



EVALUATION REPORT 2025

—
Beyond the Uniform
pilot campaign

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Objectives
4. Concept and Design
5. Action Plan
6. Results
7. Responses
8. Partnerships
9. Challenges
10. Next Steps
11. Conclusion



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beyond the Uniform was a pilot communications campaign delivered by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) and funded by Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London (PATROL's) Driving Improvement Award.

The NEPP's pilot campaign ran from **21 January to 31 March 2025** in Harlow, Essex. **The campaign aimed to tackle violence and aggression towards Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)** by highlighting the issue and humanising staff - shifting focus from enforcement to empathy and community service.

Through a series of digital content, printed materials, media and community events, the campaign introduced the public to individual CEOs, sharing their personal stories, interests and experiences.

These stories were designed to highlight that our staff are real people with real lives - something the public can relate to - which helps foster a greater understanding of the important public-facing role CEOs play in keeping communities safe, accessible, and fair for all road users.

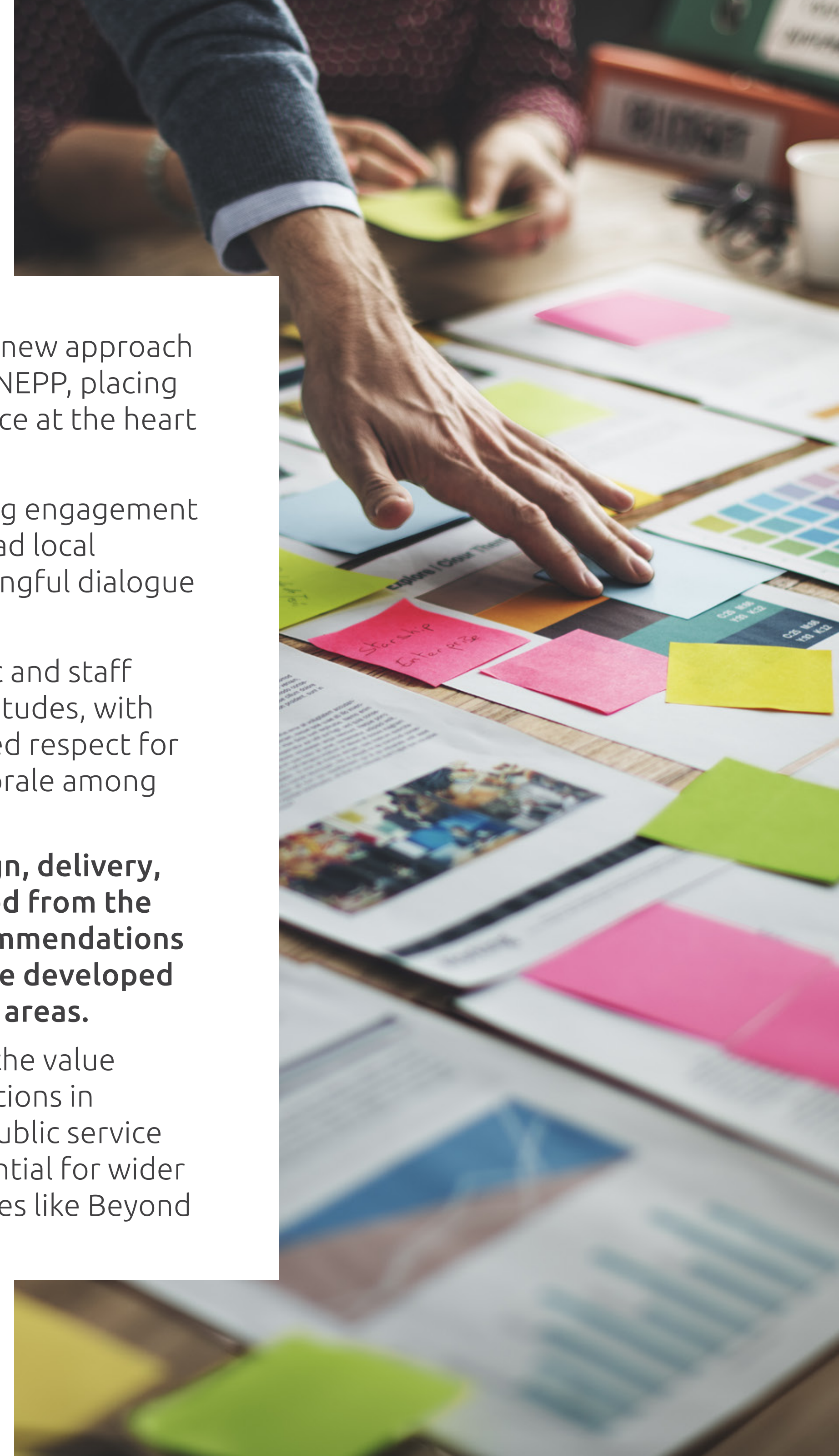
Beyond the Uniform marked a new approach to public engagement for the NEPP, placing storytelling and lived experience at the heart of its communications.

The campaign generated strong engagement on social media, reached a broad local audience and prompted meaningful dialogue within the community.

Feedback from both the public and staff indicated a positive shift in attitudes, with early signs suggesting increased respect for the CEO role and improved morale among staff.

This report outlines the design, delivery, outcomes, and lessons learned from the campaign, and provides recommendations for how the approach could be developed further or replicated in other areas.

The evaluation demonstrates the value of human-centred communications in transforming perceptions of public service roles, and underlines the potential for wider sector impact through initiatives like Beyond the Uniform.



2 INTRODUCTION

In April 2024, the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) submitted a funding bid for £25,000 to PATROL to support a campaign aimed at tackling **violent and aggressive behaviour towards its frontline staff, Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)**.

From January to March 2024, in just three months, NEPP Civil Enforcement Officers recorded **43 violent and aggressive incidents** whilst out on patrol. Of these, 10 were severe enough to report to the Police. **The NEPP takes a zero-tolerance approach towards staff abuse.** Although our officers are trained to handle these situations and are supported after they occur, the number of incidents was increasing, so we wanted to find a way to reduce this.

As part of its funding application, the NEPP proposed piloting a campaign in Harlow, Essex, which, at the time, had the highest level of abusive incidents experienced by NEPP staff.

Harlow is a town located in the west of Essex, covering an area of 12 square miles, with a population of approximately 95,000. Positioned in the heart of the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, it also borders the county of Hertfordshire.

Our goal was to launch a campaign that wasn't about parking, but about people – to humanise our officers, celebrate their resilience, and build a community where respect thrives. By fostering respect, understanding, and empathy, we hoped to create a positive shift in perceptions and reduce instances of abuse and negativity.

In July 2024, the NEPP, together with Brighton and Hove City Council, was jointly awarded £25,000 in funding.

The two organisations were asked to collaborate on a single campaign that would act as a pilot, with potential to be expanded nationwide or be developed further in the future.

This campaign would be a transformative initiative – one that bridged the gap between the public and our unsung heroes: the parking officers who diligently serve our communities. Through this work, we hoped to encourage behaviour change and ultimately see a reduction in the number of abusive incidents faced by our staff.



3 CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Before developing the creative concept and visual identity for the campaign, we began by considering the core purpose of the campaign - who we were speaking to, what would have the most impact and what we hoped to achieve. From the outset, the campaign was built around four key pillars:

Shining a Spotlight

At the heart of Beyond the Uniform was a commitment to shine a spotlight on the individuals behind the important roles of CEOs.

Championing Empathy

By sharing the stories and complex challenges faced by CEOs, we aimed to evoke empathy and promote a deeper understanding of the role beyond the uniform.

Transforming Perceptions

To challenge the negative stereotypes associated with parking and traffic enforcement, shifting the narrative to one of dedication, professionalism, and humanity. By showing CEOs as individuals with families, aspirations, and strong community values, the campaign reframed how the role is perceived.

Encouraging Respect

Respect is more than a courtesy - it's a foundation for positive public interaction. Beyond the Uniform encouraged open dialogue, helping to dispel misconceptions and nurture mutual respect between enforcement officers and the communities they serve.



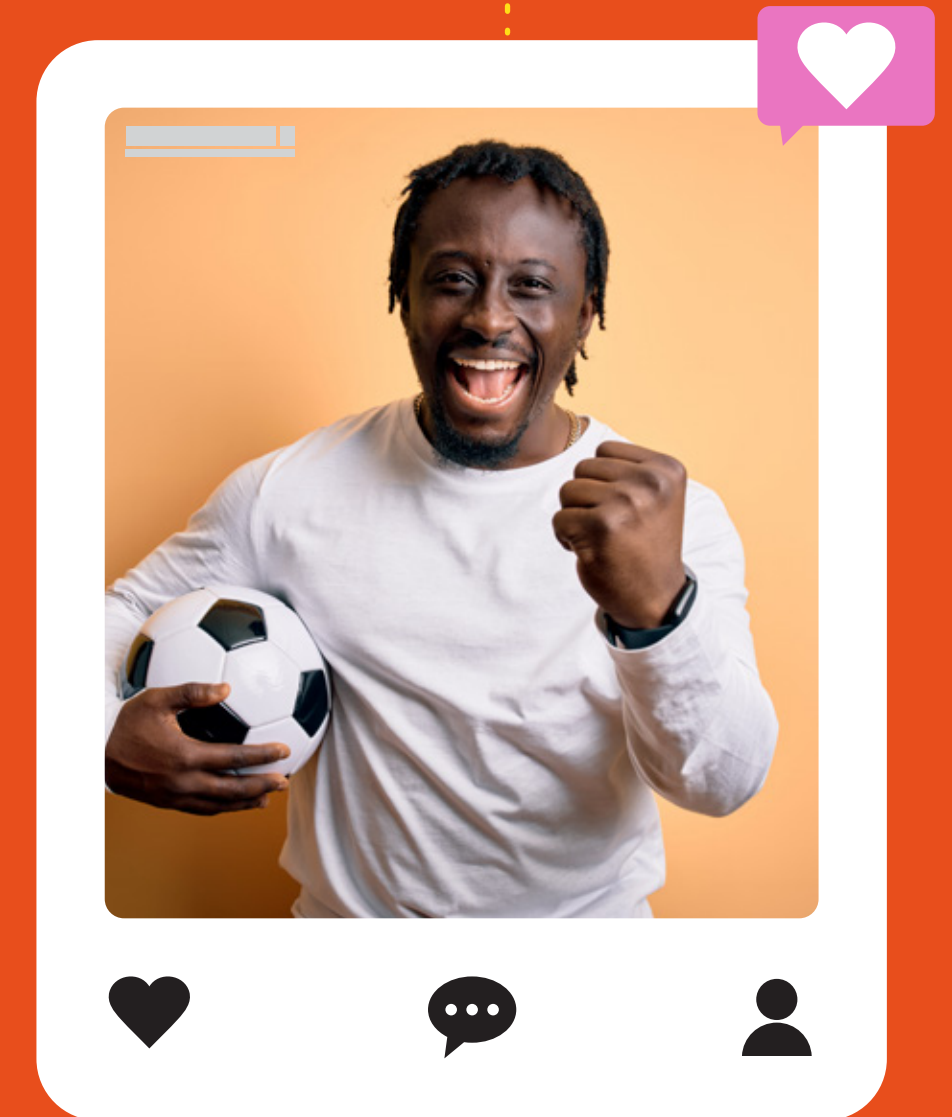
KEY MESSAGES AND CALLS TO ACTION

To support these four pillars, a series of clear and consistent messages ran throughout the campaign:

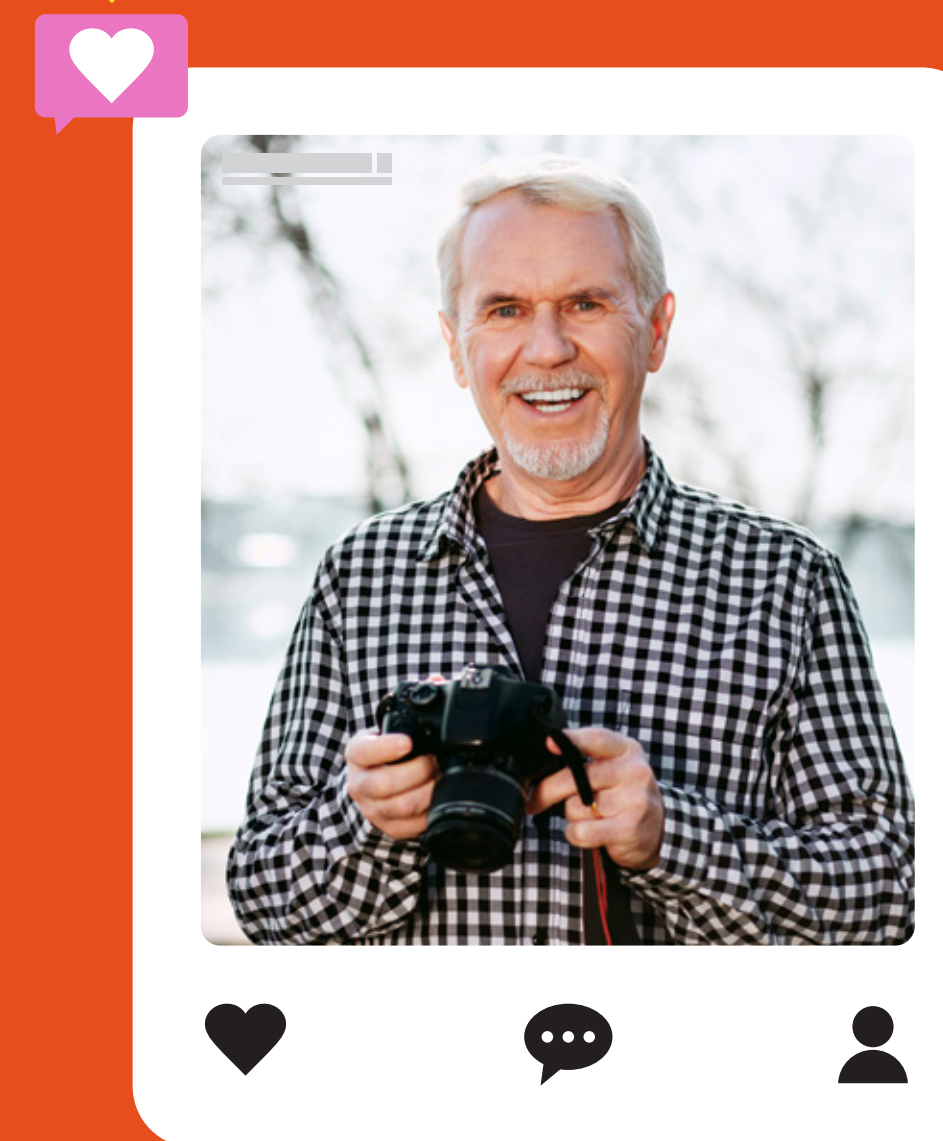
- **Shine a light on the consequences of aggression:** Violent and abusive behaviour towards CEOs has real and lasting impact - emotional distress, physical harm, and, where necessary, police involvement and prosecutions.
- **Highlight the value of the CEO role:** Keeping roads safe, accessible and moving for everyone - emergency services, pedestrians, cyclists, children, wheelchair users, prams, public transport etc.
- **Humanise frontline parking staff:** Officers are people first - parents, grandparents, siblings, friends - carrying out an important and often challenging public duty
- **Prompt reflection:** Encouraging the public to pause and consider the impact of their words and behaviour before interacting with our staff.



Meet Julie, a caring nan with a love for gardening and nurturing beautiful plants.



Meet Mosi, a proud dad and an inspiring kids' football coach.



Meet Sam, a dedicated dog owner with a talent for capturing moments through photography.

4 CONCEPT AND DESIGN

Both the NEPP and Brighton and Hove City Council contributed initial concepts and creative ideas of how the campaign could look, feel and function across different formats and platforms.

From the outset, it was important to consider the campaign's long-term potential. PATROL had expressed interest in scaling the concept nationally, so the design needed to be adaptable — suitable for a wide range of local authorities with varying sizes, geographies, demographics, parking provisions, and budgets.

NEPP proposed the concept of 'Beyond the Uniform' for the campaign. This idea encouraged the public to see past the uniform and recognise the individual — emphasising that CEOs are not only enforcement officers, but also community members with personal stories, responsibilities, and values. The uniform itself often becomes a symbol of authority or conflict; the campaign sought to shift that perception and refocus attention on the person behind it.

The creative approach centred on short, powerful, and relatable messages designed to humanise CEOs and highlight the breadth and value of their work.

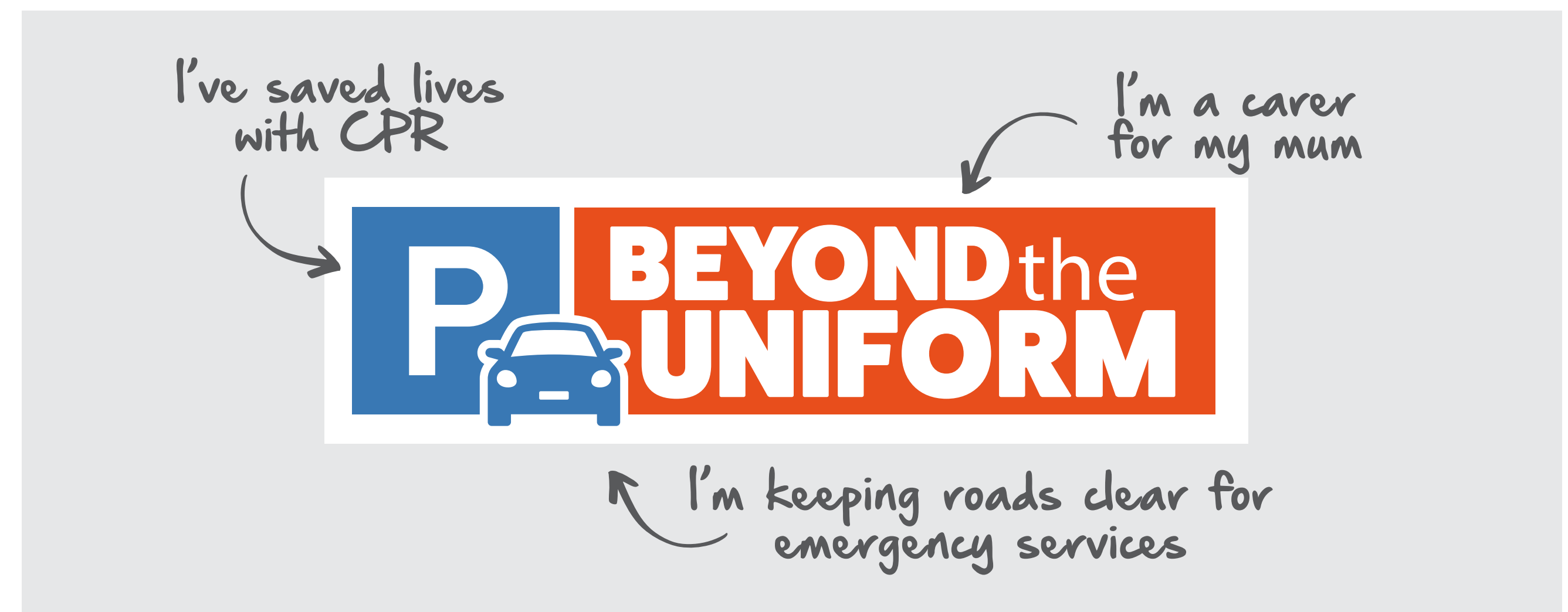
Examples included:

- Beyond the uniform, I'm a carer for my mum.
- Beyond the uniform, I've saved lives with CPR.
- Beyond the uniform, I'm keeping roads clear for emergency services.

For the artwork, we proposed using bright, vibrant materials designed to capture attention and move away from the darker tones typically associated with parking and enforcement. To support

the objective of humanising our staff, NEPP felt it was important to feature imagery of real people and due to photographic permissions, stock imagery of individuals was carefully chosen to reflect and represent the diversity of our workforce.

The campaign design and materials were developed to work effectively across a range of assets, from social media to posters and video content — ensuring clarity, consistency, and emotional impact across all campaign touchpoints.



5 ACTION PLAN

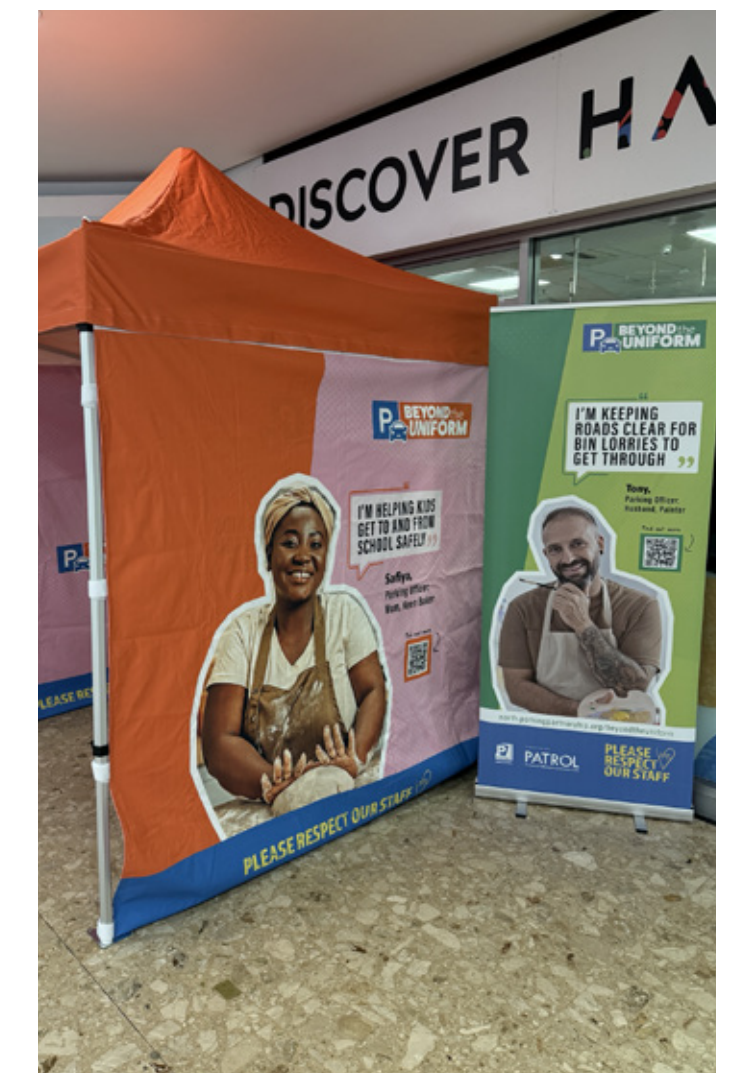
As the Driving Improvement Award was jointly awarded to two organisations and the delivery timescales were significantly condensed, we revisited our original application to assess what could realistically be achieved within a three-month timeframe and a revised budget of £12,500.

Taking into account our local insight, campaign objectives, and the needs of both our frontline staff and the wider organisation, we opted to pilot a blended approach that combined a range of communication and engagement methods. These included:

- Media and Public Relations activity
- Bus advertising
- Organic social media
- Paid social media awareness campaign
- Posters and postcards
- Editorial features
- Use of Harlow Council's communication channels
- Online advertising
- A dedicated campaign webpage
- Email signatures
- Internal communications initiatives, including a staff competition
- Pop-up community engagement events with supporting materials and refreshments

A key component of the campaign was direct community engagement. NEPP staff, including CEOs, attended the pop-up events in Harlow to meet and speak with members of the public. These interactions allowed officers to explain their role, highlight the positive contributions they make to local communities, and share the personal impact of experiencing abuse while on duty.

By featuring real CEOs at these events, the campaign aimed to humanise the individuals beyond the uniform, fostering empathy and greater public understanding. This face-to-face engagement was complemented by a broader print and digital media campaign designed to raise awareness of the issue and promote respect towards parking enforcement officers.



6 RESULTS

Media

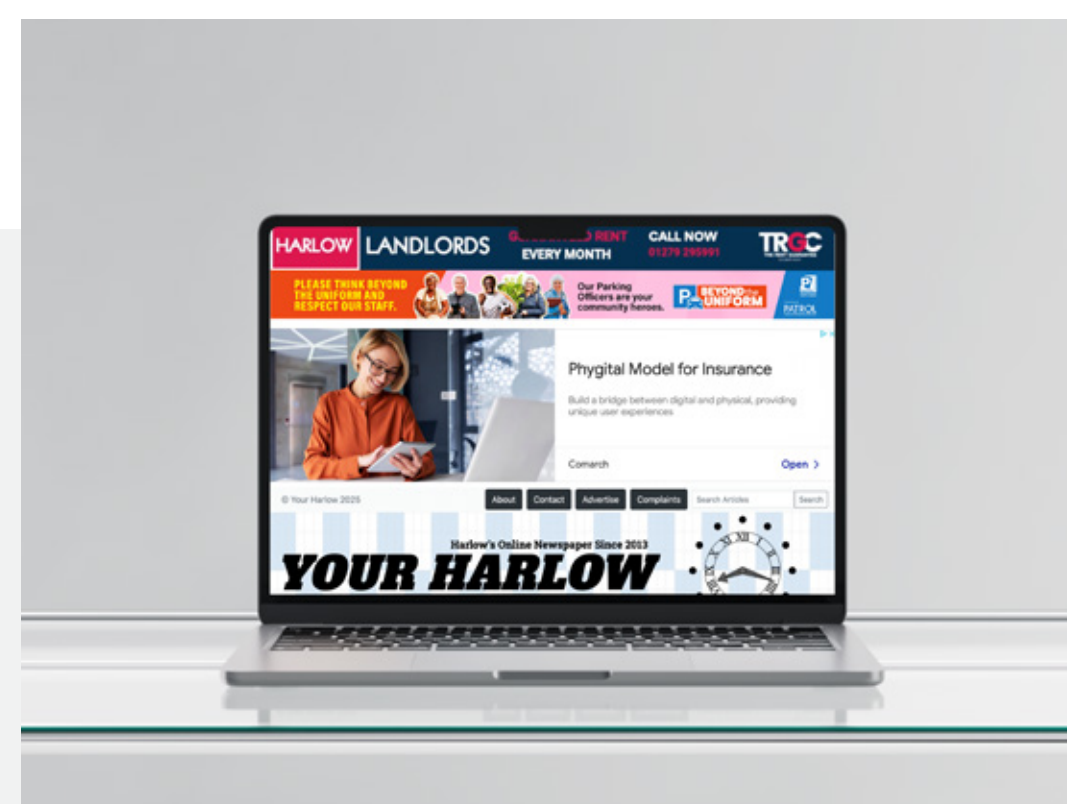
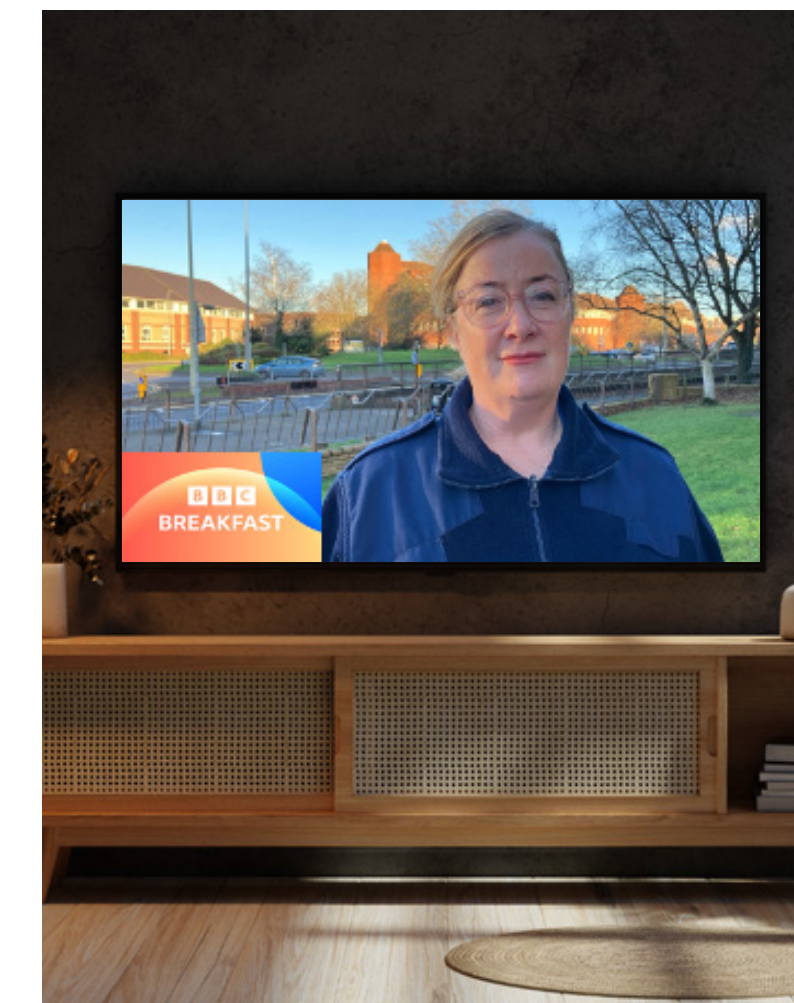
The NEPP experienced an incredible media response to the campaign with 19 media features at local, regional and national level (with more still to come).

The campaign got off to a great start, with pre-recorded interviews with five staff members prepared prior to the launch date and the campaign being BBC Radio Essex's 'Story of the Day' and live interviews in the the studios for their Breakfast show and a social media feature. The BBC then also ran this as their top news story on regional BBC Look East and picked it up on national BBC Breakfast TV, all within the first week!

Media interest and support for the campaign grew very quickly and we secured regional and national TV coverage, county-wide radio, print and digital media outlets, including, but not limited to....

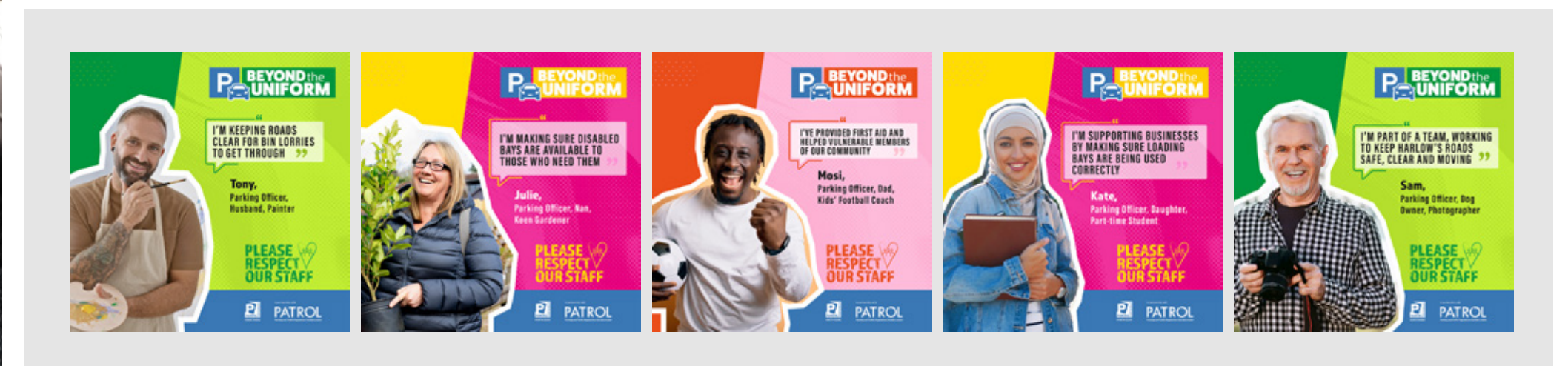
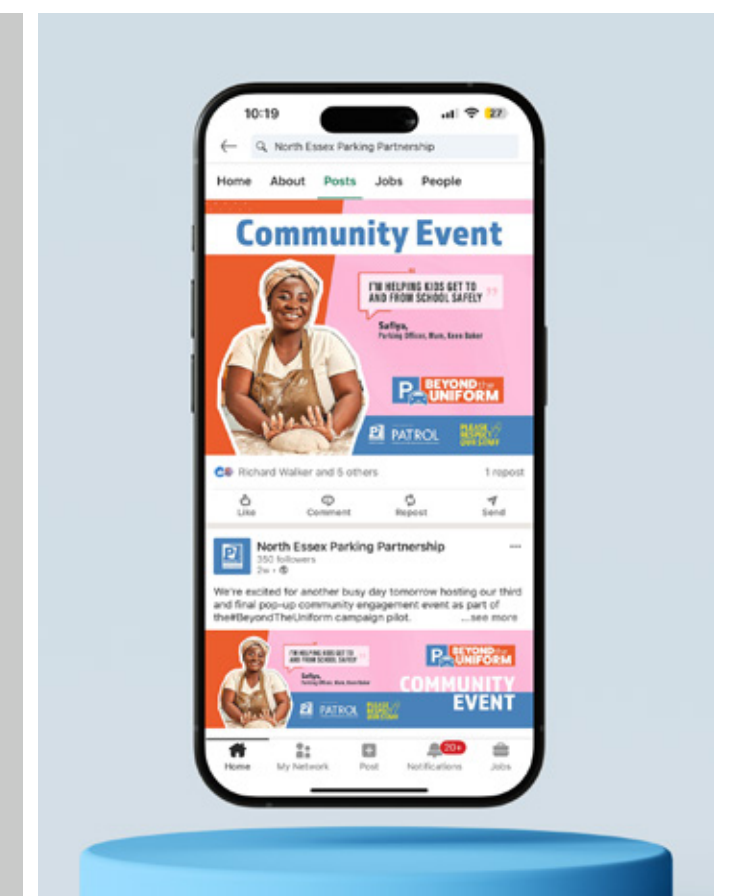
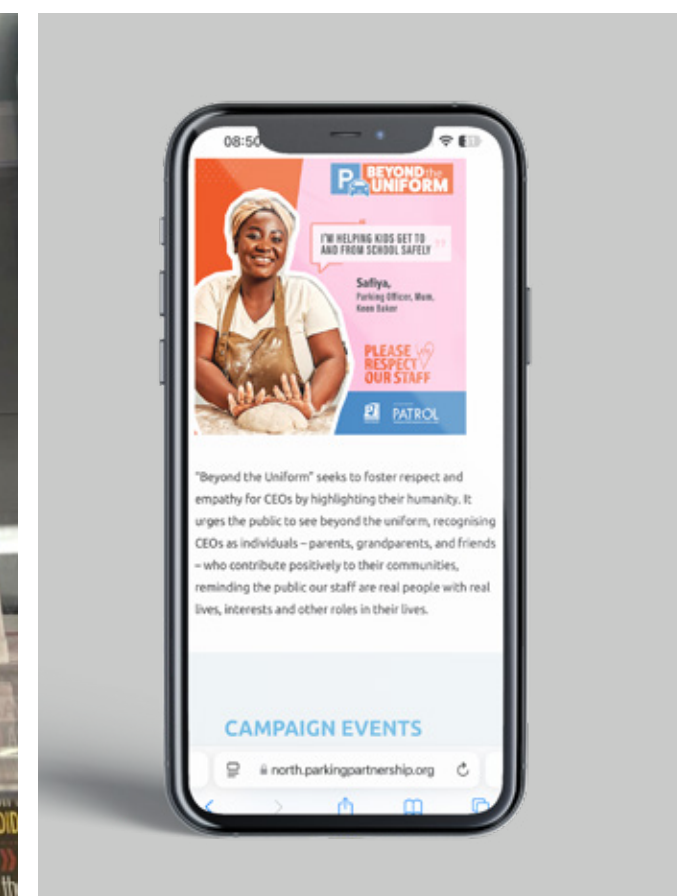
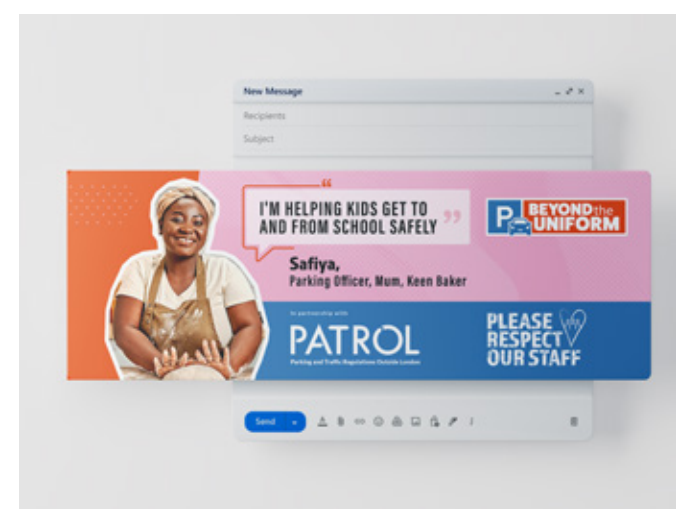
BBC Essex | BBC Look East | BBC Breakfast | Your Harlow | Transport Xtra
Parking Review | Parking News | Bauer Media | Colchester Gazette | Essex
County Standard | Halstead Gazette | Clacton and Frinton Gazette

Several of the media outlets also ran follow-up features or multiple articles about the campaign which was great at sustaining momentum and coverage.



Communications and Marketing

- Paid social media advertising impressions in Harlow had a **reach of 246,205**, with **748,573 impressions** and **941 clicks** to learn more about the campaign on NEPP's website. We also only received two negative comments.
- Bus advertising in Harlow had **577,000 impacts**.
- **19 media features** at local, regional and national level (with more to come).
- **42,000 households** received Harlow Council's printed resident magazine, the Harlow Times which featured a double-page feature.
- **3000 impressions** on the NEPP's LinkedIn.
- **7000+ members of staff and councillors** were reached through internal communications issued to Harlow Council, Essex Police and NEPP.
- **375 interactions** with the public at pop-up community events in Harlow.
- **24 NEPP staff** competition entries received.



Events

NEPP held three pop-up community events in The Harvey Shopping Centre in Harlow, at which our staff engaged with a total of **375 individuals** where we had really meaningful and insightful conversations with members of the Harlow community. At these events, NEPP gave out materials created specifically for the campaign which included A5 postcards, keyrings and pin badges, as well as offering refreshments.

In addition to these local events, NEPP also raised awareness of the campaign nationally at a number of parking sector events, including, but not limited to:

- BPA Live North in Leeds
- BPA Live South in Brighton
- BPA Live West in Bristol
- Landor North East Parking Show in Newcastle
- Parkex 2025 in Coventry



Violent and aggressive incidents

In terms of reported incidents of abuse towards its CEOs in Harlow, from January to March 2025, the NEPP saw a **73% decrease** compared to the number recorded for the same period the year before and a **60% decrease** compared to same period in 2023.

From January to March 2025, the NEPP also saw a decrease in the number of incidents reported NEPP-wide, however this was a much smaller decrease of 23%. The decline in the other five NEPP areas could be due to the coverage the campaign had in those areas, particularly the media coverage e.g. BBC Essex covers all six areas.



7 RESPONSES

“

I have just listened to the recording on the radio this morning. Wow very powerful stuff it really was fantastic the message was loud and clear.

”

“

Well done all, hopefully the momentum can be kept up to make it clear how tough the job is and how lucky the public are to have such dedicated and selfless people prepared to help!

”

“

”

Thank you from every CEO and those that have been CEOs for helping the public to view us as people and recognise that we are just doing our jobs.

“

It's good to feel like the issue of the daily abuse that CEOs experience is being addressed.

”

“

The campaign has made CEOs feel heard and encouraged people to report more incidents to hold people accountable. In all the campaign was really positive but should just be the beginning.

”

“

Credit to all those involved it is a very brave thing to go and talk openly about the abuse well done.

”

“

Huge thanks to 'L' for her tireless effort into this campaign it has gone off with a bang and is on course to really make a difference. If we can stop one CEO from being insulted/assaulted, then it has all been worth it although I am sure it will have a far wider reach than that.



8 PARTNERSHIPS

Through this pilot campaign, the NEPP collaborated with and made new and improved partnerships with:

- PATROL
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Harlow Council
- Essex Police
- Media contacts

We were also approached by other parking authorities about the campaign, who gave us positive feedback and expressed an interest and desire to introduce the campaign in their local areas too.

“It has been a pleasure working with Colchester City Council and the NEPP for the Beyond the Uniform campaign. Their expertise in communications and marketing provided us with the tools to promote the campaign to a high level. The artwork they created fitted the brief perfectly. It’s eye-catching, educational, humanising and impactful. Additionally, their support with alterations and resizing the artwork enabled us to enhance the visual aspects of the campaign significantly. This achievement would not have been possible without their assistance. I hope we can collaborate with them again in the future.” - **Sarah Bussey, Parking Contracts Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council**

”

9 HIGHLIGHTS & CHALLENGES

Highlights

The campaign achieved a number of significant successes, both in terms of external impact and internal organisational benefits.

One of the most notable highlights was the volume and breadth of media interest and coverage. The campaign attracted attention across a wide range of local and regional media outlets, reflecting the relevance and resonance of its messaging. This coverage not only helped to amplify the campaign's reach but also led to ongoing support and follow-up features, demonstrating sustained media engagement well beyond the initial launch period.

Internally, the campaign had a profoundly positive effect on staff morale. Many staff members expressed feeling heard and valued as a result of the campaign, particularly those who contributed their stories or saw their experiences reflected in campaign materials. This sense of recognition contributed to a more positive workplace culture and stronger internal engagement.

Encouragingly, within the pilot area, there was a noticeable reduction in the number of abusive incidents reported by staff during the campaign period. While this is a complex issue with many contributing factors,

this trend suggests that the campaign played a role in raising awareness and encouraging more respectful behaviour toward staff.

In addition to these outcomes, the campaign helped to forge new and improved relationships with a number of external partners. The collaborative nature of the work opened up new channels of communication and strengthened mutual understanding, laying the groundwork for future partnership opportunities and joint initiatives.

These highlights reflect the broad and lasting impact of the campaign, not only in achieving its immediate goals but in setting the stage for ongoing progress and collaboration.



Challenges

Despite the huge success of the campaign, several challenges emerged during its planning and delivery phases, many of which required ongoing adaptability and problem-solving.

One of the primary challenges was a significantly reduced budget and shortened delivery timeframe compared to what was originally applied for. This placed pressure on all stages of the campaign, from idea generation and development through to implementation. These constraints limited the scale and flexibility of planned activities, requiring prioritisation of core outputs over broader ambitions.

Another key difficulty was sourcing multiple CEOs within our organisation who were willing and comfortable to share their personal stories and experiences for use as case studies. This involved utilising internal comms, providing media training for staff members as well as building trust and ensuring individuals felt fully informed and supported throughout.

Financial processes presented additional challenges. Campaign materials had to be paid for upfront from our own budget, with reimbursement claimed afterwards, which hadn't been anticipated or factored into financial planning for the year. This created a temporary strain on internal resources.

Furthermore, there was initial uncertainty around which items were eligible for reimbursement, which led to delays and additional administration.

The nature of the funding award also introduced complexities. While we originally applied for the full amount as a single organisation, the award was ultimately granted on a shared basis with Brighton and Hove City Council, with whom we had no prior relationship. Although this collaborative arrangement ultimately proved successful and productive, it did require an initial period of coordination to align goals, strategies and styles.

In addition, our in-house design team provided support to Brighton and Hove City Council in developing their campaign assets, as they lacked the internal resource to do so. While this fostered a spirit of cooperation and strengthened the partnership, it also placed extra demand on our team and required careful balancing of workloads.

These challenges, while significant, were met with a proactive and flexible approach by all involved. Lessons learned throughout this process have provided valuable insights for future campaign planning and partnership working.



10 NEXT STEPS

The Beyond the Uniform pilot campaign has, without doubt, been a huge success for NEPP in so many ways. Whilst the pilot and our funded activity may now have ended, NEPP is keen to build on the positive work, momentum and progress that has come from this pilot.

Our staff

Staff engagement with the campaign was very high, and both the materials and activities were well received, with excellent feedback. Many of our staff have been really interested and eager to get involved in the campaign, whether that be helping out at the community events, delivering materials, sharing their stories with the media etc.

The organisation's work on the campaign, along with efforts to strengthen our relationship with the Police when incidents are reported, and the sharing of successful prosecutions for abusive behaviour - both internally and externally - has helped boost staff morale and foster a more positive outlook on the role and the future of tackling this issue.

We have been clear with staff, that whilst the paid pilot activities may now have ended, the campaign has not and we will continue to develop this further with them and are keen to keep the staff morale high, which will hopefully also help with staff wellbeing and retention.

Community Events

The NEPP is keen to continue and expand on the community events it piloted in Harlow and deliver these in the five other districts where the NEPP operates. These events proved to be a great way to raise awareness of the issue and humanise CEOs. They were also a great opportunity to engage with the local communities we serve and have meaningful and helpful discussions with the public which have provided us with valuable customer insight.

As well as pop-up events in high footfall locations, we'd like to attend other local community events in these areas too, including Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service's local Open Days as these tie in well with our messages, locations and are well attended by the local community. Being present at emergency service open days will also highlight the link and vital role our staff play in allowing emergency vehicles and staff to get to emergencies as soon as possible.

Partnerships

Through this campaign, we have broadened and deepened our relationships with a number of partners and are keen to continue building those relationships and work with them to raise awareness of the issue and tackle violence and aggression towards our staff. This includes our partners and contacts in Harlow (especially Harlow Council), Essex Police, PATROL, the wider parking sector and of course the media.

Media

We are extremely grateful to the media for their support in helping us highlight this campaign and for the valuable coverage and visibility they have provided. Following the initial launch in January, several media outlets have already run follow-up features and are keen to work closely with us on this in the future, which is something we're very grateful for and happy and willing to do.

Funding

If and when more funding becomes available for the campaign, we would like to run some of the paid marketing activities in other NEPP areas, particularly social media and bus advertising and explore other marketing opportunities. We will also be continuing to closely monitor the number and types of incidents in Harlow and, if needed and funds allow, rerun some of the paid activity from the pilot.

We remain very interested in extending the campaign to learner drivers. Unfortunately, due to changes in funding and timelines from our original application, we were unable to include them as a target audience in this pilot. However, we conducted extensive early-stage research, including focus groups, and still see strong potential to influence driving behaviour from the point of learning.

Materials

The materials NEPP designed that were used in both Harlow and Brighton have delivered everything that we hoped for

the campaign – they have delivered the objectives, been eye catching and have been flexible.

We are currently preparing a catalogue of all seven designs/individuals that featured in the campaign, including how they were adapted and utilised on various materials and media. The relevant designs have already been white-labelled and sent to PATROL for any planned national roll-out later this year.

Events

We will continue to showcase and discuss the pilot campaign at upcoming events, including ParkEx in May and the PATROL Awards in July. At the PATROL Awards, we plan to recreate our community event setup - including the gazebo and campaign materials - so other members can experience it firsthand. Staff from across the organisation, including CEOs and our Communications Team, will be present and happy to discuss the campaign, including delivery, costs, impact and their experiences.

In addition to these events, we will

continue to share the campaign locally, regionally, and nationally. Where supplies allow, we will also distribute campaign materials such as pin badges and keyrings to help raise awareness.

National usage

We hope that other PATROL members will find our pilot campaign and its outcomes of interest and use. The campaign has been designed to be adaptable, allowing others to tailor it to their local needs and resources. While time, budget, and staff expertise may be key considerations for those looking to adopt the campaign, as mentioned NEPP has developed and shared white-labelled artwork and assets with PATROL to help alleviate these concerns. From the outset, we were mindful of the need for accessible, adaptable materials, so we created free and low-cost options - including media resources, email signature graphics, and editable poster templates.

11

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the 'Beyond the Uniform' campaign was to tackle violence and aggression towards our frontline staff.

The campaign has delivered this in Harlow through effective messaging, artwork and targeted strategies. Our results suggest that in Harlow, the campaign successfully raised awareness of the issue, significantly reduced the number of incidents and signalled a clear stance of zero tolerance towards abuse.

Engagement across key channels - particularly through personal case studies and experiences and stories, demonstrated that empathetic storytelling and real staff voices resonate strongly with audiences.

Importantly, staff said they felt more supported and confident because of the visible campaign and messages from the organisation, showing a positive effect on workplace culture. However, continued reinforcement and awareness and broader audience targeting - especially in other NEPP partner areas - will be essential for sustaining behaviour change.

The pilot campaign has been a huge success for NEPP as well as its staff, partners and the wider parking sector and we are excited for the next steps, both for us and PATROL.



12 FEEDBACK

”

The campaign has had a noticeable impact on staff, as they now realise we are truly taking things to another level. Personally, I've had members of the public approach me to say they've seen the campaign, and that it genuinely makes them reflect - on our roles and on life more broadly. It's encouraging to see it resonate so widely. We've also observed a reduction in incidents, which I believe is, in part, thanks to this initiative. It would be fantastic to see the campaign rolled out across the entire NEPP, as it's clearly having a very positive effect.

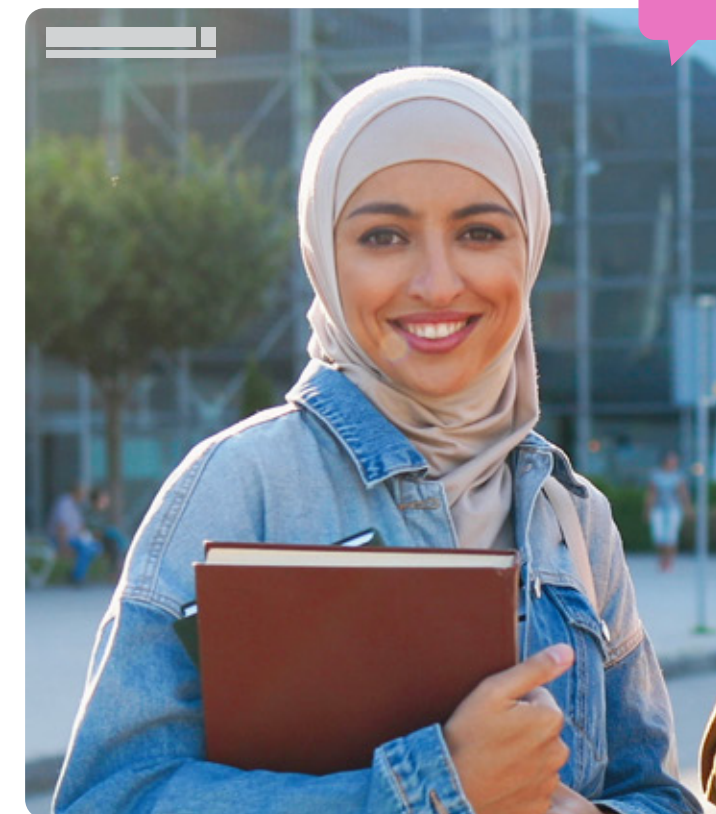
CEO at the NEPP

“

I'm pleased to say that the reaction from the staff team was very favourable; very pleased that someone was petitioning on their behalf, to raise the profile of front line workers amongst the public - and the results of the campaign speak for themselves.

Richard Walker,
Head of Parking at the NEPP

Meet Safiya, a dedicated parking officer, a loving mum, and a passionate baker.



Meet Kate, a devoted daughter and a hardworking part-time student.



Meet Steve, who plays the guitar and volunteers at the hospital.

Meet Tony, a husband with a creative side, who enjoys expressing himself through painting.



**PLEASE
RESPECT
OUR STAFF**

