



planning advisory service



Guide to Becoming a Planning Peer

July 2022

www.pas.gov.uk

Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

- Team of 11 (soon to be 13) - 10 FTE
- Part of Local Government family
- Funded by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to support **English planning authorities** (LPAs)
- Wide programme, including in 2022/23: design, developer contributions, Local Plans & development management designation
- Environmental planning a recent addition currently covering nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain (the latter funded by Defra)

“[PAS] exists to support local planning authorities in providing effective and efficient planning services and to support the implementation of changes in the planning system”



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Who we are and what we do

Getting planning right is important for councils. It allows them to manage development, ensuring that the best possible outcomes are delivered for places. It requires political and technical leadership and engaged communities. Helping councils is what we do.

What we do

The **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** provides a grant each year for the PAS so we can provide support to councils. We are funded to help get local plans up-to-date and to improve decision-making, as well as running event series on topical issues. We can also work with councillors and do thorough "peer challenge" reviews of planning departments. We believe in a 'sector led' improvement approach, where local authorities help each other to continuously improve.

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Bulletin

Sign up for our Bulletin, which brings you news of our latest support, case studies, events and muses.

What we do

The screenshot shows the PAS website homepage. At the top left is the PAS logo (planning advisory service). To its right is a navigation menu with links: Home, Our work, Councillors, Plan Making, Development Mgmt, Topics, and Find an event. Below the navigation is a section titled "The latest news from PAS". Under this title is a "Latest news" section with a list of six news items, each with a dropdown arrow icon. To the right of the news list is a green box titled "Keep in touch" with the text: "One thing seems to be a constant in the world of planning, and that is change. That is why it makes sense to stay in touch." Below this is a grey box titled "Upcoming Events" with the text: "Find out about our upcoming events that are focussed on developing the skills you need to be a better planner or councillor involved in planning."

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The latest news from PAS

Latest news

- Neutrient neutrality - more councils receive advice
- Biodiversity Net Gain and the Environment Bill – FAQs, presentations and resources including February 2022 biodiversity net gain consultation events
- PAS In Conversation... Anna Rose discusses the hot topics in planning today April 2022
- Future Proofing the Plan Making Process - Outputs from our latest Plan Making event series Feb 2022
- Development Management Challenge Toolkit - Updated guidance and practical health check toolkit
- Planning for First Homes – Presentations and resources from our July 2021 event

Keep in touch
One thing seems to be a constant in the world of planning, and that is change. That is why it makes sense to stay in touch.

Upcoming Events
Find out about our upcoming events that are focussed on developing the skills you need to be a better planner or councillor involved in planning.

- Wide programme of support for LPAs covering existing planning system and upcoming changes
- Training events and workshops
- Web-based resources and guidance
- Newsletter = 8000 recipients
- Official officer and councillor peer network
- Unofficial network of friends and advisors
- Brand new Basecamp experimental learning networks:
 - NSIP, environment, developer contributions, digital
- Also work with individual councils and offer 'peer challenge' reviews

What is a Planning Peer Review?

- Peer reviews (sometimes called peer challenges) are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. They are improvement focused; the scope will be agreed with the council and tailored to reflect their local needs and specific requirements.
 - The peer team will involve peers from across the sector. Their ambition is to help a council respond to its local priorities and issues in its own way to greatest effect.
 - The process should be proportionate – minimising the burden focusing on making appropriate preparation and maximising the benefits.
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What it is not

- It is not a sector-owned form of inspection
 - It does not deliver a scored assessment
 - It is not driven by external requirements or a standard set of KLOE
 - It is not reported to Government

 - But we do expect local authorities to publish the final report (usually on their website) so it is made publicly available
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The Peer Team

- Peers are very much be at the heart of the process. From across the sector and beyond, experienced officers and councillors as 'peers' will be used to ensure councils get the most appropriate challenge, support and ideas for their specific needs.
 - The peer challenge team will be drawn up in line with the council's needs and to reflect the focus of the review. The composition of the team will be agreed with the council but typically comprises 3-4 senior and experienced officers and councillors.
 - Each team will also have an LGA peer review manager to support them and ensure things are well organised.
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What does a Peer do?

- Peers are at the heart of the peer review process.
 - They provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' role, building capacity, confidence and sustainability by challenging practice and sharing knowledge and experience.
 - In practice this means:
 - **Preparation:** reading background material before, including a position statement prepared by the Council before the review takes place
 - **On site work:** as part of the review team, three days onsite work at the council taking part in workshops, meeting officers, elected members and other stakeholders to discuss their current priorities and plans.
 - **Feedback:** on the third day of the site visit, presenting the results of the review to the Council's senior leadership team. This is followed by a full written report of all findings and recommendations (within 3 weeks).
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Why become a planning peer?

- Peers understand the current challenges faced by local government and they bring credibility, trust and mutual respect to the improvement process.
 - They engage and listen, explore and question, and work as a team to bring innovative ideas and experiences from elsewhere.
 - Peers not only support and challenge local government they also benefit from the places they visit and always take back learning and practice that will help their own organisations.
 - Limited (but intense!) demand on your time – most peers take part in one review every 18 – 24 months.
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What is the criteria?

To become a planning peer for PAS, we will need to make sure that you meet certain criteria. This is to maximise the benefit to the Council that we are supporting and to ensure that what you learn onsite will help you in your role.

It is **essential** that you can demonstrate the following:

- have worked in planning for at least 5 years and in local government for at least 3 years of those;
 - have seen either a major site through to delivery or a local plan through to adoption;
 - have experience of working within or with the senior leadership team of a Council; and
 - have experience of working closely with elected members.
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What is the criteria? Continued....

It is **desirable** that you can demonstrate one or more of the following:

- have been involved in the improvement of planning services in a local government setting; and
 - have advised members in either a committee setting or a local plan working group arrangement.
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Peer Skills

Planning Peer Reviews can cover any part of a local planning service and we need planners from across the full range of planning practice:

- Building Control
 - Developer contributions (CIL and S106)
 - Development Delivery
 - Development Management (including mentoring and advice)
 - Enforcement
 - General Management and Leadership
 - Local Plan production
 - Neighbourhood Planning
 - Working with Planning Committees
 - Service improvement
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We also need specialists

We also need people with specialisms in the following areas for bespoke work with Councils. This is **optional**:

- Have experience of setting up and managing an infrastructure funding model.
 - Have experience of producing, managing, and monitoring a housing delivery action plan.
 - Have experience of producing a design code for either a whole area or a significant site.
 - Have experience of producing a climate action plan.
 - Have experience of delivering an environmental strategy.
 - Have experience of strategic planning across two or more councils, joint working, or shared planning services.
 - Have experience of planning enforcement.
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How can I apply to become a planning peer?

To express your interest in becoming a planning peer please provide the following information to pas@local.gov.uk

1. Name, position and employers name and address.
2. Brief description of your experience showing how you meet the essential, desirable, and optional criteria
3. A reference from your current employer, past employer or another colleague who can verify your experience.

We will acknowledge your expression of interest within 2 working days and come back to you with any clarification questions by e-mail.

We will confirm the outcome of your expression of interest within one month.

For more information

- Email us on pas@local.gov.uk
 - See our website <https://www.local.gov.uk/latest-news-pas>
 - Engage over Twitter @pas_team
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