

Standards Board for England Annual Review 2007/08

Report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with a summary of the Standards Board for England Annual Review report for 2007/08.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

The Standards Board for England have released a report providing a review for their work for the period 2007/08. The review outlines the work of the Standards Board in moving to a strategic role in light of the introduction of local assessment of complaints. The report also provides statistical information with regard to the work undertaken by the Standards Board during the year.

4 Information

The Standards Board for England have released a report setting out a review of their work during the period 2007/08. The report provides information with regard to changes in their role. The Standards Board has adopted strategic responsibilities as a result of the introduction of the local assessment of complaints under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. A brief summary of some of the points raised in the review are set out below as follows: -

- In terms of key indicators, BMG Research shows that overall satisfaction with Standards Board for England has increased from 29% in 2004 to 38% in 2007.
- Change that the Standards Board for England also relate to key personnel. The Standards Board has a new Chief Executive Glenys Stacey, who was previously the Chief Executive of Animal Health, Criminal Cases Review Commission and the Greater Manchester Magistrates Court Committee. In addition to a new Chief Executive, the Board has also appointed a new Chair, Doctor Robert Chilton, who is also a Non-Executive Director of the Waste Resources Action programme, a Board Member for the Office of the Information Commissioner, Chair of the major London housing association the East Thames Group, and Deputy Chair of ICSTIS (the premium phone rate regulator).
- In relation to complaints, from April 2007 to March 2008 the Standards Board received 3,547 allegations, 66% of allegations were from members of the public, 14% of all allegations received were referred for investigation and ten days were taken in each case to decided whether to refer a complaint for investigation. Attached at the appendix is an extract from the review report outlining the outcomes for those matters referred for investigation and determination.

In terms of the year ahead the Standards Board states as follows: -

“The task now for the next twelve months is to ensure that standards committees and monitoring officers are confident in their roles and that the system is operated efficiently at the local level. We will provide guidance and information on the management of cases locally. We will offer a light touch when it comes to monitoring. And we will look to highlight good practice wherever we see it”.

5 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6 Legal Comment

The legal comment is contained within the main body of this report

7 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service’s Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

8 Appendix

Standards Board Investigations 2007-08

9 Background Papers

Standards Board for England Annual Review 2007-08

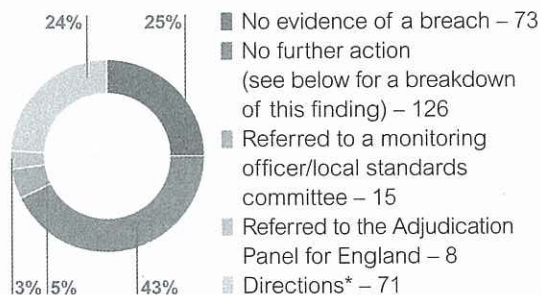
Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

Standards Board investigations 2007-08

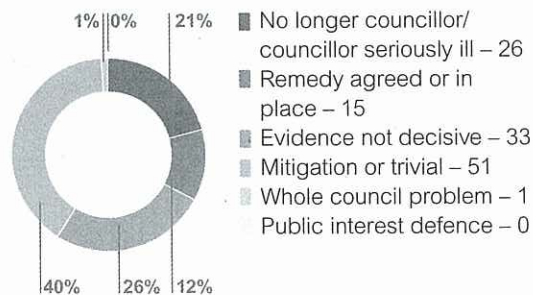
From April 2007-March 2008, the Standards Board referred 524 allegations for investigation. During the same period, 285 allegations that were referred for investigation were sent to monitoring officers for local investigation.

The Standards Board's ethical standards officers made 293 final findings in investigations



*In some cases, our ethical standards officers have the option of issuing monitoring officers with directions to take action to solve local problems – for example, training for the whole authority or guidance on proper procedures. The aim is to help the authority improve its own effectiveness and conduct, at a far lower cost in time and money than an investigation. Often we issue directions in situations where we believe a case has broad relevance for the overall governance of an authority.

Breakdown of findings of 'no further action'



When we complete an investigation, we may decide to take no action in relation to the subject of the complaint. This is often because the appropriate action has already been taken. For example, apologies may have been made or a registration of interests completed. Sometimes, having examined all the evidence, it is insufficient to decide that there was a breach of the Code of Conduct. Changes to legislation mean that this is the last year when 'no further action' findings will cover such a range of different outcomes.

Adjudication Panel for England determinations 2007-08

Of the 293 final findings, we sent eight cases to the Adjudication Panel in 2007-08, one of which is yet to be heard. The Adjudication Panel made ten determinations, as three cases were heard in 2007-08 but referred in 2006-07.

Of the ten determinations made by the Adjudication Panel in 2007-08:

- 0 no sanction
- 1 no breach
- 4 disqualified for 15 months to five years
- 2 suspended for up to a year
- 3 disqualified for up to a year

Standards committee determinations

We sent 15 cases to standards committees in 2007-08 following investigations by Standards Board ethical standards officers.

Of these, three are still to be heard. Standards committees made 14 determinations, as two cases were heard in 2007-08 but referred in 2006-07.

- 10 suspension (including training and apology)
- 1 no breach
- 1 censure
- 1 training
- 0 partial suspension
- 1 censure and training
- 0 apology and training