

Employee Code of Conduct

The citizens of Edinburgh are entitled to have high expectations of those who are employed by the City of Edinburgh Council (the Council), and the way in which they conduct themselves in undertaking their duties.

Our shared purpose as employees of the City of Edinburgh Council is that we work together for the people of Edinburgh. Building their trust and confidence in our reputation and what we do is key for our continued success as a Council. Our Employee Code of Conduct (the Code) should be given the highest priority in delivering our services, in our decision making as well as working with each other and our citizens.

In delivering our services, and adhering to this Code, we will demonstrate [Our Behaviours](#) of:

- **Respect:** We're inclusive, we promote equality, we treat people with fairness, understanding and kindness and we consider others in all our decisions and actions.
- **Integrity:** We're open and honest, we take responsibility, we build trust, and we pull together to do what's right for our citizens, colleagues and our city.
- **Flexibility:** We're open minded, we keep it simple, we adapt to provide great service and find better ways of doing things, and we embrace opportunities for shared working and learning.

This Code of Conduct builds upon our shared organisational purpose and Our Behaviours and sets out the standards of conduct which govern our relationship with the citizens of Edinburgh and with each other. It is designed, first and foremost, to protect you and your colleagues from being placed at risk. You are expected to carry out your work reasonably and according to the law, to conduct yourself according to high professional and ethical standards, and in a way that promotes our behaviours and maintains our reputation.

In addition to this, as a public body, we also expect you to practice the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) as identified by the Nolan Committee and adopted by COSLA. We expect all colleagues to adhere to these principles in all their activities.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the Council's disciplinary policies and user guides.

Author

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Scope

This policy applies to all Council employees.

Purpose

This document sets out the Code of Conduct for all employees, along with supporting guidance about their rights, responsibilities and duties whilst at work.

Review

The policy will be reviewed as and when a change to the existing policy deems this necessary, primarily as a result of changes to legislation or statute; agreement of new national terms and conditions of service or Government Policy; organisational change; or resulting from changes agreed through Trade Union consultation.

Local Agreement

This policy is a local collective agreement between the Council and our recognised Trade Unions. We will make every effort to ensure that it is maintained as a local collective agreement. Any changes will be made by agreement. If we cannot agree, either party can end the local collective agreement by giving four months' notice in writing, with the policy ceasing to apply to staff at the end of that period.

Employee Code of Conduct	1
1. Your Responsibilities	3
2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	3
3. Professional Registration Requirements	3
4. Use of resources	4
5. Alcohol and Drugs	4
6. Inappropriate Conduct Outside of Work.....	5
7. Conflict of Interest.....	5
8. Business Integrity	6
9. Benefiting from a will or bequest	7
10. Use of Social Media	7
11. Media Contact.....	8
12. Working Relationships	8
13. Personal Relationships	9
14. Contractors	10
15. Politically Restricted Posts	10
16. Employees as Constituents	10
17. Secondary Employment	11
18. Raising Concerns.....	12
The Seven Principles of Public Life	13

1. Your responsibilities

- 1.1 All colleagues are expected to familiarise themselves with the Employee Code of Conduct, the Disciplinary Code and the Disciplinary User Guide to ensure they understand their responsibilities, rights and duties as a Council employee. To ensure our continued success and to protect yourself from any scrutiny, you should ensure you adhere to the responsibilities as outlined and make the appropriate declarations to avoid conflicts of interests where necessary.
- 1.2 You should always behave professionally and courteously towards colleagues, citizens and service users and conduct yourself in a manner that maintains the Council's good reputation. You're responsible for your own behaviour within work, however you should also be aware of your conduct out with work, and how this may impact the Council's reputation.
- 1.3 You're expected to comply with the reasonable instructions of your line manager or other senior managers.
- 1.4 Where your behaviour falls below this standard or you act in a way which breaches this Code, this will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal. If you're in any doubt about whether a course of action is appropriate, you should speak to your line manager.

2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.1 We want to attract and retain a diverse workforce to deliver better outcomes across a range of services and can respond to the range of needs of the citizens of Edinburgh and is reflective of the people we serve.
- 2.2 The Council aims to provide a safe working environment where employees are treated fairly and with respect. As an employer, we're committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, fair treatment for all colleagues and to building a more inclusive culture which values and celebrates the diverse nature of our workforce.
- 2.3 **All our colleagues are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace.** Discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.
- 2.4 All our managers have an important leadership responsibility to promote dignity and respect in the workplace and take steps to advance equality and address concerns in their service area.

3. Professional registration requirements

- 3.1 In addition to this Code, certain occupations within the Council, for example those within education and social care, are also governed by externally set registration requirements and professional standards of conduct. It is your responsibility to ensure that you're registered with the appropriate body, that this registration is kept up to date, and that you continue to adhere to the expected standards.
- 3.2 If you fail to meet and maintain these registration requirements and standards, this may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, being taken by the Council.
- 3.3 Additionally, the Council is required to comply with certain duties to notify external registration bodies of issues concerning misconduct and/or disciplinary action taken. Where this occurs, colleagues concerned would be notified by the Council.

4. Use of resources

- 4.1 You're responsible for safeguarding Council resources, systems, and information under your control or accessed as part of your work. Resources can include (but are not limited to) property, information, equipment, vehicles, or financial transactions.
- 4.2 In your role, you may be permitted access to telephones, intranet / internet, and email systems, as well as other equipment and information systems. Your use of these must be for a legitimate Council business purpose and comply with relevant policies and codes including the [ICT Acceptable Use Policy](#).
- 4.3 Some of the information you encounter in the course of your work with the Council may be privileged or confidential in nature. This information should be held in the strictest confidence and must not be divulged to other parties without authorisation.
- 4.4 Misuse of Council resources may lead to disciplinary action and in certain cases may constitute a criminal offence. It's important that you use these resources reasonably, with integrity and in accordance with the relevant Council policy.

5. Alcohol and drugs

- 5.1 The Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy and productive working environment for all colleagues, contractors and customers. This includes ensuring that people are fit to carry out their jobs safely and effectively in a working environment which is free from alcohol, drug and substance misuse.
- 5.2 Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours is not permitted.
- 5.3 Any employee who is found to be unfit to undertake the contractual duties of their post because they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be sent home for the remainder of that working day, this is to ensure the highest standards of health and safety for all colleagues.
- 5.4 The matter will then be managed in accordance with the Council's Policy on Alcohol and Drugs, and appropriate strategies and arrangements will be put in place which offer help and support to employees.

However, misuse of substances that impact upon the workplace may also result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

6. Inappropriate conduct outside of work

- 6.1 As a Council employee, you should be aware that your behaviour outside of work may be subject to scrutiny if it impacts negatively on your job role or the Council.
- 6.2 Inappropriate conduct outside of work may result in disciplinary action if it impacts, or has the potential to impact, your ability to do your job, and brings, or has the potential to bring, the Council into disrepute.
- 6.3 If you're arrested or charged by the Police, served with a summons on a criminal charge, issued with a fixed penalty notice or convicted of any criminal offence you must disclose this in writing to your manager as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against you, up to and including dismissal. A criminal investigation, charge or conviction relating to conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if we consider that it is relevant to your employment.
- 6.4 Conviction for a criminal offence that, in the Council's opinion, may affect our reputation or our relationships with our colleagues, customers or the public, or otherwise affects your suitability to continue to work for us may result in disciplinary action.
- 6.5 All information on criminal convictions may be verified and will be treated in strict confidence. Line managers should retain a copy of the notification in line with the Council's Retention Policy.

7. Conflicts of interest

- 7.1 In line with this Code, you should conduct yourself with integrity and not misuse your position, or any information obtained in the course of your employment to further your own interests or the interests of others who don't have a right to benefit under the Council's policies. Such misuse may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, and in certain cases may constitute a criminal offence.
- 7.2 You should never use your position with the Council to seek special favour or preferential treatment for yourself, relatives or those with whom you have a close personal relationship.

What is a Conflict of Interest?

- 7.3 A conflict of interest can arise if your personal relationships or outside activities – including private, personal or financial interests - influence or interfere with the decisions you make in the course of your work for the Council. This includes perceived and potential, as well as actual, conflicts. This can include interests of close or extended family members, those who live in the same household or personal contacts.
- 7.4 Some examples can include (but are not limited to) financial investment in a business which is contracted with the Council, involvement in a company, club, voluntary organisation or business, that is being funded or supported in some way by the Council or having a personal relationship with someone who has applied for a role within your team or for whom you have line management responsibility.

7.5 A conflict may also occur where you have access to Council information and could be seen to be using this information for personal gain or advantage. This includes passing such information without authorisation to someone out with the Council, who then gains or could be perceived to gain an advantage or benefit by receiving this information.

Declaration

7.6 It's **your** responsibility to declare any **actual** or **potential** conflicts of interest. If you're in any doubt about whether an actual or potential conflict of interest exists, you must report it.

7.7 Reporting it will safeguard you from the possibility of future criticism and allows your manager to plan the work you're involved in accordingly to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest arising.

7.8 Guidance on how to declare a conflict of interest and management action can be found in the supporting guide along with the Conflicts of Interest Declaration form.

7.9 If information comes to light and the Council considers that you should have made a declaration but chose not to, or that you didn't fully disclose details of any potential conflict of interest, then your line manager will meet with you to discuss. Where you have intentionally not made a disclosure or there is a clear conflict of interest, disciplinary action may be taken.

8. Business integrity

Legal and regulatory compliance

8.1 You're required to comply with all applicable legal requirements and regulations relevant to the work you undertake. These can include (but are not limited to) compliance with externally set registration requirements and professional standards of conduct.

Bribery and coercion

8.2 The Council does not tolerate bribery or coercion of any kind.

8.3 Bribery occurs when you offer, pay, seek or accept a payment, gift, offer of hospitality or favour to influence a business outcome. Bribery and corruption can be direct, or indirect through third parties, such as family or friends. You should never accept any offer that may influence or appear to influence your actions or behaviour.

8.4 Coercion occurs when someone tries to influence your decision making in a certain direction that benefits them by issuing threats or promises. Coercion can come from Council colleagues, current or potential contractors or elected officials. You should never feel intimidated to make decisions in a certain way due to the behaviour of other parties and should raise any attempts at coercion with your line manager, or senior manager, as appropriate. This behaviour may constitute bullying.

8.5 You're liable to disciplinary action including dismissal, legal proceedings and possibly imprisonment if you're involved in bribery and corruption. Even ignoring any suspicions of bribery and corruption can result in liability for the Council, and for you personally. You must raise any concerns as soon as possible if you believe or suspect that bribery or corruption is occurring.

8.6 Further guidance can be found in the Council's [Anti-Bribery Policy and Procedure](#) as well as our Whistleblowing or Grievance policies.

Gifts and hospitality

8.7 In certain limited circumstances, and in connection with your official duties, you may receive an offer of hospitality, gifts of limited value, or small tokens of gratitude from customers or contractors. You should not accept such offers if you can't reasonably justify it, or where you may be placed under an obligation. You must act with integrity in all such decision-making. Cash gifts should not be accepted.

8.8 If you're unsure, speak to your manager on the appropriateness of accepting such hospitality or gifts. Consistency should be applied across the service area. Hospitality and gifts received must be recorded in the service area's register of gifts and hospitality, in accordance with departmental arrangements.

9. Benefiting from a will or bequest

9.1 Under this Code, anything left to you in the will of a service user is considered to be a gift. These are also known as bequests. In certain circumstances, it may be acceptable for this to happen.

9.2 If you're named as a beneficiary in the will of a service user, you must declare this to your manager as soon as you become aware of this.

9.3 Failure to declare this information immediately may lead to disciplinary action. If you're aware that there may be a possibility that you'll be named as a beneficiary in a will in the future, you must disclose this information to your manager.

9.4 Each case will be investigated for evidence of coercion or behaviour designed to obtain favourable treatment. A decision on each case will be made by the appropriate Chief Officer and your manager will advise you of the outcome of these investigations.

9.5 If there's evidence of coercion or behaviour designed to obtain favourable treatment on your part, this will lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

9.6 If, prior to a decision being made, you choose to accept the bequest, this may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

9.7 Where approval is given for you to accept a bequest, all bequests received should be recorded in the departmental register of gifts and hospitality.

10. Use of social media

10.1 'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools that allow users to share content, express opinions or interact.

10.2 Social media sites such as (but not limited to) Facebook and Twitter are a useful way to keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues and a useful way to exchange information and news. However, employees who use social media should be mindful that they may be more vulnerable due to the public profile of the Council. As an employee of the Council, you must not post anything (whether the forum is open to the public or not) which may bring the Council into disrepute, result in legal action

against the Council or will clearly cause distress or offence to colleagues or members of the public. You must not publish any comments or information that may undermine public confidence in the Council.

- 10.3 Whilst there's no intention to restrict any proper and sensible exercise of an individual's rights and freedoms, it is expected that all employees will conduct themselves in such a way as to avoid bringing the Council into disrepute or compromising its effectiveness or the security of its operations and assets.
- 10.4 If you use the internet or social media during your 'personal time' to post offensive material, to harass, to bully or victimise employees or members of the public, this will be considered as seriously as if it had occurred in the workplace or during working time.
- 10.5 The [Council's ICT Policy](#) outlines appropriate use of social media for employees which everyone should familiarise themselves with.
- 10.6 If you are using social media as part of your role as an employee, for example, publicising activities of your department, it is particularly incumbent on you to ensure posts do not cause offence, even unintentionally. Ensuring you have appropriate training, and follow advice from your line manager, is essential. Further information is available in the [Social Media Policy and Guidance](#).
- 10.7 Misuse of social media may lead to disciplinary action and in certain cases constitute a criminal offence.

11. Media contact

- 11.1 You should only have contact with the media in the course of your employment where this has been approved in advance.
- 11.2 Contact from the media should, in the first instance, be referred to the Council's Communications team.
- 11.3 If an aspect of your work requires contact with the media to be made, you should contact the [Council's Communications team](#).

12. Working relationships

Colleagues

- 12.1 You're entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment from your colleagues and managers. All our colleagues are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace and we're committed to building an inclusive culture which values and celebrates the diverse nature of our workforce.
- 12.2 We will not tolerate harassment, bullying, discrimination or abuse in any form. If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or have been discriminated against, you are entitled to raise your concerns under the [appropriate policies](#).

The Public and service users

- 12.3 The way we treat our citizens matters because they may judge us on a single experience. If that experience is poor, it affects the way they see us. To our customers, **you** are the Council.
- 12.4 Providing good service is a priority. Even when we're telling the customer something they don't want to hear, we can do it in a way that makes them feel valued and listened to.

Elected Members

- 12.5 Mutual respect between Councillors and employees is essential to good local government. However, close personal familiarity between employees and Councillors can damage the relationship and should therefore be avoided. If you have a relationship with a Councillor outside of work, this should be declared by following the Managing Relationships at Work guidance.
- 12.6 Employees must serve all Councillors and not just those of the Administration. If you're required to advise political groups, you must do so impartially and without compromising your political neutrality.
- 12.7 You must never allow your own personal or political opinions to influence or interfere with your work.
- 12.8 Further guidance can be found in the [Council's Member/Officer Relations Protocol](#) available from your line manager.

13. Personal relationships

- 13.1 We recognise that colleagues who work together can also be in a personal relationship. Whilst such relationships seldom interfere with work, there is potential for a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or fraudulent activity to occur.
- 13.2 This section should be read in conjunction with the Managing Relationships at Work Guidance.
- 13.3 Where a family or personal relationship exists or develops between colleagues who work together in the same area, or where one employee is in the line management chain, both individuals **must** declare their relationship in confidence to their line managers. This is intended for the protection of both parties.
- 13.4 As a result, you should not be involved in appointments or decisions that relate to discipline, grievance, promotion or grading, or payment of additional expenses /overtime where you're related to the individual or have a close personal relationship with them outside work.
- 13.5 'A close personal relationship' in this context could include any colleague who is a close or extended family member or be someone that you're in an intimate relationship or a close friendship with, however this list is not exhaustive.
- 13.6 To decide whether to declare a relationship or not, ask yourself if you're acting in line with Our Behaviours and the Seven Principles of Public Life, and if you're protecting yourself and others from potentially valid criticism.
- 13.7 If information comes to light and the Council considers that you should have made a declaration but chose not to, or that you didn't fully disclose details of any potential conflicts of interest within a relationship, then disciplinary action may be taken.

14. Contractors

- 14.1 If you, a member of your family or a personal contact have an interest with a contractor or potential contractor, then you must declare this as detailed in the Section 7 - Conflict of interest.
- 14.2 Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition and without unfair discrimination. If you're involved in a tendering process, or if you're an employee who has both a 'client' and 'contractor' responsibility in the tendering process, you must follow the Council's procedures and rules about tenders and contracts.
- 14.3 If you have access to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors, you must never disclose that information to any unauthorised individual or organisation.

15. Politically restricted posts

- 15.1 The public expects you to carry out your duties in a politically neutral way, and this must be respected by Councillors. The political activities of a small number of employees are "politically restricted" under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and they will have been advised of this restriction. You must serve the Council and all Councillors, regardless of their political outlook. The Chief Executive and senior officers have ultimate responsibility to ensure that the policies of the Council are implemented. You must implement the policies of the Council irrespective of your personal views.
- 15.2 Certain posts are 'politically restricted' which means that individuals who hold them are prevented from having any active political role either inside or outside the workplace. Postholders in these posts can't:
- stand for or hold an elected office (i.e., MP, MSP, MEP, Councillor etc) whilst retaining their post within the Council.
 - participate in political activities, publicly express support for a political party or undertake other activities such as canvassing on behalf of a person who is seeking to be a candidate.
 - speak to the public at large or publish any written or artistic work that could give the impression that they advocate support for, or are an authorised representative of, a political party.
- 15.3 Politically restricted posts include specified posts detailed in the legislation as well as those who give advice on a regular basis to the Council and posts involving regular contact with the media. A list of the impacted posts can be sought from HR.

16. Employees as Constituents

- 16.1 Many council employees are also residents of Edinburgh therefore have dual sets of rights and responsibilities (as a worker and as a resident). It is important that these different sets of rights and responsibilities are not confused or come into conflict with each other.
- 16.2 Criticism of ideas and opinion is part of democratic debate. As such, the Council may seek the views of the citizens of Edinburgh on proposals or policy through public consultation processes. If you're both a citizen and employee of the City of Edinburgh Council, then the potential for a conflict of interest can occur.
- 16.3 Whilst participation in local democratic debate as a citizen is to be encouraged, you should ensure that your participation doesn't impact on or conflict with the role you deliver for the Council. For example, it may be appropriate for you as a citizen to participate in a Council meeting as part of a deputation on a national or regional matter, or to attend a Councillor's surgery, as long as the issue under debate is unrelated to the specific role you do with the Council and that you do this in your own time.
- 16.4 Particular care must be taken to avoid situations where your personal views (including a political opinion) could be perceived as representing the Council's position.
- 16.5 Within this context, you must never release information that is not yet in the public arena or promote viewpoints that may undermine public confidence in the Council.
- 16.6 In your capacity as an employee, you must never criticise the Council through any form of media, at a public meeting, in any written communication with members of the public or in any other context likely to cause harm to the Council's reputation.
- 16.7 If you have a complaint about Council services you have received as a citizen, you're entitled to raise this with your local Councillor. However, if your complaint concerns any aspect of the service you deliver, or the work you do with the Council, it is more appropriate that this is raised internally with your line manager and/or use the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- 16.8 If you're in any doubt about what actions you can or can't take in this context, you should speak to your line manager or HR.

17. Secondary employment

- 17.1 The Council recognises that employees may wish to undertake secondary employment.
- 17.2 For the purposes of this Code, secondary employment includes:
- secondary employment within the Council itself;
 - engaging in contracted work on a voluntary basis;
 - fee-paying roles such as appointments to Boards or tribunals;
 - self-employment; or
 - engaging in any other business activity.
- 17.3 If you're a Headteacher / Grade 8 or above, you're not permitted to undertake other employment

without the written approval of your Service Director.

- 17.4 If you're Depute Teacher / Grade 7 or below, then you must tell your manager of any secondary employment that you undertake or intend to undertake.
- 17.5 Where there may be a conflict of interest in undertaking secondary employment, for example, there may be possibility that it has an adverse effect on your work, or it might impact adversely on the work of the Council - then the secondary employment will not be permitted.
- 17.6 Employee appointments as Councillors to other local authorities, membership of the Territorial Army, appointment as a Justice of the Peace, do not constitute secondary employment. While volunteer work for an organisation or charity is also not considered as secondary employment, you should consider any potential conflicts of interest with your role within the Council before taking up the activity.
- 17.7 The Council expects that an employee's total working time shouldn't exceed an average of 48 hours per week and this total includes hours worked in any other jobs either with the Council or secondary employment. To comply with the Working Time Regulations and to support your wellbeing, we may ask you to disclose your total working hours.
- 17.8 Communications (this includes the use of personal email accounts or social media) or the conducting of any business activity which relates to secondary employment are not permitted during working hours with the Council.

18. Raising concerns

- 18.1 If you believe that your own or another colleague's behaviour contravenes this Code of Conduct and related policies, it's vital that you raise the issue with the appropriate person. If your concerns relate to your line manager, you should raise the issue with their manager. If your concerns relate to others in the management structure, above your line manager, you should raise the issue with an appropriate manager within your service, or with Human Resources (HR).
- 18.2 There may be circumstances where you feel you can't raise a concern with management or HR. In these circumstances, the Council's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) sets out the steps you can take to raise concerns.
- 18.3 All concerns raised will be taken seriously. Employees should feel they're able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals or other adverse treatment, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 18.4 Any disclosure you make under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy will be treated sensitively and we're very aware of the importance of confidentiality. However, there may be times when not all matters can be kept confidential. For example, there may be a court order that means that we have to disclose information, or a criminal or public safety issue may be raised. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy contains further information on confidentiality.
- 18.5 The Council takes allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination very seriously and it should be noted that all allegations of a sexual nature, domestic abuse, physical violence, harassment or stalking (whether occurring during the course of work hours or on work premises or not) will be reported to the Monitoring Officer and investigated thoroughly in line with our procedures.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life outline the ethical standards those working in the public sector are expected to adhere to.

Selflessness

You should not take decisions which will result in any financial or other benefit to yourself, your family or your friends. Decisions should be based solely on the Council's best interests, which will reflect the best interests of the communities it serves.

Integrity

You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to an individual or an organisation which might influence you in your work with the Council.

Objectivity

Any decisions that you make in the course of your work with the Council, including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, must be based solely on merit.

Accountability

You are accountable to the Council as your employer. The Council, in turn, is accountable to the public.

Openness

You should be as open as possible in all decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for your decisions and should not restrict information unless this is clearly required by Council policy or by the law.

Honesty

You have a duty to declare any private interests which might affect your work with the Council and to ensure the appropriate and proper use of all Council equipment, materials and resources. You must set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, correct any errors as soon as possible and you should not deceive or knowingly mislead Council.

Leadership

If you are a manager, you should promote and support these principles by your leadership and example.

More information is available on the [Government website](#)