

## 1 Circulating reports

Passing ESO reports to Standards Committees.

## 2 Referral statistics

The latest figures on the complaints we receive.

## 2 Public interest

Clarification on the issue in light of a recent case.

## 2 MORI research

Initial findings into satisfaction with guidance.

## 2 Complaints leaflet

## 3 Recent adjudications

## 3 FAQ

You may have noticed that the *Bulletin* has a new look this month. As well as an improved design, it has new features that should make it even easier for you to find the information you need. The front page now includes a contents area and the pdf includes hyperlinks, so if you read the *Bulletin* onscreen you can get to any websites we mention with just one click of the mouse. We would like to know what you think, so please feel free to send us your comments.

As this is the last *Bulletin* of the year, it is the custom to look back at the previous 12 months and take stock of where we are. I would prefer instead to look forward to the new year and the challenges ahead.

Next year will see legislation passed to enable Ethical Standards Officers to refer allegations for local investigation by Monitoring Officers, enabling local disputes to be resolved at a local level. Our latest understanding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is that it will be in a position to consult on the regulations in January 2004. We plan to consult on draft guidance at the same time. We will also be issuing guidance on lobby groups and related issues to help members get to grips with the many complex areas of the Code of Conduct.

We would like to thank you for all your feedback and help throughout 2003. We hope to continue this dialogue through a series of presentations and workshops planned for 2004. As an organisation, we are still learning to be as effective as we can be. The promotion of ethical conduct was never going to be an easy route to take, but to have got where we are today in less than two years is an achievement that we can all be proud of.

Season's greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

John Edwards, Interim Chief Executive

### **Circulating Ethical Standards Officers' reports to Standards Committees members**

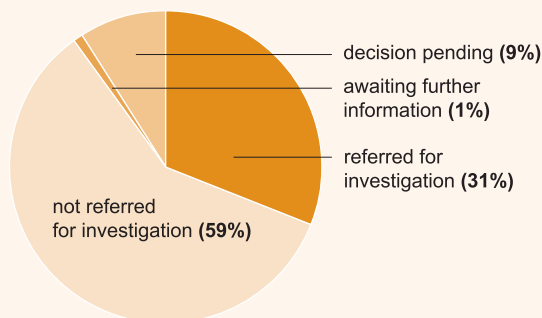
To clarify our earlier advice, when an Ethical Standards Officer refers a matter to a Standards Committee for local determination, they must send a copy of the report to the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee.

Rather than sending it direct to the Standards Committee, we ask Monitoring Officers to circulate the report to all members of their Standards Committee on our behalf. At that stage, you should inform them that the report is being circulated to them in confidence, but you should make it clear that it is likely that part or all of the report will be in the public domain at the Standards Committee hearing.

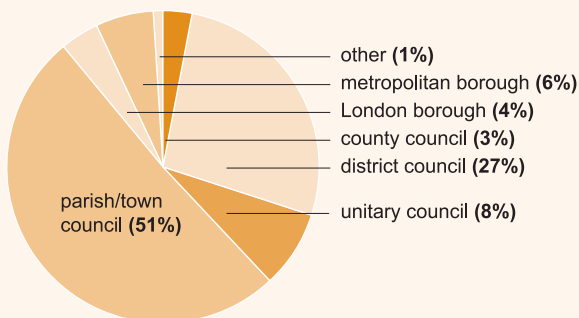
### Latest referral statistics

The following charts show The Standards Board for England's referral statistics for the period 1 April to 30 November 2003.

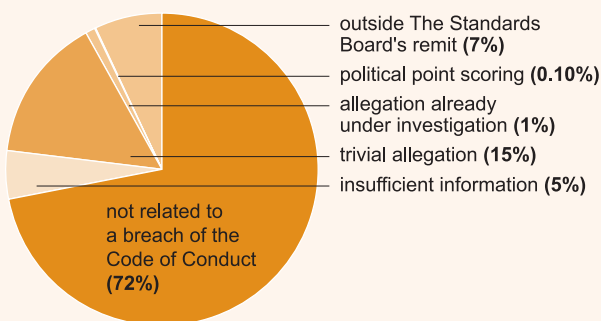
#### Action taken with allegations received



#### Allegations received by type of authority



#### Reason for not referring allegations



### Public interest and the Code of Conduct

At a recent hearing of The Adjudication Panel for England, the issue of a public interest defence was raised. As you may be aware, this subsequently generated some publicity and we are aware that the Green Party has written to authorities on the subject. You can see a summary of the case at:

[www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/decisions/pdfs/APE0143.pdf](http://www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/decisions/pdfs/APE0143.pdf)

It is an issue we are considering, and may wish to raise with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister when it conducts its review of the Code of Conduct. In the meantime, if your authority is considering amending its adopted Code of Conduct, remember that it cannot reduce the scope of the Code of Conduct — for example, by inserting a public interest clause. You must also inform us of any changes.

### Research reveals good levels of satisfaction

Stage one of a MORI research project into satisfaction of members and officers with the work of The Standards Board for England is now complete. The results will be used to shape our work in the future. Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey.

According to the research, 89% of councillors support the Code of Conduct. The survey also found that:

- nearly three-quarters of members (74%) believe the public are concerned about members' conduct;
- less than a third of members (31%) believe standards of behaviour have improved over the last two years.

Other findings indicate that Monitoring Officers and Standards Committee members are relatively satisfied with our work so far. Few stakeholders seemed dissatisfied with our work, although the findings did reveal that there is more work to be done with leaders and town and parish councils to meet their expectations.

The bulletin also rated highly — 92% of Monitoring Officers questioned were aware of it. Of these, 95% read it and 86% found it useful.

We will bring you further findings in the new year. Stage two of the research will begin in December, and will involve interviews and focus groups with a cross-section of members and officers.

### New complaints leaflet

The latest guide to The Standards Board for England's complaints procedure, *How to make a complaint*, is available now. The leaflet is suitable for anyone who may wish to complain about a member's behaviour. It explains what things they can complain about, how to complain, and what happens once the complaint has been made. There is a form at the back to help the complainant provide all the information we need.

The leaflet was distributed recently to MPs, local

authorities, citizens advice bureaux and law centres. To get copies of the leaflet, telephone 020 7378 5110 or e-mail:

[publications@standardsboard.co.uk](mailto:publications@standardsboard.co.uk)

The leaflet is also available from our website at:

[www.standardsboard.co.uk/complaints](http://www.standardsboard.co.uk/complaints)

### Recent adjudications

The Adjudication Panel for England recently disqualified a member for three years for:

- failing to treat others with respect (a breach of Paragraph 2(b) of the Code of Conduct);
- bringing his authority into disrepute (a breach of Paragraph 4 of the Code of Conduct);
- using his position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for himself or any other person an advantage or disadvantage (a breach of Paragraph 5 of the Code of Conduct).

Full details can be found at:

[www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/decisions/pdfs/APE0144.pdf](http://www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk/decisions/pdfs/APE0144.pdf)

### FAQ

#### Why does The Standards Board for England publish summaries of investigations?

Ethical Standards Officers have a statutory power to publicise the results of their investigations. The Standards Board for England makes summaries of the findings available to the public to help people understand the Code of Conduct and provide an insight into how decisions are made by Ethical Standards Officers.

We also believe publication of the summary helps to clear the name of the member investigated or ensure that justice is seen to be done, according to the outcome of the case.