

Honesty

Objectivity

Openness

Selflessness

Integrity

Accountability

Leadership

PRESS NOTICE

FOSTERING A NEW ETHICAL CULTURE: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY COMMISSION LAUNCHES LANDMARK PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC OFFICE (ACCOUNTABILITY) BILL

Today, the independent [Ethics and Integrity Commission \(EIC\)](#) unveiled its official Terms of Reference for a major new project in response to the [Prime Minister's letter](#), which calls for the EIC to “act as a Centre of Excellence on public sector codes of conduct, providing guidance and best practice to help all public bodies put ethics and integrity at the heart of public service delivery.”

Launched in support of the [Public Office \(Accountability\) Bill](#) before Parliament, the initiative will examine existing Codes of Ethical Conduct to formulate practical, non-statutory guidance. The goal is to help public authorities meet their upcoming legal requirements, which are designed to achieve meaningful workplace culture change.

Building on the foundation of Lord Nolan's historic [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), the project is a direct response to systematic institutional failings, including those identified in the wake of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, which lies at the core of the proposed Bill.

"This project isn't just about preparing for a new law; it's about restoring public trust. We want to help public authorities move past basic compliance and foster a genuine culture of everyday selflessness."

Doug Chalmers, Chair, Ethics and Integrity Commission

A Two-Phase Approach to Lasting Change

The EIC will deliver the project in two distinct phases to ensure the final guidance is both robust and practical:

- **Phase One: Evidence Gathering & Drafting**
The EIC is launching an open call for evidence, seeking written submissions to identify knowledge gaps, uncover what works, and capture lessons learned from existing codes. This evidence will shape a provisional draft of the guidance. The Commission will also invite key stakeholders to give formal oral evidence to further inform our work.
- **Phase Two: Public Consultation & Testing**
Once drafted, the provisional guidance will be subjected to a rigorous public consultation to test its real-world practicality and effectiveness. Public feedback will directly refine the final guidance issued to authorities, and the EIC will thereafter deliver its final report containing this guidance.

Backed by Cutting-Edge Research

To ensure the final framework is highly practical and evidence-based, the EIC has commissioned three foundational research projects:

1. **Mapping the Landscape:** building a database that compares how different sectors' codes of conduct enable ethical decision making that puts the public interest first, ensuring that the EIC's future guidance is sector-sensitive.
2. **Embedding Ethical Conduct:** creating a report and toolkit based on recent literature to help public authorities bridge the gap between tick-box compliance and genuine, everyday selflessness.
3. **Reflecting on Principles and Behaviours:** exploring how different regulatory approaches, from traditional rules to behavioural 'nudging' theory, can best drive institutional compliance with the Nolan Principles.

EIC Chair Doug Chalmers said:

"Our objective is to ensure that public authorities are equipped not just to draft a piece of paper, but to foster environments where ethical decision-making is an instinctive, first thought. To make this guidance genuinely transformative and practical, we want to listen to sectoral practitioners, government experts, and the public themselves"

EIC Independent Member Lady Arden of Heswall said:

"As the lead Commission member for this project, my goal is to ensure the EIC delivers meaningful guidance that not only meets the rigorous requirements of the upcoming Public Office (Accountability) Bill, but actively weaves the Nolan Principles into the daily fabric of public service".

The final report and completed guidance are scheduled to be published in 2027.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- **Media Contact:** For interview requests, or further media enquiries, please contact joseph.rice@eic.independent.gov.uk
- **About the EIC:** [The Ethics and Integrity Commission](#) (EIC) is an independent body dedicated to upholding and improving ethical standards across public life. The Commission promotes the highest standards in public life, reports to the Prime Minister on matters concerning ethical standards, and advises public authorities on the development of clear codes of conduct with effective oversight arrangements. The Commission is not a regulator and has no remit to investigate individual cases.
- **About the Bill:** The Public Office (Accountability) Bill stems from lessons learned from historic institutional failings, most notably the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, aiming to legally enforce transparency and accountability in public office. The Bill passed the Commons stage on 14 July 2026 and was moved to the Lords where it passed its first reading on 16 July 2026. It is estimated to go back to the Lords on 1 September 2026. More information can be found [here](#).
- **Other work:** In addition to this project, the EIC recently published its first report: [Lobbying, Business Appointment Rules, and Disclosure](#), and is currently carrying out a review of the [public sector ombudsman system](#).
- **Membership:** The current members of the EIC are Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE (Chair), The Rt Hon Lady Mary Arden of Heswall DBE, Ewen Fergusson, Professor Gillian Peele, Ian Blackford (Scottish National Party), Ruth Dombey OBE (Liberal Democrat), Rt Hon. Michael Tomlinson KC (Conservative), and

The Baroness Crawley (Labour). They will be joined on 01 August 2026 by Rev. Ijeoma Ajibade, Dr Samuel Power, Nicola Driver, and Dr Katerina Hadjimatheou.

- **Social Media:** Follow the EIC on [X](#), [Bluesky](#), and [LinkedIn](#).