

The Standards Commission is keen to ensure that it reflects best practice and continually strives to improve its processes in respect of how Hearings are managed and conducted.

In order to obtain views and feedback on the different aspects of Hearings, we recently undertook a survey of individuals who had attended Hearings and/or been involved in the process between 1 January 2016 and 31 July 2016.

Participants were asked questions about all aspects of Hearings, including the information and contact they had with the Standards Commission before, during and after the Hearing.

While a limited number of responses were received, we were pleased to note that the majority of survey participants were positive about the clarity of information and correspondence before and during the Hearing. The majority of survey participants were also positive about how easy it was to access information on the Hearing Panel's decision and the clarity of the decision itself.

One participant commented that the costs associated with representation at Hearings appeared not to be a matter of consequence for the Standards Commission. Whilst we recognise that legal assistance can be expensive, the Standards Commission's Hearing Rules make it clear that while a party can choose to be represented at a Hearing, there is no need for them to do so.

A view was also expressed that it was unfair that the Standards Commission holds Hearings in Council buildings. Without further explanation being proffered as to why, it is difficult to answer this point. However, the reason we do so is because the Standards Commission is publicly funded and, as such, we seek to ensure best value by holding Hearings in venues of the Council or Devolved Public Body in question, wherever possible, on a minimal or no cost basis.

We intend to seek feedback from participants and those who attend Hearings on an ongoing basis after each Hearing. If you would like more information about this, please contact us on 0131 348 6666 or by email to enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk.