**Artificial Intelligence (AI) and public standards review – FAQs**

**What is the Committee on Standards in Public Life?**

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) was established in 1994 by the then Prime Minister, John Major, and is responsible for promoting the [Seven Principles of Public Life](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life): selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership – commonly known as the Nolan Principles.

CSPL is an advisory non-departmental public body sponsored by the Cabinet Office. It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of public office holders, and advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in England.

**What are the Seven Principles of Public Life?**

The Seven Principles of Public Life were established by the Committee in its first report chaired by Lord Nolan, and set out the standards of conduct expected of public office holders. These principles have since become the bedrock of ethical standards for those in public life.

*Selflessness*

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

*Integrity*

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

*Objectivity*

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

*Accountability*

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

*Openness*

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing do.

*Honesty*

Holders of public office should be truthful.

*Leadership*

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

**Who do they apply to?**

The Principles of Public Life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected and appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies, and in the health, education, social and care services.

The principles also apply to those in the private sector delivering public services.

**Which areas of the public sector will the review consider?**

The review will focus on public service delivery, including front line services such as policing and law enforcement, justice and health.

**Will you be re-evaluating the Seven Principles?**

The Committee is concerned to establish whether the existing principles stand up well to new models of public service delivery, or whether the use of AI requires a new understanding or formulation of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

**Will you examine how AI can take account of the Seven Principles?**

Yes. The Committee is concerned to establish how provisions for standards can be built into the development, commissioning, and deployment of new technologies in the public sector.

**What do you mean by “AI”?**

Artificial Intelligence is difficult to define.

For the purpose of its review, the Committee is interested in advanced autonomous systems that are capable of solving problems, which would normally require human intelligence, and which do not follow a set linear pattern where a given input will always equal a given output.

The Committee takes the view that it is not necessarily helpful to narrowly define AI, as to do so would possibly exclude associated advanced technologies, which in themselves raise a number of standards concerns.

**What do you mean by “standards”?**

The Committee is interested in the upholding of standards as understood by the Nolan Principles. These include issues related to objectivity, transparency and accountability, as well as those around the appropriateness of AI assisted decision-making in certain contexts (which may not be in the public interest for example).

**Are wider ethical concerns around AI within scope?**

No. The Committee is not concerned with wider ethical concerns around AI, which are not directly relevant to the upholding of standards as understood by the Nolan Principles, such as morality or the legal personality of AI systems.

**What do you mean by “existing frameworks and regulations”?**

The Committee is concerned to establish whether the existing approach to AI by the government (policy, institutions, and legal frameworks) is sufficient to ensure that public office holders continue to have the ability to uphold standards, as data-enabled technologies are increasingly used to aid public sector decision-making. This includes an examination of the safeguards and considerations of standards currently in place in procurement processes and in the deployment of AI in the public sector.

**Will issues related to data privacy and security be considered?**

No. The Committee is concerned with data processing in so far as automated decision-making systems include the processing of large quantities of data, which must be lawful, and operate under the principles of transparency, fairness and accountability set out in the GDPR and in the Nolan Principles.

**Are you concerned with the private sector?**

Private organisations involved in the provision and delivery of public services do fall within the Committee’s remit.

It will almost certainly be the case that the government procures technology from outside of the public sector. As such, the Committee is concerned to establish what safeguards and considerations of standards are currently in place in the private sector, where they are developing AI systems and advanced technologies intended for use in the public sector.