

Civility in public life call for evidence: Abuse and intimidation of councillors

There are growing concerns about the impact an increasing level of public intimidation and abuse has on our country's democratic processes, particularly at a local level. This harmful behaviour can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election and undermine public trust in democratic processes.

The LGA has committed to promoting civility in public life and supporting the well-being of elected members. This call for evidence is an ongoing part of the Civility in Public Life programme to capture elected members' experiences and emerging trends around abuse and intimidation from the public. Evidence collected in this way will help the LGA to develop a body of evidence to support our calls for legislative and systemic change and develop support for elected members.

This survey is primarily designed to capture the experiences of councillors experiencing or having experienced abuse or intimidation from the public due to their elected role. Candidates who have run for election, officers who have supported candidates or councillors and members of the public may wish to share their reflections of abuse and intimidation suffered by candidates and councillors. This has been accounted for in the survey.

Issues around standards of councillor conduct are dealt with under our Standards and Model Code of Conduct workstream and are not the focus of this call for evidence. The most recent iteration of the Code was published in December 2020, and accompanying guidance was published in July 2021.

For this survey, the following definitions should be used:

- Abuse – words and/or behaviour that constitute abuse or mistreatment can include, but is not limited to, physical abuse, bullying, emotional abuse, unsolicited abusive communication, and harassment. It may be one-off or repeated.
- Intimidation – words and/or behaviour intended or likely to block, influence, or deter participation in public debate or causing alarm or distress, which could lead to an individual wanting to withdraw from public life. It may be one-off or behaviour.

How to complete

- You can navigate through the questions using the buttons at the bottom of each page.
- Use the 'previous' button at the bottom of the page if you wish to amend your response to an earlier question.
- Please complete this survey in one go - if you exit before submitting the survey, your answers may be lost.
- If you would like to see an overview of the questions before completing the survey online, you can access a PDF here: <link>

All responses will be treated confidentially. Information will be aggregated, and no individual or authority will be identified in any publications without your consent. Identifiable information may be used internally within the LGA, and by NALC, for responses from Community/Neighbourhood/Parish/Town councillors, but will only be held and processed in accordance

accordance with our [privacy statement](#). We are undertaking this survey to aid the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing authorities. By completing this survey you are agreeing to us processing your information.

We are undertaking this call for evidence to aid the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing local authorities. It is necessary for us to collect and process the special category data (such as age, gender and ethnic group) for the purposes of understanding the aggregate picture of councillors across England, which we do on the basis that you have given us explicit consent for the processing of your data in this way (Article 9(2)(a)).

It will take about 10-15 minutes to complete this pro forma, depending on the answers you provide.

If you have any queries regarding the content of the consultation, please contact Jess Norman on 07824 605538 or jessica.norman@local.gov.uk. For queries about completion of the survey, please contact Helen Wilkinson on 020 7664 3181 or helen.wilkinson@local.gov.uk.

Please enter your details below

Name _____
Email address _____
Region _____

Please indicate your council type

If you sit on more than one type of council you can indicate this under the 'other' category.

- Community/Neighbourhood/Parish/Town
- District/Borough
- County
- Metropolitan/Unitary/London Borough
- Not currently serving as a councillor
- Other (please specify below)

[If not currently serving as a councillor] When did you last serve as a councillor?

- In the past 12 months
- Between one and three years ago
- Between three and five years ago
- More than five years ago
- Never

[If never] In which capacity are you providing evidence?

- A past candidate (including past candidates intending to stand again)
 - A future candidate (including confirmed and potential candidates)
 - A political agent
 - An officer
 - A member of the public
 - Other (please specify below)
-

Do/did you have any additional responsibilities as a councillor (e.g. council leader, group leader, portfolio holder, cabinet member, committee chair)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[If yes] Please let us know which role(s) you undertake/have undertaken

How many years have you served as a councillor?

In which year were you first elected as a councillor?

[If respondent has served as a councillor or stood as a candidate] Your experiences of abuse and/or intimidation

Have you ever experienced abuse and/or intimidation, directed at you personally, from a member of the public, or persons unknown, as a result of, or in relation to your role as a councillor, or while a political candidate? (you will be asked about witnessing abuse and/or intimidation of other councillors/candidates later)

- Yes, abuse
 - Yes, intimidation
 - Yes, abuse and intimidation
 - Yes, other (please specify below)
-

- No
- Don't know/not sure

[If experienced] Did you experience a single incident or have there been multiple incidents?

- Single incident
- Multiple incidents perpetrated by the same person
- Multiple incidents perpetrated by different people
- Multiple incidents perpetrated by an unknown number of people i.e. not known whether by the same person or different people
- Don't know/unsure

[If experienced single incident] Where did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

Please tick all that apply

- In person
 - On social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
 - Online meeting platform e.g. Zoom, Teams, Skype, Facetime
 - Online written communication e.g. email, WhatsApp, Messenger
 - Verbally by telephone, including voice messages
 - Written by telephone e.g. SMS messages, texts
 - By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox
 - Other (please specify below)
-

[If experienced multiple incidents] Where did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

Please tick all that apply

- In person
 - On social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
 - Online meeting platform e.g. Zoom, Teams, Skype, Facetime
 - Online written communication e.g. email, WhatsApp, Messenger
 - Verbally by telephone, including voice messages
 - Written by telephone e.g. SMS messages, texts
 - By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox
 - Other (please specify below)
-

[If experienced multiple incidents Using answers provided] Please rank the types of abuse and/or intimidation you experienced by frequency.

Please use the rank of 1 for the most frequently occurring type, followed by 2 for the next most frequently occurring type, carrying on as appropriate, until you have ranked all of the options shown.

- _____ In person
- _____ On social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- _____ Online meeting platform e.g. Zoom, Teams, Skype, Facetime
- _____ Online written communication e.g. email, WhatsApp, Messenger
- _____ Verbally by telephone, including voice messages
- _____ Written by telephone e.g. SMS messages, texts
- _____ By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox
- _____ Other (As specified)

[If experienced single incident] When did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

- Within the last month
- Between one and three months ago
- Between four and six months ago
- Between six and 12 months ago
- Between 12 and 18 months ago
- Between 18 and 24 months ago
- Over 24 months ago (please specify)

- Don't know/unsure

[If experienced multiple incidents] When did the abuse and/or intimidation first occur?

- Within the last month
- Between one and three months ago
- Between four and six months ago
- Between six and 12 months ago
- Between 12 and 18 months ago
- Between 18 and 24 months ago
- Over 24 months ago (please specify)

- Don't know/unsure

[If experienced multiple incidents] When was the most recent incident?

- Within the last month
- Between one and three months ago
- Between four and six months ago
- Between six and 12 months ago
- Between 12 and 18 months ago
- Between 18 and 24 months ago
- Over 24 months ago (please specify)

- Don't know/unsure

[If multiple incidents] How frequently did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

- More than once a day
- Approximately once a day
- Approximately every two to three days
- Approximately two to three times a week
- Approximately once a week
- Approximately every 10 days
- Approximately once a fortnight
- Approximately two to three times a month
- Approximately once a month
- Less than once a month

- Other (please specify below)

[If experienced] Was the abuse and/or intimidation triggered by specific events?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know/unsure

[If yes] What was the event that triggered the abuse?

If there have been multiple incidents please tick all that apply and provide clarification below

- Campaigning for elections
 Taking up my role
 A particular decision
 Other (please specify)
 Don't know/unsure

If you would like to provide any clarification regarding the event(s) that triggered the abuse you may do so here (Max 500 characters)

[If multiple incidents] Is the abuse ongoing?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know/unsure

[If experienced] Please provide brief details of the abuse and/or intimidation you have experienced (max 500 characters)

[If experienced] Did you seek support in relation to the abuse and/or intimidation you experienced?

- Yes
 No

[If sought support] From whom did you seek support?
Please tick all that apply

- Peers i.e. other councillors

- Your political party office
 - Council officers
 - Police
 - Friends and/or family
 - Other (please specify below)
-

[If sought support] How helpful was the support provided by (cycle through all options ticked in previous question)

- Very helpful
- Fairly helpful
- Not very helpful
- Not at all helpful
- Don't know/unsure

[If sought support] Please provide brief details about the support provided (max 500 characters)

[If support not sought] Please provide brief details about why you did not seek any support (max 500 characters)

Have you taken any actions to avoid intimidation and/or abuse, or to protect yourself? e.g. using rules of engagement, installing security systems, avoiding social media

- Yes
- No

[If actions taken] Please provide brief details about the action(s) you have taken (max 500 characters)

Abuse and/or intimidation of others

Have you ever witnessed abuse and/or intimidation, directed at others, from a member of the public, or persons unknown, as a result of, or in relation to their role as a councillor or candidate standing for election?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/unsure

[If witnessed] How many times, have you witnessed abuse and/or intimidation?

- Once
- Between two and five times
- Between six and 10 times
- More than 10 times
- Other (please specify below)

- Don't know/unsure

[If witnessed] Where did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

- In person
- On social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- Online meeting platform e.g. Zoom, Teams, Skype, Facetime
- Online written communication e.g. email, WhatsApp, Messenger
- Verbally by telephone, including voice messages
- Written by telephone e.g. SMS messages, texts
- By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox
- Other (please specify below)

[If witnessed] Please provide brief details about the abuse and/or intimidation you witnessed (max 500 characters)

Impact of abuse and/or intimidation

[If experienced] Please provide brief details about the impact of abuse and/or intimidation on you as a councillor or candidate for political office and personally (max 500 characters)

Will you be standing for election at the next local elections for your area?

- Yes
- No
- Not yet decided

[If no or undecided] Has the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation influenced your position on whether to stand?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/unsure

[If yes] Please provide brief details on how the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation has influenced your position on whether to stand (max 500 characters)

Are you aware of people being unwilling to stand or re-stand for election, or take on leadership roles, due to anticipated abuse and/or intimidation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/unsure

[If yes] Please provide brief details on how the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation has influenced your position on whether to stand (max 800 characters)

Dealing with abuse and/or intimidation

In your opinion, what more, if anything, could be done by the police, the council or any other relevant agent to prevent abuse and/or intimidation of councillors? (max 500 characters)

In your opinion, what more could be done by the police, the council or any other relevant agent to address abuse and/or intimidation of councillors when it occurs? (max 500 characters)

[If serving as a councillor, or a past or future candidate] About you

Finally, we would like to know more about you. There is evidence that individuals with certain protected characteristics experience more abuse and intimidation than others generally and specifically with reference to feeling able to engage with democracy. In gathering specific information about you, we hope to create an evidence base about who is effected by abuse and intimidation in public life and what further ramifications this may have on local democracy. Your replies will be treated confidentially.

Your consent

The following section of the survey will collect and process special category data in relation to your age group, gender and ethnicity. Completion of this section is voluntary, and all of the questions within this section are individually voluntary. We are collecting this data under condition (a) of Article 9(2) that the subject has given explicit consent for the processing of

their data for such purposes and conditions.

Please confirm that you agree to us processing and holding this data:

I agree to the LGA processing my special category data as laid out in Article 9(2)(a) of the Data Protection Act 2018

- Yes, I agree
- No, I do not agree

In line with our privacy policy, which is published at www.local.gov.uk/privacy-policy-0, you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

If you do not consent for the LGA to collect and process your age group, gender and ethnicity information, these questions will not be displayed.

If you do consent, all of the questions will be voluntary and can be answered as 'Prefer not to say'.

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] What is your sex? (As registered at birth)

This question is voluntary

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

This question is voluntary

- Yes
- No (please specify your gender identity)

Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] What is your age group?

This question is voluntary

- Up to 24 years
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65 years and above
- Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] What is your ethnic group?
This question is voluntary

White

- English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
 - Irish
 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 - Roma
 - Any other White background (please specify in the space below)
-

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
 - White and Black African
 - White and Asian
 - Any other Mixed or Multiple background (please specify in the space below)
-

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
 - Pakistani
 - Bangladeshi
 - Chinese
 - Any other Asian background (please specify in the space below)
-

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Caribbean
 - African
 - Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background (please specify)
-

Other ethnic group

- Arab
 - Any other ethnic group (please specify in the space below)
-

- Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
This question is voluntary

- Straight or Heterosexual
 - Gay or Lesbian
 - Bisexual
 - Other sexual orientation (please specify)
-

- Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] What is your religion?

This question is voluntary

- No religion
- Christian (all denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion (please specify)

Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data] Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

This question is voluntary

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[If consents to LGA processing special category data and has a condition or illness] Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?

This question is voluntary

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all
- Prefer not to say

Any other comments

If there is anything else you would like to add may do so here (max 500 characters)

Further Contact

Would you be happy for us to contact you about the information you have provided?

- Yes
- No

[If yes] How would you like us to contact you?

Phone (please provide the number you would like us to use)

Email (please provide the email address you would like us to use)

Other (Please specify)

Once you press the 'Submit' button below, you will have completed the survey.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey. You are in control of any personal data that you have provided to us in your response. You can contact us at all times to have your information changed or deleted. You can find our full privacy policy here: [click here to see our privacy policy](#)

For Information Only - Do Not Complete