

down to detail
making local regulation work

Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees
15-16 October 2007, International Convention Centre, Birmingham

Advance programme – issue one

Key to conference session symbols

Where delegates are given the choice to attend one of a number of conference sessions, each of these sessions has a symbol to indicate the format it will take and what delegates can expect from it. The definitions of the session symbols are as follows.



Plenary sessions take place in Hall 1, with a maximum attendance of 500. They are informative sessions.



Mini plenary sessions are informative sessions taking place in smaller halls, with an attendance of up to 100, but in a more informal setting than the main plenary sessions. They usually incorporate an opportunity for questions and answers.



Workshops take place in smaller halls, with a maximum attendance of 70. These sessions take a practical approach to topics, giving delegates the chance to get hands-on experience by working through case studies and/or more structured activities, such as role-play.



Presentation and discussion sessions take place in smaller halls, with a maximum attendance of 70. These sessions involve presentations on key topics, followed by facilitated discussion amongst delegates.



Q & A sessions take place in smaller halls, with a maximum attendance of 70. They provide an open house for delegates to put questions to the Standards Board for England. Representatives from our legal and policy and guidance teams and an ethical standards officer are usually on the panel.



Fringe events are optional and take place in medium-sized halls. These sessions are organised and run independently of the main conference programme by a range of bodies from the local government family. They cover topics of key interest to delegates.

If you require this programme in another format or language, please contact the Standards Board for England by emailing annualassembly2007@standardsboard.co.uk or calling 01483 205432.



Welcome to the Sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, the leading conference on all issues concerned with the local government Code of Conduct and improving ethical standards.

This year's conference comes at a crucial time for local government. From May 2007 the revised Code of Conduct should be up and running and the local filter is no longer just on the horizon – it's on our doorstep.

Down to detail: Making local regulation work will help you to tackle all the key issues raised by these developments, as we move beyond theory to focus in depth on the detail and practice of making local regulation work.

In depth, in detail

As you will see, this year our conference programme gives you a range of informative plenaries and hands-on workshops that map out all the steps you need to take to put the local filter and the revised Code into action.

Of course, in addition to this practical focus, *Down to detail* will provide plenty of opportunities to network and share experiences and opinions with fellow practitioners.

I wish you a successful and productive conference.

Sir Anthony Holland

Chair, the Standards Board for England

Day 1 Monday 15 October 2007

08.30 – 10.15

Registration



Light breakfast available

9.15 – 10.00



Getting up to speed

David Prince, Chief Executive, the Standards Board for England

An introduction to the Code of Conduct and the Standards Board, for those delegates new to the Code or the conference. Attendance optional.

Opening plenary

Hall 1

10.15 – 10.25

Welcome

Sir Anthony Holland, Chair, the Standards Board for England

10.25 – 10.40

Defining the detail

Phil Woolas MP, Minister for Local Government and Community Cohesion

The Minister highlights how meeting the dual challenge of the local filter and the revised Code of Conduct depends on getting the details right – and sets out the government's focus for the future.

10.40 – 10.55

Evolving standards

David Prince, Chief Executive, the Standards Board for England

Drawing on local authorities' experience of putting the revised Code into practice, we provide a timely update on how implementation is progressing. The session also brings delegates up-to-date on the development of the Standards Board and our future support for authorities.

10.55 – 11.15

Local filter: Countdown to 2008

Patricia Hughes, Deputy Chair, the Standards Board for England

What key challenges, changes and implications will the local filter bring? We look at how the new legislation will impact on authorities and shape their future responsibilities, as well as setting out the timetable for implementation of the local filter.

11.15 – 11.30

Question time

An opportunity to pose questions to the morning's speakers.

11.30 – 12.00

Refreshments

Tea and coffee available



12.00 – 13.15

The Local filter: In detail

Various halls



A step-by-step guide to the local filter, essential for anyone working with the Code of Conduct. Using a case example, this session takes delegates through every stage of the local filter process, from handling the initial complaint to evaluating the outcome.

Delegates will have the opportunity to discuss solutions and draw on expert advice at every stage of the session.

Up to eight workshops, each with a maximum of 100 delegates.

Delegates will choose between:

- A monitoring officer focused session
- A standards committee focused session
- A mixed attendance session

13.15 – 14.30

Lunch



Hall 3

14.30 – 15.45

Breakout sessions

Breakout sessions on day one of the conference aim to prepare delegates for the changes expected in April 2008. They look in depth at the process and practice of managing the local filter and focus on helping delegates to develop the skills and knowledge they need to deliver a high standard of effective local governance.

Please note that these sessions run again at 16.15, with the exception of *Investigations: The essentials* and *Investigations: Tackling complex cases*.

Delegates can choose to attend one of the following session options.



Safeguarding local standards

An informative session mapping out the monitoring and auditing role of the Standards Board and how it fits in with other regulatory bodies such as the Audit Commission. Delegates learn what local filter data they will have to supply from 2008 and how we intend to collect it. The session also explores ways in which the Standards Board can support delegates in ensuring local arrangements are working effectively – and when we will intervene to support authorities who face difficulties.

Useful for all delegates.



Referrals: Lessons learnt

Drawing on over five years' experience, the Standards Board referrals team use practical case examples to explain the essential technical components and key skills involved in effectively managing referrals. **Useful for all delegates.**



Investigations: The essentials

Delegates work through a range of practical scenarios, based on the requirements of the new local filter system, to build the key technical skills required at each stage of the investigations process. This is an opportunity to share experiences and discuss best practice. **Particularly useful for monitoring officers new to the investigations process or those wanting a refresher.**



Investigations: Tackling complex cases

Not every case is straightforward. In this practical workshop delegates work in groups to review a case complicated by a number of issues. This session helps delegates to anticipate and respond effectively to potentially serious impacts on the decision-making process. **Particularly useful for experienced monitoring officers who want to develop their skills in this area.**



Managing the filter: Resources, challenges and solutions

The local filter brings benefits, not least increased local ownership of the ethical agenda. But it also brings challenges. This session shares the results of the Standards Board pilot looking at joint arrangements for standards committees, and explores ways of dealing with some of the pressures on local resources. Delegates discuss solutions and share best practice on this important issue.

Useful for all delegates.



Cracking the revised Code

An overview of the revised Code of Conduct, using practical case examples to bring delegates up-to-date with all the major changes and how they work in practice.

Useful for all delegates.



Talking it over: Why mediation works

Speakers explain how they have used mediation to successfully resolve a range of cases, demonstrating the key benefits of this valuable alternative to investigation and helping delegates to identify opportunities to apply this approach in their own work.



Standards committee member open house Q&A

An open house for standards committee members to ask questions on any topic to representatives from the Standards Board for England. **Useful for standards committee members.**

15.45 – 16.15

Refreshments

Tea and coffee available



16.15 – 17.30

Breakout sessions

Please note that in this part of the conference the sessions *Investigations: The essentials* and *Investigations: Tackling complex cases* have been replaced by two new sessions, *Hearings: The essentials* and *Spotlight on sanctions*.

Delegates can choose to attend one of the following session options.



Safeguarding local standards

An informative session mapping out the monitoring and auditing role of the Standards Board and how it fits in with other regulatory bodies such as the Audit Commission. Delegates learn what local filter data they will have to supply from 2008 and how we intend to collect it. The session also explores ways in which the Standards Board can support delegates in ensuring local arrangements are working effectively – and when we will intervene to support authorities who face difficulties.

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Referrals: Lessons learnt

Drawing on over five years' experience, the Standards Board referrals team use practical case examples to explain the essential technical components and key skills involved in effectively managing referrals. **Useful for all delegates.**



Hearings: The essentials

Delegates work through a range of practical scenarios, based on the requirements of the new local filter system, to build the key technical skills required at each stage of the hearings process. Delegates have the opportunity to share experiences and discuss best practice. **Particularly useful for standards committee members new to the investigations process or those wanting a refresher.**



Spotlight on sanctions

A practical workshop focusing on assessing the findings of a problematic case and agreeing a proportionate sanction. Delegates take an in depth look at the alternative sanction options and their implications and how they have been applied in recent cases. **Particularly useful for experienced standards committee members who want to develop their skills in this area.**



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Talking it over: Why mediation works

Speakers explain how they have used mediation to successfully resolve a range of cases, demonstrating the key benefits of this valuable alternative to investigation and helping delegates to identify opportunities to apply this approach in their own work.



Monitoring officers open house Q&A

An open house for monitoring officers to ask questions on any topic to representatives from the Standards Board for England. **Useful for monitoring officers.**

17.30

Close of day one

17.45 – 18.45

Fringe events

Various optional fringe events including:



Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS)



The Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce)



Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)



Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)



Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)

19.30 – 20.00

Drinks reception



20.00 – late

Conference dinner

Dress code is smart or smart-casual.

Cash bar available.

Live music.



Day 2 Tuesday 16 October 2007

08.00 – 09.00

Refreshments

Tea and coffee available. Delegates attending for today only should register at the Enquiries desk.



09.00 – 10.15

Breakout sessions

Breakout sessions on day two of the conference address vital issues linked to managing the wider impact of the local filter and the revised Code. Training and hands-on workshops help delegates to focus on raising their authorities' standards to an even higher level, improving communications with their stakeholders and confidently delivering effective local regulation.

Please note that these sessions run again at 13.15, with the exception of *Anything to declare? Understanding interests*.

Delegates can choose to attend one of the following session options.



Key case review

A detailed review of key cases which have had a significant impact on procedure and application of the Code. Delegates gain an insight into how the lessons learned from the cases can be applied to their work. **Useful for all delegates.**



State of independence

This session helps independent chairs and members build the key skills they need to respond effectively to the challenges of the local filter, including chairing successful meetings, dealing with complaints, problem solving and effective communication skills. **Particularly useful for independent members of standards committees.**



Positive about towns and parishes

Delegates hear a series of short presentations identifying positive ways to improve engagement with town and parish councils. The session focuses on key issues including how to maximize the role of town and parish representatives, the most effective techniques for training and building a useful and productive dialogue with town and parish councils and the benefits of working with County Associations.

Particularly useful for officers and members working closely with town and parish councils.



Engaging leaders

The local filter system positions local authorities as the foundation of the ethical framework, making an engaged leadership more vital than ever. Speakers share their experiences, suggesting practical measures to help delegates ensure that their own council leader and chief executive are fully prepared to take the lead and meet the challenges of greater local ownership. **Useful for all delegates.**



Anything to declare? Understanding interests

A practical session giving delegates the opportunity to build a sound knowledge of the detailed changes to the Code relating to interests. Delegates are presented with a series of short scenarios and are asked to debate the likely conclusion.

Useful for all delegates.



Message received? Managing communications

As the local filter comes into play, local authorities will be the first point of call for local media enquiries on complaints, investigations and case outcomes. This session uses practical examples to reveal the detail of how and why we deal with press interest in cases, before giving delegates the opportunity to discuss the implications of possible differing approaches. **Useful for all delegates.**



Practical mediation skills

A useful companion session to 'Talking it over'. Mediation can be a valuable tool in resolving disputes and reducing the potential of a complaint leading to a full investigation. This practical training session focuses on key mediation skills, equipping delegates with the competencies to mediate in disputes between individuals. **Useful for all delegates.**



Standards committee member open house Q&A

An open house for standards committee members to ask questions on any topic to representatives from the Standards Board for England. **Useful for standards committee members.**

10.15 – 10.45

Refreshments

Tea and coffee available



10.45 – 12.00



What's the score?

Hall 1



What is the current state of the regulatory framework? Is it fit for purpose and robust enough to deal with greater local ownership? Key opinion formers discuss and draw conclusions from the results of recent studies including Audit Commission research into ethics and standards committees. **All delegates attend this session.**

12.00 – 13.15

Lunch



Hall 3

13.15 – 14.30

Breakout sessions

Please note that in this part of the conference the session *Anything to declare? Understanding interests* has been replaced by a new session, *Striking a balance: Disclosure and public interest*.

Delegates can choose to attend one of the following session options.



Key case review

A detailed review of key cases which have had a significant impact on procedure and application of the Code. Delegates gain an insight into how the lessons learned from the cases can be applied to their work. **Useful for all delegates.**



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Striking a balance: Disclosure and public interest

A practical session giving delegates the opportunity to build a sound knowledge of the key changes to the Code relating to public disclosure. Delegates hear a series of short scenarios and debate whether they constitute disclosure in good faith, or are examples of disclosure in the interests of political gain. **Useful for all delegates.**



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Monitoring officer open house Q&A

An open house for monitoring officers to ask questions on any topic to representatives from the Standards Board for England. **Useful for monitoring officers.**

14.30 – 14.45
Comfort break

Closing plenary

Hall 1

14.45 – 15.00

All clear

Sir Anthony Holland, Chair, the Standards Board for England

A review of the conference.

15.00 – 15.30

The next step

David Prince, Chief Executive, the Standards Board for England

The conference has provided delegates with a wealth of knowledge and the confidence to make local regulation work. What happens next?

15.30

Networking

Refreshments available



16.00

Close of conference

How to get there

The ICC is located in the centre of Birmingham. You can travel there in a number of ways. A location map will be sent to delegates in a final mailing, shortly before the conference. The map will indicate the train stations, motorways and car parks.

By train

Services to Birmingham New Street Station travel from locations all over the country. Services to Birmingham Snow Hill Station run in the local area. Please telephone National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50 for further information.

By taxi

The venue is a short taxi ride from Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Snow Hill stations.

On foot

The venue is approximately 10 minutes walk from Birmingham New Street Station.

By car

Birmingham is easily accessible via a network of motorways.

Car parking

There are five public multi-storey car parks close to the ICC.

Further information

If you have any enquiries regarding the conference, please contact:

Benedict Business Resources
St Jude's Place
PO Box 617
Albury, Guildford
Surrey, GU5 9XU

Telephone: 01483 205 432

Fax: 01483 202 335

Email: annualassembly2007@standardsboard.co.uk

Alternatively, visit our conference website at

www.annualassembly.co.uk

All information contained within this programme was correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change.

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