

Ethical governance diagnostic

Improving your authority's arrangements



‘High ethical standards are a cornerstone of good governance.’

The Standards Board for England

Local authorities have a duty to:

- take responsibility for their own standards;
- adopt a Code of Conduct for their members; and
- promote and maintain ethical standards across the authority.

Failure to live up to the requirements of the law can lead to individual members being investigated by their local authority or by the Standards Board for England and possible disqualification of the member. This can damage the reputation of the member and the local authority, not only with the public but also with partners.

The Audit Commission and the Standards Board for England, together with the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA), have developed a diagnostic to help protect local authorities against these risks. Areas covered by the diagnostic include how far the authority is:

- supporting the genuine motivation of members while ensuring that those who do breach the rules are challenged;
 - monitoring, developing and promoting the authority’s approach to the ethical agenda and how far this is delivering improvement;
 - encouraging good conduct in the authority, including in relation to the equalities and diversity agenda; and
 - ensuring transparency in the way the authority carries out its business.
-

‘Recommendation: All local authorities should consider using the Audit Commission/Standards Board Ethical Governance Audit tool and facilitated workshop to self-assess their arrangements for ensuring ethical standards.’

10th Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The diagnostic has three parts:

- audit of compliance with the Code of Conduct and how arrangements are developing;
- survey of members and officers including awareness and understanding of ethical behaviour; and
- workshops with members and officers exploring dilemmas, conflicts of interest and equality issues. These can be delivered either by the Audit Commission or by IDeA.

Audit Commission staff work with individual local authorities to tailor each audit to meet their particular needs.

If you would like further information about this work please contact Derek Elliott, Alison Kelly or Alan Bryce at the Audit Commission

Derek Elliott

Head of the Governance and Counter Fraud Practice
derek-elliott@audit-commission.gov.uk

Alison Kelly

Senior Manager –
Governance and Accountability
Mobile: 07759 723943
a-kelly@audit-commission.gov.uk

Alan Bryce

Senior Manager – Counter Fraud
Mobile: 07766 44 2593
a-bryce@audit-commission.gov.uk

For more information about this diagnostic call 0844 798 2211.

For general enquiries please contact
Infogovcounterfraud@audit-commission.gov.uk

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers by auditing the £180 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for people.

The Audit Commission working in association with:



**Audit Commission,
1st Floor, Millbank Tower,
Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ**

Telephone: 020 7828 1212

Fax: 020 7976 6187

Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

**The Standards Board
for England
Fourth Floor, Griffin House
40 Lever Street
Manchester, M1 1BB
www.standardsboard.co.uk
Telephone: 0161 817 5300
Minicom: 0161 817 5449
Fax: 0161 817 5499
Email: enquiries@standardsboard.gov.uk**

**Improvement and Development
Agency for Local Government
Layden House, Turnmill Street,
London EC1M 5LG
www.idea.gov.uk
Telephone: 020 7296 6600
Fax: 020 7296 6666
Email: ihelp@idea.gov.uk**