

Bringing Standards into Focus

2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

12-13 October 2009 International Convention Centre, Birmingham

Day 1

Monday 12 October 2009

08.15- 09.45 Registration and breakfast

09.00-09.45 Drop-in sessions (advance booking required)

An opportunity to talk to Standards Board team members about your specific Code queries, managing local assessment, or any other part of the standards framework

The drop-in slots are available on a first-come, first-served basis and must be booked in advance via these web pages. Booking opens August 2009.

09.15-09.45 Focus on the essentials

Mini plenary

Aimed at: Ideal for anyone who is new to the Code or the Annual Assembly

A short, sharp session designed to bring you up to speed with the role and responsibilities of the Standards Board and other key players in the standards community. The session will also provide a quick update to the Code and latest developments and gives you a chance to meet other delegates over coffee.

10.00-11.00 State of the nation

Hall 1 plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

The session brings you the latest standards statistics and trends to report back to your authority, highlights the successes of local assessment and explains some of the challenges you've dealt with. The session will also feature a presentation from the current government minister, and include an opportunity to put your questions to the Standards Board.

11.15-11.45 Networking and refreshments

12.00-13.30 Breakout sessions

Please select one of the following sessions.
All sessions last for one hour 30 minutes.

Practical advice for single purpose authorities

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members from fire, police, park and integrated passenger transport authorities

A forum for standards committee members from single purpose authorities to discuss key issues relating to handling local assessment, investigation and sanctions, other action and joint working regulations specific to these authorities.

Other action: Examples and results

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

Explore the decision-making process, management and final outcome of a range of cases where other action has been used. Build your knowledge of the short and long-term value of other action, and discuss the challenges you've faced when putting it into action. You'll look at how the subject member and complainant might respond to the process, and share your techniques on how to deal with this. The session will give you practical resources, including a flowchart for selection of other action options, good practice examples and a quick guide to mediation.

The highly effective standards committee

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members

What features do successful standards committees have in common? In this session you'll get practical advice and good practice ideas from experienced standards committee chairs including:

- the right skills for a top quality independent chair
- understanding the profile of an effective and influential standards committee
- how to recruit and develop the right members
- how to build a positive profile for your committee how to establish a clear work programme with maximum positive impact.

Work with your peers to map the current effectiveness of your standards committee, set out what you want to achieve and the steps you need to take to get there.

Understanding pre-determination and bias

Workshop (Discussion and Q&A)

Aimed at: All delegates, may be particularly helpful for monitoring officers

An in-depth discussion of this potentially problematic issue. Get answers to your questions, including; what exactly is pre-determination? How do I explain it clearly to members? What impact can it have on councillor decision-making? How does it fit in with the Code of Conduct? By the end of the session you'll be equipped to confidently advise and support members and your standards committee.

Local assessment: Sharing lessons learnt
(monitoring officers)

Discussion forum

Aimed at: Monitoring officers, heads of legal and democratic services and other officers in a similar role

Managing large numbers of complaints, dealing with confidentiality issues and anonymous complaints, when/how to issue decision notices and case summaries. These are just some of the challenges monitoring officers have told us they've dealt with over the past twelve months. Take part in this forum to share your experiences of the local assessment process. Discuss the challenges that have come up and the solutions you've developed to manage them. By the end of the session, delegates will put together their 'top ten' local assessment problems and solutions, which the Standards Board will share with the wider standards community via our website.

Local assessment: Sharing lessons learnt
(standards committees)

Discussion forum

Aimed at: Standards committee members

This forum allows standards committee members to focus on the main challenges of putting local assessment and the wider standards framework into action. This is a great opportunity to review your experience of a range of issues, including the composition of sub-committees, how to deal effectively with conflicts of interest and when and how to issue decision notices and case summaries. By the end of the session, delegates will put together their 'top ten' local assessment problems and solutions, which the Standards Board will share with the wider standards community via our website.

Understanding political parties

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

Experts give a guide to political party governance, discipline and decision making. Gain an insight into the potential tensions of the executive system and better understand the political constraints councillors can be subject to. The session will also consider the potential benefits of building relationships with party leaders and whips. How could this help you to anticipate and reduce the risk of conduct issues that could otherwise lead to a breach of the Code?

Engaging leaders and embedding standards

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates, may be particularly helpful for independent chairs of standards committees

How do you get your leader and chief executive to engage with your work? Is it possible to put standards right at the heart of your authority's™ culture and governance? What difference can this make? This is your chance to talk to standards committees who are well on the road to embedding standards and engaging the leadership of their authority. They™ reveal how they made it happen and provide ideas and inspiration you can take back to your authority. We™ also hear from a council leader and chief executive who have got the standards message loud and clear, and find out what it took to get them on board and proactively promoting standards to their authority and beyond.

13.45 - 14.15 Drop-in sessions (advance booking required)

An opportunity to talk to Standards Board team members about your specific Code queries, managing local assessment, or any other part of the standards framework

The drop-in slots are available on a first-come, first-served basis and must be booked in advance via these web pages.

Booking opens August 2009.

13.45-14.30 Lunch

14.30-15.30 The big debate

Hall 1 plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

The debate will hear both sides of some challenging arguments. Does the current approach to standards work? Is it fair and proportionate? What's the future for local standards? Can they really contribute to an effective ethical environment and build public trust? You decide.

Further details on the debate and speaker line-up to be announced.

15.30-16.00 Networking and refreshments

16.15-17.45 Breakout sessions

Please select one of the following sessions.
All sessions last for one hour 30 minutes.

Town and parish councils: Capacity building, peer mentoring and compacts

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members, town and parish council representatives

What are the benefits for town and parish councils who work closely with standards committees? The recent capacity building bid has developed ways to improve working relationships between councils and principal authorities, including setting up model compacts for partnership working and peer mentoring. This session shows you how to put the learning from the project into action. It will provide practical examples from the town and parish councils who worked on the pilot, and give you the chance to construct your own model compact and action plan. Examples used in the session take into account different sizes, budgets and locations of parishes, and consider the support that compacts can provide to new unitary authorities.

Managing investigations with confidence

Workshop

Aimed at: Monitoring officers, heads of legal and democratic services and other officers in a similar role

Delegates share their learning and good practice ideas to develop a checklist for effective investigations management. The session will look at practical techniques for guiding a fair and proportionate investigation, and how to confidently communicate the process and the investigation outcomes to your standards committee. Discuss techniques for managing the expectations of your standards committee, including how to help them understand the components of an effective and thorough investigation, the differences between working with an internal and external investigator, planning realistic timescales, and producing high quality investigation reports.

Focus on determinations, sanctions and appeals

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

Experienced local authority speakers use a range of real-life scenarios to describe what happens when the determinations process does not go smoothly. Delegates have the chance to contribute their own experiences and discuss practical solutions. Case examples are examined to help you to get to grips with the levels of sanction commonly applied to the most frequent Code breaches. The session examines examples of successful appeals to the Adjudication Panel for England (APE). It also provides examples of when the APE has agreed with the sanction applied, and why this is the case.

Putting the public in the picture

Workshop

Aimed at: Standards committee members

What are proactive standards committees doing to raise their profile with their authority and with the public? Take part in this practical workshop which will give you a guide to the tools you can use to generate the right kind of coverage for your work. Successful authorities share good practice ideas and practical hints and tips for quick wins and longer term communications strategies. We also aim to bring you a Q&A opportunity with web experts and a local media journalist.

Supporting planning and licensing committees

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

Planning and licensing are amongst the most difficult issues for councillors to deal with â€" potential minefields of conflicts of interest and complex information. This session uses practical scenarios to put you in the place of the councillors on these committees. Youâ€™ll get an insight into their role and the decisions they face, helping you to provide more effective guidance, support and training for your authority.

Focus on Code changes

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

An opportunity to increase your knowledge of the key changes to the Code of Conduct. Working with other delegates and an experienced member of the Standards Board team, you'll work through a selection of real-life scenarios and build a clearer picture of how to implement the changes and effectively advise members.

Effective joint working: Protocols and practice

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

A straightforward explanation of how to develop and run joint standards committees, delivered by authorities that have recently put the process and protocols into practice. Build your knowledge of tried and tested joint working models, understand the outcomes of joint working in action, and consider practical examples that show how you can anticipate and deal with potential challenges.

Standards and partnerships

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

Practical guidance, based on the latest research, to help you to build robust and transparent ethical and governance arrangements into your working partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

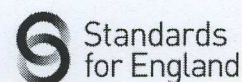
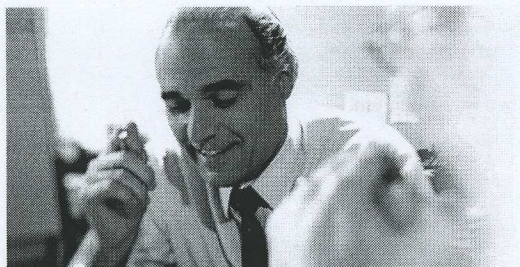
18.15-19.15 Fringe meetings

[Click here for further information on fringe events at this year's conference](#)

19.15-Late Drinks reception and conference dinner

Dress code: Smart casual

The Standards for England, Fourth Floor, Griffin House, 40 Lever Street, Manchester, M1 1BB
enquiries@standardsforengland.gov.uk - www.standardsforengland.gov.uk



Bringing Standards into Focus

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12-13 October 2009 International Convention Centre, Birmingham

Day 2

Tuesday 13 October 2009

08.00 - 09.00 Registration for 1 day delegates

Light refreshments available

08.15 - 09.00 Drop-in sessions (advance booking required)

An opportunity to talk to Standards Board team members about your specific Code queries, managing local assessment, or any other part of the standards framework

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09.15-10.30 Breakout sessions

Please select one of the following sessions. All sessions last for one hour 15 minutes.

Train the trainer

Workshop (places strictly limited) Aimed at: Standards committees

Outlining the key training standards committees can provide for members and officers, followed by a workshop providing hints, tips and techniques for the delivery of successful training sessions.

Sharing good practice

Discussion forums Aimed at: All delegates

Delegates choose a discussion and advice session chaired by either a panel of experienced monitoring officers, or experienced standards committee members, supported from the Standards Board.

The sessions are a great opportunity to ask questions and advice on any topic relating to the Code or wider standards issues. The panel will share their expertise and open the floor to delegates, giving you the chance to share your challenges, hear alternative solutions and develop good practice ideas.

10.30-11.00 Networking and refreshments

11.15-12.15 On the brink: Coming back from ethical collapse

Hall 1 plenary Aimed at: All delegates

Whether it's in a major corporation or the smallest parish council, ethical collapse has a devastating effect - destroying public trust, breaking reputations and generating conflict. This session looks at lessons from history. What are the warning signs and is there anything local government can learn from the private sector? We'll also look at the experiences of local authorities who've fought their way back from the brink, and consider what role high standards have played in getting them back on track.

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12.15-13.15 Lunch

13.30-15.00 Breakout sessions

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Other action: Examples and results

Workshop

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- how to establish a clear work programme with maximum positive impact.

Work with your peers to map the current effectiveness of your standards committee, set out what you want to achieve and the steps you need to take to get there.

Local standards live

Workshop

Aimed at: All delegates

Watch performers bring a difficult council meeting to life, spot the potential Code breaches and then direct the action. Following a short dramatic scene, you'll get to redirect the actors with new actions and lines, drawing on your own experiences to challenge situations and raise issues. You'll pick up tips from colleagues on different ways of dealing with the scenario, and discuss good practice ideas and the pros and cons of your preferred approach.

Local assessment: Sharing lessons learnt (monitoring officers)

Discussion forum

Aimed at: Monitoring officers, heads of legal and democratic services and other officers in a similar role

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The parish council toolkit

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

The launch of the latest parish council toolkit. The session reviews the tools to build good governance within town and parish councils, including clear protocols for member/officer relations, clear schemes of delegation, and guidelines for effective administration and communication of council meetings. Speakers will provide examples of what can go wrong when these tools are not used. An opportunity to discuss the strategies you've used to respond to governance issues, and get an insight into how to use the toolkit to build good governance, promote ethical behaviour and reduce complaints about member conduct.

Working together

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

Hear from authorities who have worked with the Standards Board to iron out conduct issues and improve their ethical governance. What did the process involve and what were the benefits? Was there anything they'd do differently? The session also explains how suspension of standards committee powers can be used as a 'force for good', relieving pressure on hard-pushed standards committees, for example those in the new unitary authorities.

Engaging leaders and embedding standards

Workshop

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How do you get your leader and chief executive to engage with your work? Is it possible to put standards right at the heart of your authority's culture and governance? What difference can this make? This is your chance to talk to standards committees who are well on the road to embedding standards and engaging the leadership of their authority. They'll reveal how they made it happen and provide ideas and inspiration you can take back to your authority. We'll also hear from a council leader and chief executive who have got the standards message loud and clear, and find out what it took to get them on board and proactively promoting standards to their authority and beyond.

15.00-15.15 Comfort break

15.15-16.45 Breakout sessions

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Focus on Code changes

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Joined up regulation

Mini plenary

Aimed at: Standards committee members

An overview of Comprehensive Area Assessment as relevant to standards committees, including an explanation of how the annual returns information submitted by standards committees is used as part of your authority's assessment. Example authorities will also present their experiences of the Audit Commission and IDeA ethical governance toolkits, and explain how they used the findings to improve their ethical governance. The session will help delegates to start to build a picture of the health of their authority's ethical governance, and develop an action plan for their authority.

Effective joint working: Protocols and practice

Mini plenary

Aimed at: All delegates

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Standards and partnerships

Mini plenary
Aimed at: All delegates

Practical guidance, based on the latest research, to help you to build robust and transparent ethical and governance arrangements into your working partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

16.45-17.15 Networking and refreshments

17.15 Close of conference

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