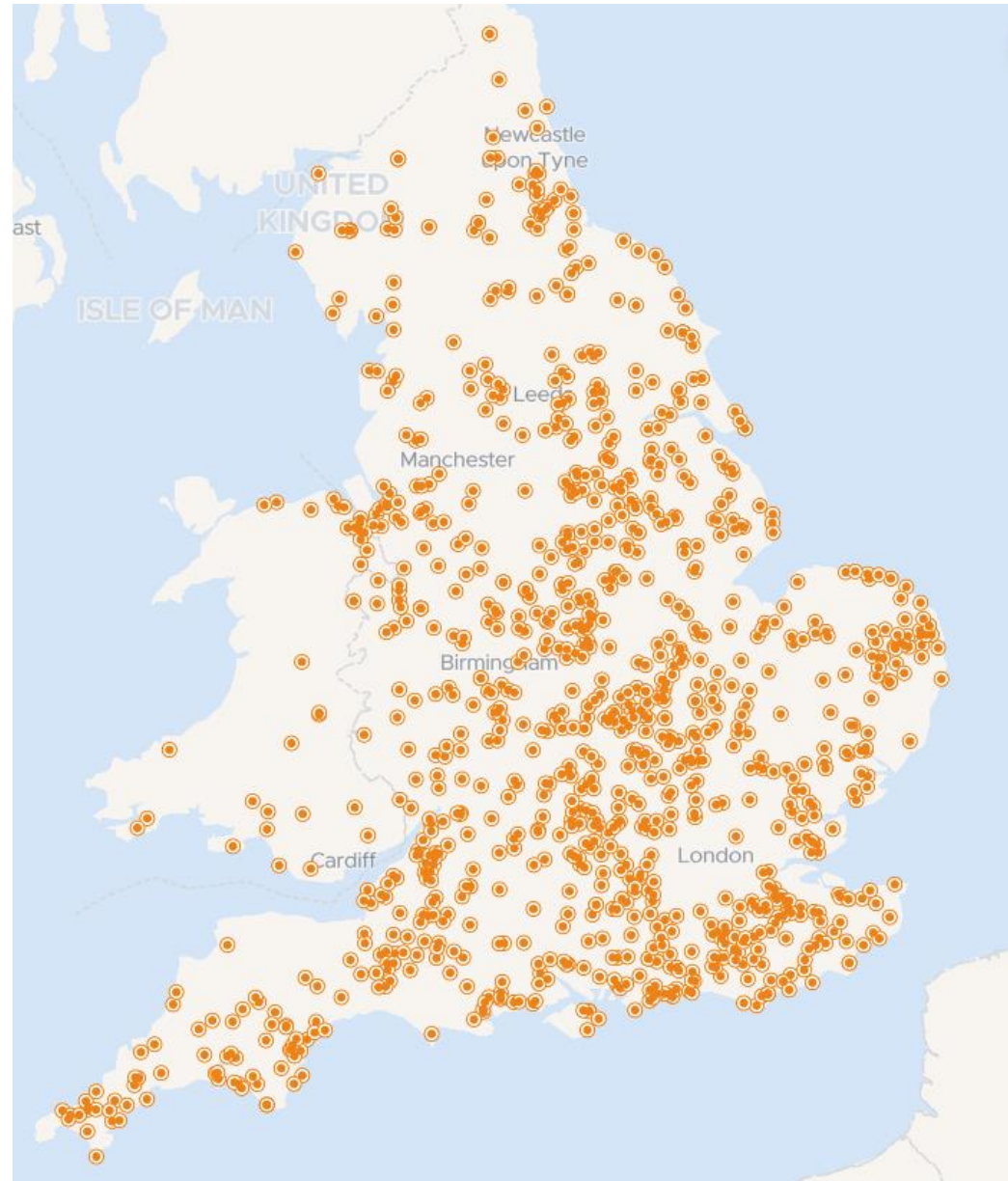
Thank you! Any Questions?

Further information is available at:

- www.slcc.co.uk/news-publications/civility-respect-project/
- www.nalc.gov.uk/respect