

Previous Ethical Audit results for comparison with the Staff Survey

It is not possible to draw direct comparisons between the results of the Staff Survey and the Ethical Audits carried out by the Standards Committee as the questions have been phrased differently. For instance, whilst the Ethical Audits asked whether the Council had adopted a Code of Conduct for Members and officers, the Staff Survey asks whether officers know that these documents are available within the Council's Constitution.

However the results of the Ethical Audit 2007 are broadly consistent with the Staff Survey in showing that those who haven't worked for the Council as long are more likely not be aware of key documents, as are those at lower job grades. This is also supported by the results of the Ethical Audit 2006 which showed much higher awareness of the Codes of Conduct than shown in the Ethical Audit 2007 and the staff survey.

The staff survey shows much higher awareness of the need to register gifts and hospitality and interests than the Ethical Audit 2007, although this may be consistent with the finding that those with lower awareness are those at lower job grades and who have not been working for the Council for very long. As these questions were not posed in the Ethical Audit 2006, it is not possible to draw comparisons with responses from more senior staff.

Results of the Ethical Audit 2006

The 2006 audit was carried out by the Audit Commission. The survey was sent to all Members of Leeds City Council, and a sample of staff (S02 with management responsibility and above). 1011 officers were asked to participate (this included staff from Education Leeds). 502 officers responded, amounting to a 50% response rate for officers. Overall, the survey had a 49% response rate.

The results showed that:

	Yes	No	Don't Know	
Has the council adopted a code of conduct for members?	70.7%	0.2%	27.5%	
Has the council adopted a code of conduct for officers?	80.4%	1.6%	16.6%	
	Very clear	Fairly clear	Fairly unclear	Very unclear
How clear are you about reporting a potential breach of the members' code of conduct?	14.8%	34.9%	27.5%	21.4%

	<i>Agree strongly</i>	<i>Tend to agree</i>	<i>Tend to disagree</i>	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Your council's approach to promoting high ethical standards is helping to build the public's confidence in local democracy.	16.4%	45.1%	10.6%	2.2%	23.6%

Results of the Ethical Audit 2007

The 2007 audit was carried out by the Corporate Governance Team. The survey was sent to a sample of staff (S02 and below). The total number of staff selected to take part was 1057 which amounts to approximately 10% of the grading group. A total number of responses to the survey was 466, which amounts to a response rate of 44%.

The results showed that:

1) Has the Council adopted a Code of Conduct for Councillors?

Yes	176	41.51%
No	0	0.00%
Don't know	248	58.49%
Total	424	

2) Has the Council adopted a Code of Conduct for Officers?

Yes	259	56.18%
No	3	0.65%
Don't know	199	43.17%
Total	461	

3) How clear are you about reporting a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct?

Clear	61	13.17%
Unclear	402	86.83%
Total	463	

4) The Council's approach to promoting high ethical standards is helping to build the public's confidence in local democracy

Agree	196	42.4%
Disagree	46	10.0%
Don't know	220	47.6%
Total	462	

5) A register is kept in which officers are required to record any interests which might impair their impartiality

Agree	299	64.9%
Disagree	6	1.3%
Don't know	156	33.8%
Total	461	

6) A register is kept in which officers are required to record any offers of hospitality or gifts.

Agree	282	61.6%
Disagree	6	1.3%
Don't know	170	37.1%
Total	458	

Interpretation of results for questions 1-3

Question 1: Has the Council adopted a Code of Conduct for Councillors?

The breakdown by department shows a much greater awareness of the existence of the Councillors' Code of Conduct in Corporate Governance (59%) and Planning, Policy and Improvement (69%). This may be consistent with respondents from Corporate Governance being the most likely to have contact with Councillors either regularly or often.

The results also show that there is less awareness of the Councillors' Code amongst the grading scales 1 to 4 (29%), as oppose to scales 4 to 6 (49%) and S01 to S02 (43%). There also appears to be more awareness of the Councillors' Code in those respondents who have worked at the Council for more than three years. 51% of those who have worked for the Council for three to five years and 42% of those who have worked for the Council for more than five years, say that the Council have adopted a Code of Conduct for Councillors. In comparison to 37% of those who have worked for the Council for one to three years, and 38% of staff who have worked for Council for less than a year.

Encouragingly, those officers who are 'regularly' or 'often' in contact with members of the public have relatively high awareness of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, 40% and 42% respectively. Those who 'never' have contact with members of the public have much lower awareness (27%).

Question 2: Has the Council adopted a Code of Conduct for Officers?

The breakdown of results by department shows that there is much greater than average awareness in Corporate Governance (70%), Planning, Policy and Improvement (63%) and Environment and Neighbourhoods (62%). Resources also had a relatively high awareness of the officer code (60%), and amongst those officers who identified themselves as being members of the Human Resources Team, nine out of ten knew the Council had adopted a Code of Conduct for officers.

Children's Services had the lowest awareness of the officer code, with only 38% answering positively.

Again the results show that awareness increases in line with the grading groups. Only 43% of those at scales 1 to 4 are aware of the officer code, in contrast with 64% at scales 4 to 6, and 68% at S01 to S02. Furthermore those who have worked at the Council for three years or more are more likely to answer positively to this question. A total of 57% answered that the Council had adopted a Code of Conduct for officers, in contrast with 50% of staff who have worked at the Council for less than three years.

Unlike the previous question there does not appear to be any identifiable trends between the amount of contact an officer has with the general public and their awareness of the officer code.

Question 3: How clear are you about reporting a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct?

Only 10% of those respondents who rarely or never have contact with the public were clear on reporting a potential breach of the Members' Code, in comparison with 14% of those who regularly or often have contact with the public.

Again those respondents who have worked for the Council for less than three years have less understanding of these issues. Only 8% are clear about how to report a potential breach of the Members' Code, in comparison with 16% of officers who have worked for the Council for three years or more.

Members of the Standards Committee should note that since the audit was carried out, the Standards Committee has begun receiving complaints about Councillors, as oppose to Standards for England. The Standards Committee have been obliged to advertise this change, and certain officers have been provided with training on the new process.