


# High Streets Task Force

# Experts/Facilitators/Mentors Charter V8

4<sup>th</sup> March 2020



 Winchester

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## Introduction

Town and city centres and high streets are facing unprecedented challenges which are diverse and complex. To support town and city centres to address these challenges the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government has established a High Streets Task Force ([www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk](http://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)). The High Streets Task Force is a consortium of professional bodies, membership associations representing place partnerships, universities and technology and data providers. It is led by the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The High Streets Task Force will give local authorities access to expertise and capacity across the professions of place management, planning, landscape architecture, surveying, architecture as well as the practices of place making and urban design. It does this by working with the Institute of Place Management, Royal Town Planning Institute, Landscape Institute, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and The Design Council,

The High Streets Task Force will appoint Experts, Mentors and Facilitators to be prescribed in situations where additional expertise or capacity is needed to unlock the strategic potential of a high street, town or city centre. High Streets Task Force Experts/Mentors/Facilitators will be a key component of its delivery, undertaking work of a very important nature. To ensure high streets, town and city centres adapt, fresh thinking is needed to help decision makers understand the nature of the challenges they face and to involve a wider group of stakeholders in finding solutions.

Therefore, we expect those appointed as High Streets Task Force Experts, Mentors or Facilitators to commit to a Charter to ensure high standards of professional conduct and, consequently, high standards of delivery. This Charter lays down standards of conduct and ways of working for those who will undertake Expert, Mentor or Facilitator roles on behalf of the High Streets Task Force, to maintain high levels of service as well as protecting them from any misunderstanding or unfair criticism.

The Charter is intended to set out the way in which you undertake your High Streets Task Force duties. It is not intended to be legally enforceable, to create any legal obligations or rights, or to undermine existing professional body Code of Conducts. Much of the detail contained within this Charter mirrors the professional expectations from the Design Council, The Institute of Place Management, the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. However, by focusing on the needs of the end-users of the High Streets Task Force, this Charter focuses on the most salient standards of professional conduct and ways of working *in the context of high street transformation*. These have been established through consultation with experienced place leaders through asking them what standards they expect from the professionals that provide them with advice.

For the avoidance of doubt, this Charter does not take precedence where the courts or other institutions, such as a regulatory agency, authority or body, have jurisdiction.

## Professional and Ethical Conduct

Acting professionally is the minimum requirement for anyone working within the High Streets Task Force. As an Expert, Mentor or Facilitator for the High Streets Task Force, you are appointed on merit and are expected to carry out your role with dedication and a commitment to the High Streets Task Force; its mission, its ways of working and its core values:

**Integrity** is putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests;

**Honesty** is being truthful, open and accountable;

**Objectivity** is basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence;

**Impartiality** is acting solely according to the merits of the case;

**Respect** is behaving and communicating in a kind and courteous manner;

**Reflexivity** is being conscious of your limitations and also learning and improving.

The remainder of this section sets out the standards of professional and ethical conduct expected of you and others representing the High Streets Task Force.

### Integrity

High Streets Task Force Experts, Mentors and Facilitators will be *champions* for the High Streets Task Force, fully supporting its mission and purpose through their work. They will be people of good professional standing and should act as positive and reliable role models, using their office for the good of town and city centres/high streets. They must ensure their work is both lawful and justified. Avoiding professional misconduct and declaring conflicts of interest\* are integral to upholding the integrity of the High Streets Task Force.

You **must**:

- Fulfil your duties responsibly and reliably; in a manner that complies with both the law and the purpose of the High Streets Task Force.
- Carefully review any High Streets Task Force assignment given to you and declare any conflicts of interest\*.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times and have due regard for safe keeping, and non-disclosure of sensitive information, electronic or otherwise.
- Always act in a way that is professional and that deserves and retains the confidence of all those with whom you are working.
- Carry out your fiduciary obligations responsibly, ensuring public money and other resources are used properly and efficiently.
- Deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively, to the best of your ability.
- Keep accurate official records for the High Streets Task Force and handle information as openly as possible within the UK legal framework.

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You **must not**:

- Misuse your High Streets Task Force position, for example by using information acquired in the course of your official duties to further your private or professional interests or those of others.
- Accept gifts, hospitality, financial payment and inducements or receive other benefits from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise your integrity.
- Disclose information about the High Streets Task Force without authority.
- Damage the reputation of the High Streets Task Force, through your conduct or communications.

## Honesty

During the course of their duties, High Streets Task Force Experts, Mentors and Facilitators' conduct and communication must engender trust. This will require you to be truthful, sincere and open as well as being prepared to be held fully accountable in all your dealings.

You **must**:

- Set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, in the course of your duties, and correct any errors as soon as possible.
- Say how sure or confident you are of the advice you are giving.
- Be accountable for the decisions you make and the advice you give.
- Use resources only for the authorised public purposes for which they are provided.

You **must not**:

- Deceive or knowingly mislead local authorities or others.
- Be influenced by the prospect of personal gain.
- Seek to undertake any work outside of that prescribed by the High Streets Task Force with High Streets Task Force clients, unless this work is part of a normal procurement or competitive tendering process.

## Objectivity

To ensure that the High Streets Task Force is always associated with the highest standards of objectivity it is vital that you do not compromise your professional opinion because of bias or undue influence. Any advice given or decisions taken must have been informed by a rigorous analysis of the evidence before you.

You **must**:

- Provide information and advice on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts.
- Take decisions on the merits of the case and take due account of expert advice from other High Streets Task Force personnel and local place leaders and stakeholders.

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You **must not**:

- Ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice or making decisions.
- Frustrate the implementation of policies once decisions are taken by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from those decisions.

## Impartiality

High Streets Task Force Experts, Mentors and Facilitators must display fairness, neutrality and equality throughout their work supporting a given place. You should ensure that any such work is truly independent of any personal, commercial or professional relationship that may either be sought or has previously existed between you and any person or organisation in that place.

You **must**:

- Carry out your responsibilities in a way that is fair, just, politically neutral and reflects the High Streets Task Force's commitment to equality and diversity.
- Act in a way which deserves the confidence of local authorities and other place leaders, while at the same time ensuring that you will be able to establish a good working relationship with **all** those whom you may be required to support in a location.

You **must not**:

- Act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests
- Act as a High Streets Task Force Expert/Mentor/Facilitators in places where you have had any personal, professional or commercial interest\*, within the last 24 months. (This excludes previous engagements with the place conducted through the High Streets Task Force).
- Allow your personal political views to influence any advice you give or your actions.

## Respect

As an Expert, Mentor or Facilitator for the High Streets Task Force you are expected to work with different people and organisations from across the locality you are supporting. It is, therefore, important that the views and opinions of all those you encounter are taken into account in a balanced and impartial manner and any interactions with them are meaningful, and courteous.

You **must**:

- Be inclusive and polite in your involvement of others.
- Recognise that people may hold different views from your own but this does not mean any such views are any less important.
- Actively seek out the views and opinions of different types of stakeholders.
- Appreciate that local stakeholders will have specific local knowledge of their place and that other High Streets Task Force professionals may have views pertinent to their expertise.

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- Ensure any feedback or communication is balanced and courteously delivered.

You **must not**:

- Do anything that can be interpreted to be discriminatory towards others.
- Confers or appears to confer favour of one party over another.

## Reflexivity

As High Streets Task Force Experts/Mentors and Facilitators you are expected to reflect on your own assumptions, experience and professional background and how these may influence the way you approach and solve problems. The challenges facing high streets and town and city centres are complex and multifaceted which means that, in some situations, you may not have the requisite knowledge or experience.

You **must**:

- Ask for support/guidance from the High Streets Task Force project management office. We have built an interdisciplinary Task Force, so other Experts/Mentors/Facilitators will be available, if needed.
- Engage fully with any training and support you are offered and be prepared to learn and adapt your behaviour to fulfil the expectations of this Charter.
- Seek to maintain your professional competence and keep your skills up to date.

## Additional compliance requirements

In addition to the standards of professional conduct and delivery set out in this Charter, High Streets Task Force Experts/Mentors/Facilitators are expected to:

1. Have no unspent criminal convictions
2. Have the right to work in the UK
3. Have professional liability insurance

## Failure to Comply with the Charter

High Streets Task Force Experts, Mentors and Facilitators are voluntarily required to commit to the high standards outlined in this Charter. The High Streets Task Force will ensure support and training to help Experts, Mentors or Facilitators to work to the standards laid out within this Charter. Should the High Streets Task Force project management office become aware that these standards are purportedly not being met, they will work to fairly support Experts, Mentors and Facilitators and may, in the first instance, contact the Experts/Mentors or Facilitators' professional body, who will take appropriate action to discuss performance and offer additional training and support, if appropriate.

Where serious breaches have been made, or if after training and additional support, performance does not improve, this may ultimately result in an individual being asked to cease their Expert, Mentor or Facilitator duties. There is no right of appeal against this decision.

## \*Conflicts of Interest

For the purposes of the High Streets Task Force conflicts of interest are defined as a situation where:

- i) an Expert/Mentor/Facilitator's standards of professional conduct and delivery may be compromised through a previous or ongoing relationship with a place. High Streets Task Force Expert/Mentor/Facilitators are excluded from working in places where they have had any personal, professional or commercial interest, within the last 24 months. This includes close personal, family or romantic relationships, but does not include previous engagement through the High Streets Task Force as an Expert, Mentor, or Facilitator. Any such previous or ongoing relationship must be declared to the High Streets Task Force Project Management Office.
- ii) an Expert/Mentor/Facilitator seeks to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity. Experts/Mentors/Facilitators cannot recommend or promote their own services when undertaking High Street Task Force assignments. Experts/Mentors/Facilitators can only be engaged to provide further services to local authorities if they have been procured through a competitive process. Any requests to provide further services must be declared to the High Streets Task Force Project Management Office.