

Employee Code of Conduct

Policy and Procedure

Members of the public are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from everyone who works for the council. The Employee Code of Conduct (the “Code”) sets out some examples of the standards of behaviour the council expects of its employees. It applies to all employees of the council, irrespective of grade or role. The Code forms part of your terms and conditions of employment.

If you supervise or line manage other employees you must make sure they know about and understand the Code. If you supervise people who are not employees of the council (for example contractors and temporary agency workers) you must make them aware of the Code, and make it clear that they are under a duty to follow the Code.

If the people you supervise behave in ways that are inconsistent with the Code, you must take action. You may want to ask your supervisor for guidance, or consider using another policy to guide your response, for example the Probationary, Improving Performance or Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.

If you are unsure about any part of Code you should get clarification from your line manager or from the Human Resources service.

Part One – Standards of Conduct

In performing their duties, local government employees must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity. There is further guidance on the principles in appendix 1 to this code.

1. Selflessness

- You must not use materials in breach of copyright.
- You must take reasonable action to keep yourself and others safe.
- You owe a duty of loyalty to the council.
- You must not work against the best interests of the council.
- You must not behave in a way which is incompatible with your role.
- You must report wrong-doing and any genuine and reasonable suspicion of wrong-doing as set out in the Code.
- You must only spend the council’s money wisely.

2. Honesty and integrity

- You must not misuse your official position or information acquired in the course of your employment to further your private interest or the interests of others.
- You must not engage in, or otherwise be involved in any bribery or corrupt activities or practices.
- You must not use council facilities or resources to access or distribute inappropriate or offensive material
You must avoid any reasonable suspicion of bribery or corruption or any reasonable perception of bribery or corruption.
- You must, in carrying out your duties, ensure you comply with any legal requirements.
- You must ensure that public funds and assets, including information entrusted to you are only used in a responsible and lawful manner.

- You must not use property, vehicles or other facilities of the council for personal use unless properly authorised to do so by your line manager or other appropriately authorised person.

3. Objectivity

- You must follow the policies, procedures and rules of the council.
- You must not give political advice.¹
- You must not allow your own personal or political opinions or interests to interfere with your work.

4. Accountability

- You are accountable to the council for your actions and decisions.
- You must discharge your public functions reasonably.
- You must cooperate fully with any council investigations.

5. Openness

- You must use and share information appropriately, having regard to your data protection obligations.
- You must treat information with the appropriate level of confidentiality.
- You must not engage in, or otherwise be involved in any insider dealing.

6. Leadership

- You must deal with the public, councillors and other employees sympathetically, efficiently and without bias.
- You must treat people fairly and equally.
- Professional relationships with vulnerable adults and with children who are service users must not develop into personal friendships or inappropriate relationships.
- You must maintain standards of dress and appearance which are appropriate to your role.
- You must behave appropriately when involved in tendering contracts and dealing with contractors.

7. Representing the Council

- You must only deal with the media if you are authorised to do so.
- You must ensure any dealings with the media in an official capacity are appropriate
- You must follow the rules for contact with the media in the capacity of a trade union representative.
- You must follow the rules for contact with the media in a personal capacity or in your capacity for other organisations.
- You must not create a false impression that you are authorised to speak for the council if you do not have the authorisation to do so.

¹ This does not apply to officers appointed to posts which specifically provide political advice

You are also required to follow the rules set out in these policies and procedures:

- Employee gifts and hospitality – you should obtain the permission of your director before accepting an offer of hospitality or a gift.
- Employee outside interests – you should declare: your membership of organisations the council needs to know about; associations with other businesses; beneficial interests in land and property; certain personal relationships; and financial interests in council contracts and sponsorship.
- Politically restricted posts – you should not stand for office or hold certain political positions if you are in a politically restricted post.

If you do not follow this Code

If you fail to follow the Code you may be referred into formal policies and procedures, including the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Depending on the circumstances, including the seriousness of any breach of the Code, a potential outcome of disciplinary action could result in your dismissal with or without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

You must treat this Code seriously, and make sure you understand it. If you do not understand any aspect of the Code or the council's requirements with regards to the conduct of employees then you should speak to your line manager urgently.

Part Two – Reporting wrong-doing

You have a duty to report suspicions or knowledge of wrong-doing you become aware of, for example:

- activities which you believe to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with the Code.
- anything which involves – or you think involves – irregularities concerning cash, stores or other property of the council.
- any suspected irregularity in the exercise of the functions of the council, including unofficial funds.
- council employees or any other individuals being involved in potentially fraudulent or corrupt activities, or theft.

You should normally report matters to your manager, giving them enough detail to understand your concerns and to follow them up. You should not report suspicions of misconduct to anyone who you believe is (or is likely to be) involved in the alleged misconduct.

If you want or need to report something, but have a good reason not to report the matter to your line manager, you should tell one of the following people:

- The manager of the person you think may have breached the Code.
- A director (either your own director, or the one for the area where the breach may have occurred).
- Internal Audit.

Reporting matters to Internal Audit

You can refer a matter to Internal Audit by:

- Calling the whistle blowing reporting line on 0113 37 88008; or
- emailing concerns@leeds.gov.uk; or
- using the on-line reporting form on the intranet; or
- post, to Internal Audit, 3rd Floor West, Civic Hall, Portland Crescent, LS1 1JF.

The council's Whistleblowing policy contains more information on the protections offered to staff reporting legitimate concerns under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988.

If, following an investigation no wrong-doing is found to have occurred, any innocently motivated "whistleblower" will not be subject to any disciplinary action.

However, you should also note that if a report of alleged wrong-doing is found, during the course of investigation, to have been vexatious or improperly motivated, then disciplinary action may be taken against the "whistleblower" and which may result in dismissal, with or without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

A note about the internet, social networking sites etc.

Whenever there are restrictions on what you can communicate to people, or how you should communicate with them, it does not matter whether you are communicating face to face, by telephone, email, through social networking sites, or any of the other means. The rules apply to all ways of communicating.

Inappropriate comments made on social networking sites (whether you have enabled privacy settings or otherwise) about your employment with the Council, the Council at large or any employees or former employees of the Council could amount to a breach of loyalty. As a result of this, you may face disciplinary action, which could ultimately result in your dismissal with or without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Updating this policy

The Human Resources service will monitor this policy and update it as required. The trade unions will raise any pertinent issues through established meetings with the HR service if they feel that a review is due or required.

The Chief Officer (HR) may amend any contact details, team names and job titles (and the version control number of the policy) as required without further trade union consultation. If amendments are made, the trade unions will be advised via the Corporate Negotiating Group at the earliest opportunity and an updated version of the policy will be made available through the intranet and through HR contacts.

Definition of director

The term "directors" is used to refer to a group of senior officers which includes the Chief Executive and all posts (other than administrative posts) which report directly to the Chief Executive. Wherever possible, the term "director" should be understood in this sense.