LABC Code of Conduct

What is LABC?
LABC is the organisation which represents local authority building control in England and Wales. Its functions include the provision of: research, policy advice, consultations and liaison with government departments, legislative clarification, best practice guidance, bursaries for trainees, training, people development, technical guidance and mediation, marketing, business development, liaison with manufacturers, trade associations, testing and standards bodies. LABC’s key priorities are: consistency between local authorities, promoting local authorities’ building control services, the provision of quality building control services, public safety, consumer protection, defence of market share, and, the encouragement of innovation and efficiency.

Why have a code of conduct?
LABC’s code exists to set a standard of conduct, performance and the basis for mutual cooperation between members. The LABC Constitution allows LABC to require its members to comply with the Code of Conduct. (The constitution means the Memorandum of Understanding, Articles of Association and Byelaws). The constitution is the original document agreed with the LGA to create LABC and is binding on LABC and its members.

Functions of the code
The Code of Conduct defines the standards and behaviours to be adhered to by LABC members in delivering its services to customers, interacting with industry, and, managing relationships with other members and building control bodies. The code is intended to support quality, encourage innovation, provide the platform for equitable relationships between local authorities, develop partnerships with industry, and, build mutually supporting relationships with business customers and property owners.

Handling complaints
The byelaws of LABC explain the member admission policy and disciplinary processes available to the LABC Board should there be complaints against a member for failing to follow the Code of Conduct. There are a progressive range of sanctions that can be applied, ranging from advice and reprimands through to warnings, suspension from LABC schemes, suspension of membership and expulsion.

Spirit and practice
LABC members and their teams are expected to conform to both the ‘spirit’ and the specified behaviours covering all aspects of building control practice, administration and management. The code outlines these areas and may refer to supporting documents published by LABC, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Welsh Government, the Construction Industry Council (CIC), the Building Control Alliance (BCA), the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group (BCPSAG) and other organisations, which contain greater detail.

Application of the code
The purpose of the code is to promote good conduct and the adoption of best practice. Members must comply with
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all legal obligations under criminal and civil law including legislation specific to building control, and other business statutes covering competition, financial conduct, bribery, HR, health and safety and equality.

LABC Membership
A ‘Member’ is defined by the articles to be a local authority, public sector entity or a private sector entity commissioned to deliver the building control function on behalf of a local authority, or other public sector body carrying out the building control function. Following DCLG clarifications this includes those teams using local authority powers to trade as companies or operate as an approved inspector (in order to compete with other approved inspectors and applying the guidance defined in the LABC Partner Authority Scheme).

Ethics
• LABC members must act with honesty and integrity
• Deliver the highest possible level of service commensurate with resources and competencies
• Behave in a way that reinforces trust and respect for the LABC network and the whole building control profession
• Be accountable and pro-active, engaging positively with colleagues in the network to deliver a quality service and secure work ethically
• Treat staff, other building control providers, customers, industry and consultees with respect.

Technical and commercial standards
LABC members are expected to explain the building control system and the building regulations in both England and Wales in ways that will be easily understood by professionals and contractors in the building industry, non-experts in business and the general public. Members should ensure consumers and non-experts are able to understand the system and make informed choices.

Neither quality of service nor technical standards should be sacrificed to maximise turnover or create surpluses or profit. The expectations and guidance of the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group (BCPSAG) should be used to manage the operational delivery of service to customers. Both the “standards” and the “guidance” of the Building Control Performance Standards Advisory Group are adopted by LABC to define best practice for members. BCPSAG, itself, is a sub-group of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee and both report directly to the Minister for the Building Regulations.

Special attention is drawn to “competencies and resources”. BCPSAG stipulates that building control bodies should have sufficient resources to provide the services offered to customers and those providing the service must have the appropriate qualifications, practical knowledge and sufficient experience to match the type of work they undertake. LABC members are expected to engage with colleagues in a proactive way to ensure they have the relevant mix of skills, experience and resources to support
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the work they take on.

LABC members should compete fairly and legally with private sector building control bodies and support other members in the LABC network. Specifically, members should align practice with guidance produced by LABC working groups and agreements with scheme providers ratified by working groups on behalf of LABC under the direction of the working groups or Board. These include:

• Local Authority Cross Boundary Working Protocol
• Local Authority Approved Inspector Protocol
• Partner Authority Scheme
• LABC Guidance on Charges and Inspection Service Plans
• Initial Notice Protocol
• LABC Consult
• LABC Acoustics
• LABC Warranty
• LABC Publishing
• LABC Enforcement Best Practice Recommendations
• LABC Mediation Scheme
• BCA Mediation Scheme between public and private sector building control bodies

Professional and commercial standards
In line with membership of Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and or the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), any individual working as a professional surveyor within a local authority is expected to work to the standards demanded by those professional institutions and alert their employer to conflicting demands. LABC expects local authority members to respect the professional advice of their surveyors. Both LABC and the BCA (created with input from DCLG) provide a peer group process for mediating disputes on technical standards. The BCA also provides a mediation route for commercial or technical disputes between building control bodies that is supported by LABC. LABC expects local authorities to accept industry decisions by schemes and bodies recognised DCLG.

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LABC is a membership organisation representing all local authority building control teams in England and Wales who work with industry and building professionals to ensure compliance with Building Regulations. We are a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting public sector expertise. There are 3,000 surveyors and technical support staff working in local authority building control providing a consistent national service that is delivered at a local level.