

Board Paper

Open session

Subject:

Code of Conduct Guidance

Board meeting:

19 March 2026

Agenda item:

10

Action:

- For noting
- For discussion
- For decision

Purpose

To consult on five guidance notes in support of the Architects Code: Standards of Conduct and Practice

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agrees to consult on five new guidance notes in support of the Code of Conduct:

- i) Building safety
- ii) Sustainability
- iii) Leadership
- iv) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- v) Mentoring

Annexes

Annexe A: Building Safety Guidance

Annexe B: Sustainability Guidance

Annexe C: Leadership Guidance

Annexe D: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Guidance

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1. Open Session

2. Background and Key points

Code of Conduct and Practice

- 2.1. Section 13 of the Architects Act sets out ARB's legal obligations to issue a code of professional conduct and practice and keep it up to date. The latest version of the Architects Code: Standards of Conduct and Practice ("the Code") was published in September 2025.
- 2.2. The new Code is a principle-based document based on six mandatory standards and supported by additional guidance. When launching the Code, we proposed several professional standards topics that would make up that guidance.
- 2.3. The guidance documents are not mandatory instructions, but advice to architects how they can meet the standards of the code in particular circumstances. They are focussed on matters of higher risk for architects, issues that are in the public interest, or areas of professional practice that architects have told us they would value additional information.
- 2.4. Without supporting guidance, interpretation of the Code may diverge across the profession, potentially weakening consistency, public confidence and ARB's ability to articulate expectations in high-risk areas.
- 2.5. The first six guidance notes were published in 2025: Dealing with complaints; Professional indemnity insurance; Terms of Engagement; Managing conflicts of interest; Managing finances appropriately, and Raising concerns and whistleblowing.

Building Safety Guidance

- 2.6. The draft Building safety guidance is at **Annexe A**. Building safety is a high-risk area of practice and central to public protection following the Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent regulatory reforms.
- 2.7. The Code contains explicit expectations around competence, integrity and acting in the public interest; however, architects have requested clearer articulation of how these apply in practice to safety-critical work.
- 2.8. There is heightened scrutiny across the sector regarding roles, accountability and competence in design safety.
- 2.9. The draft guidance is informed by the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and duty holder roles under the Building Safety Act, ARB's competence guidelines on fire and life safety design, feedback from consultations and professional bodies' input.

Sustainability

- 2.10. The draft Sustainability guidance is at **Annexe B**. Architects consistently identified sustainability as the area where they most wanted clearer regulatory expectations following the launch of the new Code. There is significant public interest in climate, carbon and environmental performance of the built environment. The profession faces a fast-moving technical and ethical landscape where expectations are not always clear.
- 2.11. The draft guidance is informed by ARB's competence guidelines on environmental sustainability, the British Standard on sustainability competence, RIBA climate and sustainability publications, feedback from the built-environment thinktank The Edge, input from professional bodies and learnings from consultations.

Leadership

- 2.12. The draft Leadership guidance is at **Annexe C**. Leadership behaviours directly influence safety culture, ethical practice and quality outcomes. Evidence of poor culture within the profession points to the difference good leadership can make, with architects often operating in positions of influence across multi-disciplinary teams.
- 2.13. The draft guidance is informed by the evidence collected at ARB's culture conference of October 2025, Code consultation feedback referencing workplace culture, decision-making and responsibility and Cross-professional leadership standards and literature.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.14. The draft EDI guidance is at **Annexe D**. EDI is integral to public trust, fairness in services and inclusive design outcomes; architects increasingly operate in diverse client, user and workforce environments. The Code includes expectations around respect, fairness and non-discrimination, but architects have asked for clearer application guidance.
- 2.15. The draft guidance is informed by the evidence collected at ARB's culture conference of October 2025, evidence from workplace diversity research and engagement with EDI organisations and professional stakeholders. We have also taken insights from professional conduct cases where behaviours intersect with unfairness and discrimination.

Mentoring

- 2.16. The draft Mentoring guidance is at **Annexe E**. Mentoring supports competence development, knowledge transfer and safe practice: architects entering and progressing through the profession benefit from structured professional support. Stakeholder engagement and the Professional Practical Experience Commission consistently highlight demand for guidance on effective mentoring and supervisory relationships.
- 2.17. The draft guidance is informed by the evidence collected at ARB's culture conference of October 2025, the recommendations of the PPE Commission and the engagement ARB has had with schools of architecture and practices employing early career professionals. It has also been shaped by the work of Emily Cater, a Part 2 MArch Apprentice at London Metropolitan University who has written a Mentors Code as part of her academic and professional studies.

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. Pulling together this suite of guidance has required significant effort from our relatively small team. We also recognise that consulting on five guidance documents together will put pressure on potential respondents to the consultation. We will need to monitor consultation responses, and if necessary, supplement with additional meetings so that we can collate oral feedback.

3.2. All communications materials and resourcing for the Code and guidance can be covered by ARB staff, to reduce external costs, and is accounted for the in 2026 business plan.

3.3. Delivery of the new guidance documents is subject to consultation and feedback.

4. Risk Implications

4.1. Producing supporting guidance presents both strategic benefits and risks. Without supporting guidance, the principle-based Code may be interpreted inconsistently, creating uncertainty for architects and uneven regulatory expectations.

4.2. Guidance may be cited in investigations or disciplinary proceedings; it must therefore be robust, evidence-based and clearly positioned as advisory rather than mandatory to mitigate the risk of it being challenged or misapplied. There is a risk that non-mandatory guidance becomes treated as *de facto* requirements by architects, complainants or decision-makers. Clear positioning and training will be required to reinforce its advisory status.

4.3. The Board should be alive to note the risk of scope creep, and ARB as a regulator acting beyond its powers in providing professional practice guidance, rather than restricting itself to setting out the standards of conduct and competence expected of architects. However, a failure to address areas of clear public concern (safety, sustainability, culture) risks criticism that ARB is not providing suitable leadership.

4.4. It is therefore crucial that we take care that the guidance is evidence led and accurately reflects architectural practice and standards, and that those who will be impacted by it have the opportunity to contribute before it is published.

5. Communication

5.1. We will run a six week consultation for the new guidance notes, which reflects their technical nature and the scope of interest that technical consultations usually receive.

5.2. As explained above in the section on resourcing, we will need to ensure that there is an opportunity for representative bodies, and those organisations with an interest in specific topics to respond. There will be further outreach to organisations with expertise in safety, sustainability and EDI.

5.3. Consultation will include direct communication with all architects directly to make them aware of this consultation as well as the response to the earlier guidance consultation, and the ongoing schedule of guidance notes. We will also promote the response and new consultation on all our usual digital channels.

5.4. Communications will need to anticipate and respond to concerns from parts of the profession regarding regulatory overreach, and clearly articulate ARB's statutory role and the advisory status of the guidance.

6. Equality and Diversity implications

6.1. The guidance supports architects in meeting expectations around fairness, accessibility and inclusive practice and provides clarity on how professional behaviours intersect with discrimination, bias and inclusive design.

6.2. For ARB it demonstrates our commitment to inclusive regulation and public confidence in the profession.

6.3. The consultation will include targeted engagement with under-represented groups and relevant organisations.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agrees to consult on five new guidance notes in support of the Code of Conduct:

- i) Building safety
- ii) Sustainability
- iii) Leadership
- iv) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- v) Mentoring

Building safety – supporting guidance for the Architects Code

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Architects Registration Board has developed this guidance to support architects in meeting their obligations under the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice (the Code), particularly Standard 2 (Public interest).
- 1.2 Standard 2 requires architects to act in the public interest, including by protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of those who use, construct, maintain and are otherwise affected by buildings.
- 1.3 Architects influence and make decisions that have a direct impact on building safety. These responsibilities arise throughout the lifecycle of a project and cannot be avoided or ignored through contractual arrangements or informal delegation.
- 1.4 This guidance outlines practical ways in which architects can meet their obligations in relation to building safety. It focuses on professional judgement, ethical behaviour and compliance with legal duties, rather than technical instruction.
- 1.5 While compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, it may be taken into account when considering whether an architect has met the standards expected under the Code . Any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having exercised appropriate professional judgement.
- 1.6 This guidance should be read alongside ARB’s competence guidelines relating to fire and life safety design. While the competence guidelines describe the knowledge, skills and experience architects should maintain, this guidance focuses on how architects are expected to exercise professional judgement and ethical responsibility in relation to building safety.

2. Why building safety matters

- 2.1 Building safety is fundamental to the public’s trust in architects. Safety in this context includes fire safety, structural stability, and the long-term health and wellbeing of those who live in, use, maintain or construct buildings. Failures in safety can lead to serious injury or loss of life and cause lasting harm to individuals, communities and the reputation of the profession.
- 2.2 As an architect you should place the safety of building users above commercial pressure, client preference or contractual constraints.

- 2.3 Meeting legal and regulatory minimums is essential but does not, by itself, discharge your professional obligations where foreseeable safety risks remain.

3. Design responsibility and professional judgement

- 3.1 You should design with safety in mind from the outset of a project, rather than treating it as a late-stage compliance exercise. You should do this regardless of your seniority, but it is particularly important that you do this if you have responsibility for others and their work.
- 3.2 You should understand the safety implications of your design decisions and how they may affect those who construct, occupy, maintain or alter the building.
- 3.3 You must work within the limits of your competence. Where safety-critical issues fall outside your expertise, you should seek appropriate specialist advice and coordinate effectively with others. Receiving specialist advice does not remove your responsibility to understand its relevance to your design decisions and to act on it appropriately.
- 3.4 You should share safety-critical information clearly, accurately and promptly with clients, consultants, contractors and others who may require it.
- 3.5 You should also consider how safety information is handed over at the end of a project and whether building users, facilities managers or future designers have sufficient understanding of key risks, design intents and maintenance needs

4. Legal duties and regulatory context

- 4.1 You should understand the legal framework relevant to your work, including building regulations, fire safety legislation, and health and safety law.
- 4.2 Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM), architects acting as designers must take reasonable steps to eliminate, reduce or control foreseeable risks arising from their designs.

Acting as Principal Designer

- 4.3 Where you are appointed as Principal Designer under CDM, you are legally responsible for planning, managing and monitoring the design work to ensure that health and safety risks are addressed so far as reasonably practicable.
- 4.4 This includes coordinating the work of other designers, ensuring that they comply with their duties, and ensuring that foreseeable risks are identified and managed.

- 4.5 Where you are appointed as Principal Designer for building regulations purposes under the Building Safety Act 2022, you are responsible for planning, managing and monitoring the design to ensure compliance with Building Regulations.
- 4.6 This role includes coordinating design work, monitoring competence within the design team, managing safety risks (particularly fire and structural risks), and contributing to the maintenance of accurate safety information as part of the statutory requirement to maintain a ‘golden thread’ of safety-critical information throughout the building’s lifecycle.
- 4.7 These roles require active oversight and sufficient authority, time and competence. Accepting a Principal Designer appointment in name only, without genuine authority or resources to influence design decisions, is unlikely to be consistent with your obligations under the Code or the Building Regulations.

5. Fire safety

- 5.1 Fire safety is a critical element of building safety and a fundamental consideration in architectural design.
- 5.2 You should ensure that fire safety is considered early and throughout the design process, and that design changes do not undermine agreed fire safety strategies. Where changes are proposed that could affect fire safety or structural integrity, you should assess their implications and formally advise whether the change maintains compliance and aligns with the original safety intent.
- 5.3 Proceeding with design work while uncertain about fire safety implications may place building users at risk and may be inconsistent with your professional obligations.

6. Challenging unsafe practice

- 6.1 There may be circumstances where you encounter decisions or instructions that would compromise building safety or the safety of those involved in construction.
- 6.2 In such situations you should raise concerns clearly and promptly, escalate issues where necessary, and refuse to support unsafe outcomes. This may include escalating concerns within an organisation, formally advising the client of risks, or—where necessary—raising concerns with appropriate authorities.
- 6.3 Where client priorities conflict with safety considerations, you should explain the risks clearly and advocate for safer alternatives. Document your advice and decision-making to ensure there is a clear record of professional judgement.

- 6.4 Simply disengaging from a project may not be sufficient where there is a foreseeable risk to life or serious harm. Where there is a foreseeable risk of serious harm, silence or inaction may itself be inconsistent with your obligations under the Code.
- 6.5 Fostering a culture where safety concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal is part of your responsibility. You should encourage openness within your team or practice about safety-critical decisions

7. Maintaining competence

- 7.1 Building safety expectations, regulation and best practice continue to evolve. You should keep your knowledge and skills up to date through appropriate continuing professional development, including in relation to fire and life safety. This includes maintaining the level of competence appropriate to your role, as set out in ARB's competence guidance.
- 7.2 You should reflect honestly and regularly on whether you are competent for the work you undertake, particularly where safety-critical responsibilities are involved.

8. Further information

Health and Safety Executive - [Construction \(Design and Management\) Regulations 2015](#)

[The Building Safety Regulator](#)

[Duties of Designers and Principal Designers under the Building Safety Act \(England\)](#)

Home Office – [Fire Safety Guidance](#)

ARB Competence Guidelines – [Fire and Life Safety Design](#)

RIBA CPD – [Health, safety and wellbeing](#)

Environmental Sustainability – Guidance to Standard 2

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Architects have an essential role in responding to the climate and biodiversity crises. Buildings are responsible for a large share of global emissions and place significant pressure on natural resources, ecosystems and communities. In the UK, the built environment sector is central to meeting national net-zero commitments and to creating places that are resilient, healthy and socially fair.
- 1.2 Standard 2 of the Architects Code requires architects to act in the public interest. That includes taking responsibility for the environmental implications of their work and using their professional judgement to help deliver sustainable outcomes. This guidance explains the behaviours that demonstrate compliance with those duties.

2. Your duties under the Code

Standard 2.1 – Use your best endeavours to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment

- 2.1 This means taking a proactive, not passive approach to sustainable design, advising clients on ways to reduce environmental harm and achieve net zero, even when final decisions rest with others.
- 2.2 “Best endeavours” means doing everything that is practically possible to help deliver environmentally responsible design, unless prevented by legal, safety, or client-imposed constraints. You do not have to deliver a zero-carbon or regenerative project, but you must be able to demonstrate that you tried — using your expertise, influence, and the opportunities available to you.
- 2.3 The extent of what is reasonable will vary depending on your role and stage of involvement. If you are appointed as lead designer or contract administrator, you may have greater agency to drive sustainable outcomes across the team. If your role is limited - such as a planning-only commission - you should still identify opportunities and constraints, make proportionate recommendations, and document any sustainability-related risks or missed opportunities in writing. In

every case, you should embed environmental responsibility in the work you do control.

Standard 3.1 – Maintain appropriate skills and knowledge

- 2.4 This means you should maintain your knowledge of current sustainability practice, technical standards and developments in policy and technology.

3. Key behaviours

3.1 Stay informed and keep your knowledge current.

Architects must understand the environmental impacts of buildings and the places they shape. You should:

- Understand the sources of carbon emissions and environmental degradation generated by the built environment.
- Keep up to date with relevant climate policies building regulations, and recognised standards (such as the RIBA Climate Challenge, the Low Energy Transformation Initiative, and PAS 2080).
- Be able to predict and monitor environmental performance of projects and compare with relevant benchmark data
- Be aware of local risks such as overheating, flooding, water scarcity and biodiversity loss.
- Be able to propose effective means of achieving net zero carbon emissions, reductions in pollution and protecting biodiversity.
- Understand how to design for future climate conditions, including higher temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events.

3.2 Give clear, honest advice.

You should:

- Explain the environmental implications of design choices.
- Present options that improve outcomes across carbon, biodiversity, water, health and social value.
- Be frank about the limitations of a design and identify how it could be strengthened.

Example:

A client prefers gas boilers for a small housing scheme. You explain how heat pumps cut emissions and running costs, and highlight the risk of costly future retrofit or non-compliance with future standards.

3.3 Advocate for better outcomes.

Even when others are not prioritising sustainability, you should:

- Champion environmentally responsible design principles from the earliest stages.
- Recommend lower-impact materials, systems and processes.
- Promote outcomes aligned with net-zero, resilience, and ecological health.
- Recommend resilient design strategies that anticipate long-term environmental risks, such as overheating or water scarcity.
- Share knowledge and experience of delivering sustainable solution, especially with new generations of practitioners

Example:

For a school refurbishment, you propose a retrofit strategy and show how it improves comfort, reduces energy use, and aligns with public-sector decarbonisation programmes.

3.4 Collaborate and influence.

Architects are rarely the sole decision-makers, but they can shape outcomes. You should work constructively and collaboratively with clients, engineers, contractors and others to raise standards. In rare cases, if a client insists on environmentally harmful decisions and will not consider alternatives, you may need to reconsider your involvement.

Example:

A developer removes shading devices during value engineering. You explain that this risks breaching Building Regulations on overheating and may conflict with planning consent tied to the building's external appearance. You recommend lower-cost alternatives that maintain compliance and reduce solar gain.

4. Design strategies

4.1 You should understand and apply established sustainable design strategies where they are feasible and within the scope of your appointment.

Retrofit first

Prioritise retaining and improving buildings over demolition and new build.

Example:

A disused office-to-residential project retains the concrete frame and upgrades the envelope, cutting embodied carbon significantly.

Fabric first

Improve the performance of building envelope before relying on technology.

Example:

A housing scheme uses careful junction design to avoid thermal bridging and incorporates heat-recovery ventilation to maintain air quality and reduce heat loss.

Passive design and daylighting

Use location orientation, form, materials and natural systems to reduce energy demand.

Example:

Reading rooms in a library face north for daylight without glare, and high-level natural ventilation reduces the need for mechanical cooling.

Efficient systems and renewables

Minimise energy demand and propose low-carbon systems and renewable technologies where practical.

Example:

A leisure centre uses heat pumps and photovoltaic (PV) panels, reducing grid reliance and aligning with local net-zero plans.

Whole-life carbon

Evaluate and report on assessed carbon emissions across construction, operation, maintenance and end-of-life. You should also be aware of emerging tools like digital material passports that allow future reuse and support circular economy goals. Where feasible, include data on materials and products to help future building users make sustainable choices.

Example:

A life-cycle assessment compares cross-laminated timber and steel structural options and informs a lower-carbon choice.

Land use and nature-based solutions

Design with sensitivity to land use, topography, soil and ecosystems. Work with natural features rather than against them, and promote nature-based solutions that provide co-benefits, such as flood control, cooling, and mental wellbeing.

Example:

On a housing site prone to surface flooding, you integrate swales, rain gardens and permeable paving to manage water and enhance biodiversity, reducing the need for piped infrastructure.

Water and biodiversity

Reduce water use and enhance ecological value.

Example:

A retail park refurbishment incorporates green roofs and bioswales to manage runoff and create a biodiverse habitat.

Pollution and waste

Design to minimise construction and operational pollution and eliminate avoidable waste. Consider material durability, recyclability and toxicity, and specify low-emission products wherever possible. Collaborate with the supply chain to ensure waste reduction during construction and advocate for responsible disposal and recycling.

Example:

For a commercial office refurbishment, you specify modular ceiling tiles made from recycled content, and ensure that old materials are sorted and diverted from landfill through a take-back scheme with the supplier.

Circular economy

Designing for disassembly or future reuse should be considered at the earliest stages, especially for interiors and fit-outs. Look for opportunities to use reused or recycled materials and document them for future adaptation

Example:

A modular office scheme uses bolted frames and recyclable insulation panels to support future disassembly or relocation.

5. Summary

The Code does not expect perfection, but it does require action. Architects cannot control every outcome, yet they must use their knowledge, influence and judgement to pursue sustainable outcomes at every stage. Passive compliance is not enough: active engagement with climate and environmental responsibility is now a basic expectation of professional practice

6. Further information

[UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Royal Institute of British Architects – [2030 Climate Challenge](#)

Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) [Climate Emergency Design Guide](#)

UK Green Building Council – [Net Zero Carbon Framework](#)

[UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard](#)

[PAS 2080: Carbon Management in Buildings and Infrastructure](#)

Leadership – supporting guidance for the Architects Code

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Architects Registration Board (ARB) has developed this guidance to support architects in meeting their professional obligations under the Code, particularly Standard 3 (Competence), Standard 4 (Professional practice), and Standard 6 (Respect).
- 1.2 Standard 3 expects architects to work within the limits of their competence and to encourage the professional development of those they supervise.
- 1.3 Standard 4 requires architects to carry out their work effectively – exercising skill and diligence – which includes properly planning, monitoring and managing their projects with sufficient resources and capacity.
- 1.4 Standard 6 calls on architects to treat everyone with respect and to contribute to a positive and inclusive working environment where unfair discrimination is not tolerated.
- 1.5 This guidance explains how architects can demonstrate effective leadership in practice. It highlights behaviours that support professional competence, responsible project delivery and respectful working environments. While the examples focus on architectural practice, the principles are relevant to architects working in any setting.
- 1.6 Effective leadership is fundamental to achieving these standards, as architects in leadership roles set the tone for their teams and those they work with, while influencing the culture and performance of their workplace.
- 1.7 While principals and directors have responsibility to provide direction and uphold professional standards, leadership is not only the job of those in senior roles. Leadership in professional practice does not depend on job title. Architects may demonstrate leadership at different stages of their career by influencing decisions, supporting colleagues, and raising concerns where professional standards may be at risk.

- 1.8 This guidance outlines practical ways in which architects can exercise positive leadership in practice. Compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, but any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having used their professional judgement.

2. Leadership as a professional competence

- 2.1 Effective leadership in an architectural practice sets the tone for everything that follows. Good leadership fosters an ethical, motivated and high-performing team, and improves the culture and quality of the practice. Poor leadership or poorly managed hierarchies can create a harmful culture in which people will struggle to thrive and quality deteriorates. Ultimately, effective leadership enhances staff well-being, improves project outcomes, and drives overall business success.
- 2.2 Architectural practice often operates in a commercially demanding environment. Practices may face tight programmes, small margins, fluctuating workloads and difficult staffing decisions. Leadership in this context can involve balancing competing pressures, including client expectations, business sustainability, staff wellbeing and professional responsibilities. Effective leadership does not remove these challenges, but it helps ensure that decisions are taken thoughtfully and responsibly.
- 2.3 Leadership in professional practice also involves exercising judgement when difficult or uncomfortable decisions arise. This may include addressing conflict within teams, challenging unrealistic client demands, or declining work where there are serious concerns about safety, legality or professional standards. In these situations, leadership and professionalism are closely connected: architects who demonstrate leadership help ensure that professional obligations and the public interest remain central to decision-making.

Develop leadership as a professional skill

- 2.4 Leadership is a distinct professional skill that requires conscious development over the course of an architect's career. Strong leadership will help prepare someone to manage people, set a healthy culture, resolve conflict, delegate effectively, or guide a team through uncertainty.

2.5 You should therefore approach leadership as an ongoing competency which requires regular development:

- Seek out CPD on topics such as people management, communication, conflict resolution and inclusive leadership.
- Identify colleagues or external figures who lead well and analyse what they do differently.
- Seek opportunities to learn from others, including peers, mentors or professional networks.
- Reflect on what is working in your leadership and what is not. Welcome and act upon feedback from your team and peers.

Lead by example and uphold professional values

2.6 Lead with integrity and values. Always act with honesty and fairness, setting an example that inspires your colleagues to follow suit. Engage your team in defining the core values of the practice and ensure those values guide everyday decisions. By setting an example and upholding professional standards yourself, you build trust and set a strong ethical tone from the top.

Be visible and approachable

2.7 Stay accessible to your team. Good leaders are present and approachable. Make time for informal interactions with staff at all levels – for instance, chatting over lunch or coffee – to break down hierarchies and show you are available. Being visible in the day-to-day life of the practice (rather than shut away in an office) helps build rapport and trust.

2.8 Promote open communication. Encourage your team to raise questions or concerns early, and respond supportively when they do. Make it clear that no one will be punished for admitting a mistake or reporting a problem – this helps prevent a culture of fear.

3. Creating an inclusive and respectful workplace

3.1 Set the tone from the top. Champion an inclusive, respectful culture through your own actions. Make it clear that discrimination, harassment and bullying have no place in your practice, and that everyone must be treated with respect. Leaders who demonstrate respectful and professional behaviour set expectations for everyone in the workplace.

3.2 Consider your working practices (hours, project allocation, promotion criteria) to ensure they do not create unintended barriers for colleagues in the profession or your workplace.

- 3.3 Embrace diversity and fairness. Strive to make your workplace welcoming to people of all backgrounds. Implement fair recruitment practices and ensure everyone has equal opportunities to grow: consider whether pay, promotion and development opportunities are fair and transparent.
- 3.4 Leaders have a responsibility to take concerns about behaviour seriously and to respond appropriately when issues are raised. Concerns may relate to bullying, discrimination, harassment, unethical conduct, safety risks, or behaviour that falls short of professional standards.
- 3.5 When concerns are brought to your attention, you should listen carefully, consider the information objectively, and take reasonable steps to understand what has happened. Ignoring concerns or dismissing them without proper consideration can allow harmful behaviour to continue and may undermine trust within the workplace.
- 3.6 Those who raise concerns in good faith should be treated fairly and should not be disadvantaged for doing so. By addressing issues openly and constructively, leaders help maintain a respectful working environment and demonstrate a commitment to the professional values set out in the Code.

4. Supporting and developing others

- 4.1 Mentor and train others. A key part of leadership is helping others to grow. Good mentoring and training does not always need to be formal. Make time to mentor junior staff by reviewing their work, providing constructive feedback and guiding them through new challenges. By investing in your junior colleagues' development, you build a more competent and confident team.
- 4.2 Effective leaders delegate work in a way that supports learning while ensuring that tasks are carried out competently. When delegating work, you should ensure that those carrying out tasks have the appropriate supervision, support and resources to do so safely and effectively.
- 4.3 Establish structured onboarding and progression. New employees will join your practice at different stages of their career and with different levels of experience. For some it might be their first time in a workplace. Welcome new employees with a proper induction that introduces them to the workplace's standards and culture. Induction should also introduce new employees to the practice's expectations around professional behaviour and workplace culture. Ensure that clear expectations are set around professional conduct, and outline transparent paths for career progression and ongoing training. When people see that

leadership is invested in their development from the outset, they remain engaged and motivated to excel.

Develop future leaders

- 4.4 Watch for team members who show initiative and reliability, and give them chances to take on leadership tasks (such as leading a small project or supervising an intern) in a supported way. These experiences will help develop the next generation of leaders.

5. Managing work and resources responsibly

- 5.1 Excessive workloads can increase the risk of errors, compromised design decisions and poor professional judgement. Leaders should therefore plan work realistically and monitor workloads to reduce these risks.
- 5.2 Plan realistically to avoid overwork. Manage projects with an eye on your team's workload and well-being. Model a healthy work-life balance yourself that sets the approach for others to follow (for example by limiting out-of-hours communication).
- 5.3 When scoping new work, ensure the plan and fee allows enough staff and time to do the job effectively. By planning realistically and staffing projects appropriately, you reduce the risk of burnout and mistakes caused by fatigue.
- 5.4 Set clear expectations with clients and plan for change. Use written agreements to define the scope, timeline and procedures for changes so that your team is protected from unrealistic demands. Agree in advance how to handle any project changes (for example, through a change control process or additional fees) to avoid last-minute pressure on you and your staff. By anticipating changes and establishing clear boundaries, you can adapt to evolving needs without compromising your team's well-being.
- 5.5 Ensure accountability, not blame. If you are in a senior leadership role, make sure project roles and decision-making responsibilities are clearly defined, but also ensure that you and other senior architects ultimately take accountability for overall outcomes. Junior staff should not be left carrying blame for issues beyond their control. If problems occur, focus on solving them rather than finding a scapegoat. By supporting your team and accepting responsibility, you build trust and loyalty.

6. Reflecting and improving leadership

- 6.1 Seek feedback on your leadership. Periodically ask your team for input on your leadership and the workplace culture. Be open to constructive critique and use it to improve your approach. Let your colleagues know what changes you will make as a result of their feedback, to show you take their views seriously.
- 6.2 Review and adapt your workplace's culture. Regularly assess whether your workplace culture aligns with your values and the Code's Standards. If you notice unhealthy or outdated attitudes (for example, expecting new recruits to tolerate unreasonable workloads as you may have done), take action to change them. Regularly assess whether your workplace's culture (for example presenteeism, or expectations to work late) may be disadvantaging particular groups.
- 6.3 Lead by example in driving change. Embrace the role of leadership and its power to make positive changes that will benefit you and others. Effective leaders proactively champion improvements that benefit the wider public and profession – whether it's improving equality and diversity in the team, adopting more sustainable design practices, or raising safety standards. By taking the lead on these broader issues, you demonstrate the profession's core values in action and inspire others to do the same.
- 6.4 Reflection on leadership practice can form part of your continuing professional development.

7. Summary

- 7.1 Effective leadership supports not only the success of individual practices, but also the reputation and standards of the profession as a whole. Architects who demonstrate responsible leadership help ensure that architectural services are delivered competently, ethically and in the public interest.

8. Further Information

- 8.1 Architects may wish to consult the following sources for further information on leadership, workplace culture and inclusive practice.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – [Leadership resources](#)¹

Chartered Management Institute – [Leadership and management guidance](#)

Equality & Human Rights Commission – [Equal Pay Guidance](#)

Equality & Human Rights Commission – [Preventing sexual harassment at work](#)

¹ Some resources require CIPD membership

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – supporting guidance for the Architects Code

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance supports architects in meeting their obligations under Standard 6 (Respect) of the Architects Code. It outlines how to foster inclusive working environments and design for diverse communities. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, and to work and live in environments that support their safety, belonging and wellbeing.
- 1.2 Respect is a core professional value. It applies to how architects treat clients, colleagues, collaborators and communities. It also applies to how they design the built environment. Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in professional life helps build trust, improves outcomes, and strengthens the culture of the profession.
- 1.3 While compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, it may be taken into account when considering whether an architect has met the standards expected under the Code. Any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having exercised appropriate professional judgement.

2. Why EDI matters

- 2.1 Architects shape the world around us. A profession that includes people from all backgrounds is better equipped to design safe, inclusive spaces. Inclusive teams are more creative, effective, and resilient. Inclusive workplaces are more likely to retain talent and promote wellbeing. Inclusive projects are more responsive to the needs of the public.
- 2.2 Despite this, evidence shows that many people in architecture still experience discrimination, exclusion or inequality. As an architect, you share a responsibility to change this.
- 2.3 You must also meet your legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. This includes avoiding discrimination based on protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. If you hold a position of responsibility – particularly one with influence over workplace policies or recruitment – you should ensure your organisation’s policies and hiring practices reflect these obligations.

3. Respect and inclusiveness

- 3.1 Respect is more than politeness. It means treating others with fairness, dignity and care, regardless of role, background or difference.
- 3.2 Demonstrating respect in practice means listening without interrupting, giving others credit for their contributions, and treating everyone with professionalism, regardless of background or role. It also means using inclusive language, avoiding stereotypes, and making sure everyone feels heard and safe to speak.
- 3.3 You should be mindful of how your words and actions affect others – both in the office and on site – and be prepared to challenge disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour when you see it.

4. Inclusive workplace culture

- 4.1 An inclusive culture is one where everyone feels safe, supported and able to contribute. Creating this culture is a shared responsibility.
- 4.2 In practice, fostering inclusion means being aware of who is given space to speak, how work is allocated, and whether some voices are being sidelined. Inclusion also means being open to feedback, recognising different ways of working, and not expecting underrepresented colleagues to shoulder the burden of culture change.
- 4.3 Rigid long-hours cultures, unclear promotion processes, or informal cliques can all contribute to exclusion. Practices should regularly review whether these dynamics exist – and take action to address them.

5. Designing inclusive spaces

- 5.1 Inclusive design is a core part of an architect's responsibility. It requires consideration of how different people will experience a space – not just in function, but in comfort, dignity and ease of use. This often means engaging with the people who will use or be affected by it.
- 5.2 Where appropriate, you should engage with building users, local communities, and groups representing access needs, particularly in the early stages of design.
- 5.3 Examples of inclusive features might include:
 - Step-free access and wide doorways
 - Clear wayfinding and braille signage
 - Sensory-friendly spaces with adjustable lighting and noise
 - Gender-neutral toilets or multi-faith rooms

5.4 Inclusive design is not about meeting minimum standards. It is about designing for dignity, usability and equity.

6. Leadership responsibilities

6.1 Architects in leadership roles set the tone for the profession. They have a particular responsibility to foster a culture of respect.

If you are in a leadership role you should:

- Allocate work and opportunities fairly
- Encourage flexible working and discourage presenteeism
- Resource projects appropriately to avoid excessive overwork
- Put clear policies in place for raising and addressing concerns
- Support the development of junior staff from all backgrounds

6.2 Leadership also includes recruitment and progression. You should ensure hiring practices are fair, inclusive, and designed to attract a wide pool of talent. Candidates must never be discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristics.

7. Further information

ACAS – [Guidance on inclusive workplaces](#)

Equality & Human Rights Commission [Guidance on sexual harassment at work](#)

[Centre for Accessible Environments](#)

Design Council: [Principles of inclusive design](#)

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [Factsheet on EDI in the workplace](#)

[Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - GOV.UK](#)

ARB Guidance: [Raising Concerns and Whistleblowing](#)

[ARB Workplace Culture Report](#)

[Register of Architects EDI Data](#)

Mentoring – supporting guidance for the Architects Code

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Architects Registration Board has developed this guidance to support architects in meeting their obligations under the Architects Code of Conduct (the Code) when acting as a mentor.
- 1.2 The Code requires architects to maintain competence, act with integrity, and treat others with respect. Where architects act as mentors, these obligations shape how they support the development of others.
- 1.3 This guidance explains what architects should do to comply with the Code when acting as a mentor.
- 1.4 While compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, it may be taken into account when considering whether an architect has met the standards expected under the Code. Any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having exercised appropriate professional judgement.

2. What is mentoring and why it matters

- 2.1 Mentoring is a professional relationship in which a more experienced practitioner supports the development, confidence and professional judgement of a less experienced person. It usually involves sharing experience, offering constructive challenge, and encouraging reflection to help the mentee develop their own understanding and capability. In architecture this could be a pre-registration trainee or an early career architect.
- 2.2 Mentoring is distinct from supervision, management or formal assessment roles, although these may overlap in practice. The purpose of mentoring is not to direct or control decisions, but to support the development of independent professional judgement.
- 2.3 Mentoring supports the development of competence, professional judgement, and confidence across the profession. It involves making a commitment towards someone else's development, often at a crucial time in their education and training, and it can be personally and professionally rewarding to support others in this way. Architects may mentor students, trainees, early-career architects, or peers taking on new responsibilities.
- 2.4 Acting as a mentor is a professional activity, and the Code applies whether a mentoring relationship is formal or informal. Your responsibilities are likely to be

greater where the guidance you offer as part of a mentoring relationship has the potential to influence a person's competence or professional decisions.

- 2.5 The quality of mentoring can influence how professional judgement is formed and applied in practice, and therefore how decisions affecting the built environment are made.
- 2.6 Effective mentoring contributes to public confidence in the profession by supporting the development of competent practitioners.

3. Mentoring relationships

- 3.1 Mentoring relationships rely on trust and carry an inherent imbalance of experience and influence. You should manage this responsibly.
- 3.2 Effective mentoring depends on clear communication, trust and appropriate professional relationships. You should recognise the influence you may have over those you mentor.
- 3.3 Be clear about your role and the limits of your experience, distinguish between opinion and instruction, and in situation where a variety of approaches could be considered you should avoid presenting your preferred approach as the only acceptable one.
- 3.4 Any conflicts of interest should be recognised and managed, and the mentoring relationship should never be used in a way that could exploit or disadvantage the mentee. You should avoid relationships or behaviours that could compromise objectivity, independence, or professional boundaries.
- 3.5 Mentoring should support the development of independent professional judgement and not create reliance on the mentor's direction.

4. Competence

- 4.1 Mentoring is a professional skill which should be developed and maintained through reflection, learning and feedback.
- 4.2 Mentoring plays a direct role in developing professional competence. You should ensure your guidance supports safe, ethical and effective practice and aligns with the Code.
- 4.3 Architects at any stage of their career can be effective mentors but it is a significant responsibility and should only be undertaken if you are competent and adequately prepared.
- 4.4 Only mentor in areas where you have appropriate knowledge and experience, recognise when matters fall outside your competence, and direct the mentee to

others where appropriate. Mentoring should encourage reflection, judgement, and learning over time—not simply the completion of immediate tasks. Good mentoring can be holistic and cover much more than technical work.

5. Accountability

- 5.1 Mentoring can influence decisions about competence, progression and professional practice. Architects remain personally accountable for the guidance they provide. This is particularly important where mentoring relates to learning, training or readiness for practice.
- 5.2 Provide honest and constructive feedback, support safe and competent practice, and avoid placing individuals in situations beyond their capability without appropriate support. You should recognise the imbalance of experience and authority that can exist and manage this responsibly. You should acknowledge when you are no longer the right person to provide guidance and step back where appropriate.
- 5.3 If you become aware of behaviours, environments, or practices that risk harm, exploitation, or unsafe learning, you should take appropriate action. This may include stepping back from the role, seeking advice, or raising concerns through appropriate channels.
- 5.4 Where mentoring forms part of a structured arrangement, such as part of a trainee's period of professional practical experience, you should take the role seriously, commit appropriate time and attention to it, and engage constructively with processes linked to the trainees' education and training. You should be responsive to others who are also involved in supporting the mentee's progress, such as their learning provider.

6. Further information

Royal Institute of British Architects - [Mentoring Guidance](#)

International Coaching Federation – [Core Coaching Competencies](#)