

# UKAS Accreditation: a tool to deliver effective Local Authority services

A BRIEFING FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY HEADS OF SERVICE

## Accreditation can and does help to deliver public services in a changing regulatory environment

UKAS accreditation interacts with Local Authorities on many levels:

Assurance of the Authority's own activities	Assurance in the products and services you procure	Assurance in the products and services you specify
The Authority may have an accredited in-house facility such as a laboratory or inspection body. The Authority may also hold UKAS-accredited certification to demonstrate compliance to a quality management system (QMS) or environmental management system (EMS).	Products and services that you procure will be sourced from UKAS-accredited laboratories or inspection bodies, or from suppliers that hold accredited certification (QMS, Personnel etc).	As a specifier, you will contract suppliers that are UKAS-accredited (e.g. planning and building control, environmental monitoring, asbestos testing and surveying etc).

The accreditation process determines the technical competence and integrity of organisations offering testing, inspection, calibration and certification services.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the only national accreditation body recognised by Government to assess these types of organisation against internationally-recognised standards and it does so across all market sectors by offering a single, transparent and repeatable approach which:

- supports Local Authority enforcement and monitoring
- builds business and consumer confidence by reducing risk
- reduces the need for Local Authorities to employ their own additional specialist assessment personnel

It is important to specify the appropriate requirements on suppliers according to the type of work required. For example, you can be confident in the technical competence and the results produced by testing and calibration laboratories if they hold UKAS accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025. UKAS accredited certification of a supplier's management system to ISO 9001 tells you that they have arrangements for managing the quality of their product or service, but doesn't say anything about their technical competence.

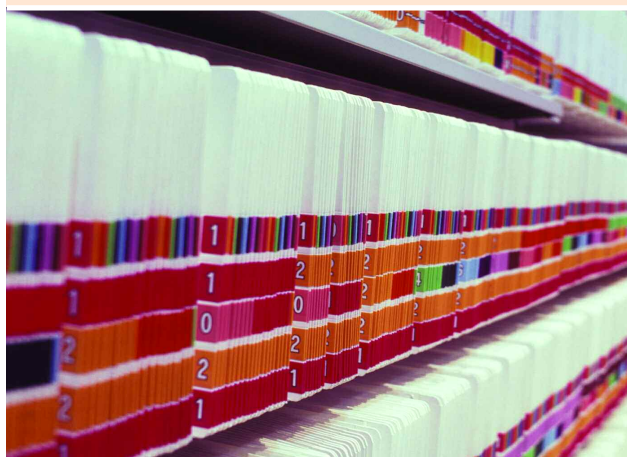
### Accreditation in action



#### Ensuring food safety

"Accreditation plays a vital role in allowing us to deliver safe food and the healthier eating approaches that consumers want. UKAS provides the solid foundation of assurance on which we can rely in order to make good decisions – particularly in the area of enforcement".

**Dame Deirdre Hutton,**  
Chair Food Standards Agency



#### Information security

In addition to having accredited certification to ISO 9001:2000, Birmingham City Council achieved UKAS accredited certification to the information security standard ISO 27001 in December 2005. This has enabled the Council to demonstrate credibility and confidence to its customers, whilst reducing the risk of information breaches. Independent third party assessment by a UKAS-accredited organisation underpins the Council's ability to achieve high standards of service delivery and corporate governance.

**Birmingham City Council**

# How can accreditation make a difference to public service delivery?

## Accreditation:

**Reduces bureaucracy.** The use of accredited services in a sector moderates the need for legislation and reduces the risk of unintended consequences.

**Enhances efficiency.** Independent verification enables Local Authorities to realise benefits through improved risk management, better allocation of resources, the removal of duplication, and smarter enforcement.

**Delivers smarter procurement.** Local Authorities are able to make an informed supplier choice, thereby simplifying the procurement process whilst maintaining confidence in delivery.

**Engenders trust.** The UKAS symbol is a well-known means of identifying organisations that meet and maintain high standards. The public gain more confidence in services when they know standards are regularly checked, updated and enforced.

## How does UKAS ensure national and international standards are met?

UKAS accreditation is an on-going business process and involves establishing that the accredited body:

- is impartial;
- is technically competent;
- has appropriate resources and facilities;
- performs to the required standard;
- sustain the required standard of performance.

UKAS carries out this accreditation work to internationally recognised standards and is itself regularly reviewed by its international peers.

## Supporting the role of the Public Analyst

Public Analysts are Statutory Officers of the appointing Authorities. Their role in Public Protection is pivotal, and embraces the direction and implementation of appropriate and necessary analysis & testing, together with the interpretation of the results of analysis obtained in the light of their expert knowledge of relevant UK and European law. Many Public Analysts also fulfil the role of Food Examiner, offering microbiological examination of food as a service in addition to chemical analysis.

All Public Analyst laboratories are UKAS accredited and have to participate in appropriate proficiency testing schemes. UKAS accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 ensures that Local Authorities can rely upon the results of analysis and examination to assist their enforcement role.

## Accreditation in action



## Quality standards and certification

Companies offering consultancy and certification to ISO 9001 approach many businesses. Whilst certification companies are not obliged to be UKAS accredited, certification which is not issued by an organisation accredited by UKAS may in some instances not be recognised by organisations with whom you may wish to deal. Only UKAS approved certification allows companies to be entered into the United Kingdom Register of Quality Assessed Companies and display the accreditation mark. If this is important to you, make sure the organisation you are dealing with is UKAS registered and approved.

**Bristol City Council**



“We see the achievement of UKAS-accredited CORGI Certification for the management and delivery of gas as being another step in the right direction in providing a quality service to our customers; it has enhanced our existing good practices and helped us to improve the areas where we were lacking”.

**East Riding of Yorkshire Council**

“The Government believes that a robust and effective environmental management system (EMS) should be externally audited to the recognised international or national standard by a Certification Body accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). External third party certification is important to realise many of the benefits of an EMS.”

**DEFRA**

# UKAS accreditation **already delivers services** for Local Authorities

Here are just a few examples of areas of public sector activity in which UKAS accreditation is helping to establish and maintain public confidence in products or services:

<b>Quality</b>	Charter mark Quality management (e.g. ISO 9001)
<b>Environment</b>	Air quality Water quality Land contamination Waste management and recycling Environmental management Legionella testing Emissions monitoring
<b>Housing and Property</b>	Sound resistance and acoustics Gas safety Electrical safety Asbestos surveying and testing
<b>Food</b>	Food hygiene and safety Animal health and transport
<b>Health</b>	Medical laboratories and devices
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	Occupational health and safety Fire detective and alarm systems
<b>Highways</b>	Materials
<b>Fair trading</b>	Weights and measures

## Quality services delivered with **confidence**

UKAS accredits:

- around 1,500 laboratories
- over 150 certification bodies
- over 230 inspection bodies

In doing so it enables them to deliver services and products that meet agreed standards, ensuring confidence on the part of consumers, purchasers and Local Authorities alike.

### Accreditation in action



#### Improving environmental performance

Chesterfield Borough Council was one of the first councils in Britain to achieve UKAS-accredited Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) registration.

During 2005/06, EMAS helped the Council improve its environmental performance significantly, including:

- Reducing the amount of waste produced by 5.5% to 5,455 tonnes
- Identifying several new recycling opportunities, which along with existing schemes ensured the Council reused, recycled and composted 1,020 tonnes of the waste it produced
- Reducing gas consumption by 11%
- Reducing employee mileage by 7.5%
- Reducing carbon emissions by 5.3% to 4,672 tonnes

As well as reducing negative impacts on Chesterfield's environment, these measures have also saved the Council money by reducing costs.

UKAS accreditation of the EMAS verifier ensures that the Council and its stakeholders can have confidence in the registration process.

**Chesterfield Borough Council**



#### Smarter procurement

Carbon emissions are considered as part of the planning process for major procurement projects within the Wiltshire County Council. The Corporate Procurement Unit leads on the purchase of energy for the County Council and currently purchases renewable energy through the Office of Government Commerce for the Council's major energy contracts including street lighting.

Contracts with a significant environmental 'risk', including high value contracts are scored on the basis of environmental policy and all major contracts include a requirement to achieve UKAS-accredited environmental management system certification.

**Wiltshire County Council**

# Key facts about UKAS

- Only national accreditation body recognised by Government to assess evaluating organisations to international standards
- Non-profit-distributing company limited by guarantee
- Over 40 years' experience
- Over 250 assessors and technical experts

## UKAS Members

Rather than shareholders, UKAS has members that represent those who have an interest in different aspects of accreditation. Current members are:

- Association of British Certification Bodies
- British Measurement and Testing Association
- British Retail Consortium
- Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply
- Confederation of British Industry
- Defence Procurement Agency
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Food Standards Agency
- Health Protection Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- Chartered Quality Institute
- Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services
- Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- The Safety Assessment Federation

## Who to contact for further information

If you wish to find out more about how accreditation might be of assistance to you in your capacity as a public servant,

please contact:

**Jon Murthy**, Marketing and Communications Manager  
Telephone **020 8917 8493**  
or email [jon.murthy@ukas.com](mailto:jon.murthy@ukas.com)

Or visit our website at [www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com)

## Accreditation in action



As a purchaser, it is essential that we get what we ask for. UKAS accreditation is a pre-requisite whenever we are choosing an organisation to work with to help us manage asbestos. We do not look for UKAS accreditation in one area of asbestos management. We would look for it in all areas that can be accredited. The reasons for using a UKAS-accredited company are manifold. Firstly, it is a way of ensuring the quality of the work. Secondly, we are dealing with the management of asbestos in schools and offices, and so there are clearly reputational issues at stake as well. Using a UKAS accredited organisation is not going to necessarily increase the price of procuring a particular service. A UKAS accredited organisation will offer value for money. The cost of getting it wrong and re-working is phenomenally expensive. This would not be the best use of rate payers' money. It is much cheaper to get it right first time.

**Hampshire County Council**



The United Kingdom Accreditation Service has made the greater public awareness of accreditation and its benefits a key strategic priority.

Activities towards this objective are carried out under the banner of the **Accreditation Awareness Campaign** and are supported by Government.



**United Kingdom Accreditation Service**

21-47 High Street, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 4UN Tel: 020 8917 8400 [www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com)

*Delivering  
Confidence*