

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

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FOREWORD – Andrew Goodall

I am very proud to be a civil servant and to lead the Welsh Civil Service. I want to be part of an organisation that champions the highest standards of excellence and delivery and provides a service that is innovative, agile and responsive.

This really matters.

Living up to the standards of behaviour expected of each of us in performing our duties and responsibilities is an essential part of the way that the Welsh Government meets its objectives and maintains the trust of the government which we serve and the trust of Wales as a whole.

Please familiarise yourself with the Civil Service Code and with the guidance here on how we should apply the code and make sure that you put it into practice. There are many avenues of help available if you feel that you need further advice or assistance and so please take advantage of that if you need to.

I expect everyone in the Welsh Government to adhere to the highest standards of behaviour as they go about their official duties and I will ensure that our organisation provides the necessary help and support.

Andrew Goodall
Permanent Secretary

About the Code

1. This Code of Conduct forms part of your terms and conditions of employment and part of the legal contract between you and the Welsh Government (WG). It sets out the standards of behaviour expected of you which follow from your position in serving the WG. It supplements information on the standards of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality set out in the [Civil Service Code](#).
2. The Code of Conduct brings together in one place information on aspects of conduct and behaviour for all staff. When seeking information on a particular issue, however, it should not be considered in isolation from the full policy and procedures relating to that issue. All HR policies and procedures can be found using the search facility on the [WG intranet](#).
3. All our policies are fully inclusive of all staff regardless of age, marriage and civil partnership (both same sex and opposite sex), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, whether they have an impairment or health condition, are neurodivergent or use British Sign Language, their gender identity or gender expression. We acknowledge that the terms 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' are not protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, however, we believe that Government policy which includes provision for those persons who identify within the 'trans' umbrella (rather than on the basis of binary gender) is a more inclusive approach and one which ensures the Welsh Ministers are in a position to comply with all their statutory duties related to equality and the promotion of well-being in Wales. If you have any feedback on the inclusivity of this policy, please email EqualityintheWorkplaceTeam@gov.wales

Accountability

4. There are references in this Code of Conduct to seeking permission to undertake activities or tasks. The person or body from whom you need to seek written permission where specified is:
 - Team Support - Grade 6 - Deputy Director
 - Deputy Director - Director
 - Director - Director General
 - Director General - Permanent Secretary

Deputy Directors or other managers can find guidance on the specific arrangements for obtaining agreement in individual HR policies.

Principles

5. Welsh Government employees are civil servants. As a civil servant, you are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and are expected to carry out your role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. In the [Civil Service Code](#):

- **Integrity** is putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests. You must not take decisions or give preferential treatment to any individual or organisation in order to further your private interests and so compromise your performance of your role. You must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence you in the performance of your official duties. You must work to the best of your ability to support the implementation of the policies and decisions of the WG and be prepared to be accountable for your actions and submit yourself to scrutiny as appropriate to your office;
- **Honesty** is being truthful and open. You must not solicit or accept money, gifts, favours or hospitality from others or any other benefits that might be construed as compromising your integrity;
- **Objectivity** is basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence. You must provide information and advice, including advice to Ministers and senior management on the basis of evidence, and in a way that accurately reflects the options and facts, taking due account where appropriate of professional advice. You must be as open as possible about the decisions and actions you take and be prepared to give reasons for those decisions.
- **Impartiality** is acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well Governments of different political persuasions. You must refrain from political activity and campaigning which could call into question your impartiality and ability to serve Welsh Ministers¹ equally.

Rules of Conduct

6. You will find the conduct rules in the following sections:

(For full and detailed information on these sections, please refer to the Welsh Government Terms and Conditions of Service and the related HR Policies and Procedures on the intranet)

Section 1	Propriety (appropriate behaviour) – page 6
Section 2	Confidentiality and official information, including Information Security – page 8
Section 3	Outside occupations and appointments – page 10
Section 4	Participation in political activities – page 11
Section 5	Other rules – page 13

Breaches of the Rules

¹ 'Welsh Ministers' means the First Minister for Wales, the Welsh Ministers and the Counsel General to the Welsh Government.

7. If you breach any of the conduct rules, or if through negligence on your part other people breach these rules, you may be subject to disciplinary action as laid out in the disciplinary policy. Depending on the severity of any breach, the penalties may include dismissal from Welsh Government employment.

More information

8. If you wish to have further advice about the conduct rules, you can contact your HR Business Partner, HR Case Advisor or TUS representative (if you are a union member).

Section 1 Propriety (Appropriate Behaviour)

Arrest or Conviction on Criminal Charges

9. You must, as soon as practicable inform your line manager if you are arrested, and refused bail or convicted of any criminal offence. This does not apply to traffic offences unless an official car was involved or the penalty includes imprisonment or disqualification from driving. You must, however, notify your line manager of all accidents or incidents involving an official vehicle or hire car. **If you do not notify your manager when required to, WG could consider the failure to disclose as an act of gross misconduct.** When you inform your line manager, they should seek guidance from the HR Case Advisor for your Department. Further guidance can be found in Annex K of the [Discipline Policy](#).

Unlawful Activity

10. You have a duty to comply with the law in your personal life and while conducting official business. You also have a duty to uphold the administration of justice and to report any evidence of unlawful and criminal activity. The WG's [Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures](#) provides guidance on the reporting arrangements.

Bankruptcy and Insolvency

11. If you are officially declared bankrupt you must report this fact as soon as practicable to your line manager who will instigate the process outlined in the [Bankruptcy and Insolvency Policy](#). **If you do not notify your manager when required to, WG could consider the failure to disclose as an act of gross misconduct.**

Offer, Refusal and Acceptance of Money, Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality

12. You or any member of your family must not accept any money, gifts, hospitality, award, decoration, or other benefit in kind from any member of the public or organisation with whom you have been in contact through your official duties. This does not apply to isolated gifts of a trivial nature, for example a diary, calendar or modest hospitality, provided their value does not exceed the limit set out in the Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality Policy (currently £20). If you are offered a gift,

benefit or hospitality above this value threshold which you consider should be accepted, you must inform your line manager, except in the case of modest and proportionate hospitality. If the refusal of such a gift is likely to cause offence to the giver, you should report the facts immediately to your line manager. Please see the [Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality Policy](#) for more information.

14. **If you are found to have accepted or have failed to register the receipt of money, gifts, hospitality, benefit or any other consideration in circumstances where it conflicts with your official duties, this will be considered an act of misconduct or gross misconduct, and could result in dismissal.**

Receipt of Fees

15. Any fees received from an outside source (e.g. for attendance at an external event) must be paid to the WG, if the payment is for services which form part of your official duties. In circumstances where all or part of the work (including preparation) involves private as well as official time, the private time should be recorded as working time and paid as part of normal pay. In accordance with paragraph 4 of this Code, you must seek permission before accepting any offers of outside employment or engagements which might affect your work directly or indirectly. Please see the [Participation at External Events Policy](#) and the [Financial Dealings and Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) for more information.

Political Influence

16. You must not use your position and proximity to Ministers and external public bodies to gain support or influence for your own personal benefit or those of others to whom you are related or otherwise connected. You are still allowed to approach your Members of the Senedd through the normal channels of social media, correspondence and surgeries on a personal non-work related matter.

Contracts for Goods and Services

17. Staff must be free of all personal interests which may conflict, or appear to conflict, with the best interests of the WG. Those who have outside business or other relationships with outside organisations must carefully consider the position in which they place themselves and the WG. To avoid any conflict, they must not invest in or have any business interest in such outside organisations.
18. Particular care should be taken to avoid using business information gained at work for personal gain or that of relatives or friends. If staff have any family, business or other relationship with, or interest in, an outside organisation which will feature in a procurement exercise they are involved with, then they must declare this relationship in writing to their line manager, copied to the Head of Procurement, and take no part in the procurement process. If in doubt about what constitutes a relationship or interest that will need to be formally declared, then staff must consult the Head of Procurement.
19. Unless you have obtained permission from senior management, you should not let WG contracts to:

- your immediate family, close personal friends and business associates;
- any company or partnership for which your immediate family, close personal friends and business associates may work;
- any employee of the WG or their immediate family or any organisation of which an employee or a member of their immediate family is a Partner or Director.

20. Where permission is granted, you must still register the decision and acquaint the WG's Head of Procurement with the background before proceeding.

Inappropriate Use of WG Property

21. You must not use any property or equipment provided to enable you to carry out your duties for any purpose other than to carry out the official business of the WG. You must not use ICT or other equipment to run a business, to carry out the work of or to work on behalf of any another organisation or individual during official time or outside your working hours. The [WG Security Policy](#) sets out the requirements you must adhere to when using ICT equipment. Any breach of these rules may be considered as gross misconduct, subject to an examination of the circumstances of each case.

Section 2 Confidentiality and Official Information, including Information Security

22. Misuse of confidential information breaches the duty of confidentiality owed to the WG and will be considered an act of gross misconduct.

23. Whilst information obtained in the course of your employment should be treated as confidential, you should be aware that information which you process may be released to individuals or into the wider public domain in accordance with legislation and the WG's policies on access to information. You must not make unauthorised use of confidential information either during or after your period of employment. You are required to treat personal information (this applies to all forms of data about an individual, including paper documents, databases and emails) confidentially and in line with the [Data Protection Policy](#) operated by the WG and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. You must also ensure that you handle all IT based information in accordance with the [WG Security Policy](#).

24. WG employees are subject to the Official Secrets Act. You are required to comply with your duties under this Act and any breach of your duties will be considered a potential breach of the Code of Conduct. Please see Annex A of the [Confidentiality, Security and Official Information Policy](#) for more information on your duties under the Act.

General Rules

25. No confidential information may be disclosed by you without permission from senior management as set out in paragraph 4 above.
26. Information, confidential or otherwise, to which you have had access, must not be used to frustrate the policies or decisions of the WG.
27. You must seek permission as set out in paragraph 4 above for any activities involving the following that are not undertaken as part of your official duty:
 - participation in any media broadcast (sound or vision) regarding the business of the WG, the Senedd or the UK Government²;
 - dissemination of any information (verbal or written) which is passed to any journalist or media organisation for publication relating to the WG or the Senedd;
 - participation in an online or written petition on a local or national issue that affects you as an individual, such as a planning enquiry or school closure unless your participation will be in purely a private capacity and you do not intend to indicate in any way that you are civil servant working for the WG.;
 - any arrangements regarding the publication of articles or materials which have been produced by you as part of your official duties, copyright of which will be owned by the WG pursuant to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Please see the [Crown Copyright, Inventions and Letters Patent Policy](#) for more information.

Participation in Opinion Polls and Market Research

28. You must seek permission as set out in paragraph 4 above before participating in any opinion poll or market research survey, including online polls or surveys, relating to attitudes or opinions on political matters, unless your participation will be purely in a private capacity and you do not intend to indicate in any way that you are civil servant working for the WG.
29. You must not take part in surveys on attitudes or opinions on political matters when it is clear that you have been approached because you are a civil servant, and may be identified as such. This also applies to surveys of matters of policy that have political connotations.
30. Authorisation to participate in a survey or research project may be given if it involves factual information which is not classified or held in confidence.
31. The Welsh Government is concerned only with the protection of official information and the duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown and the WG as an employer. Employees are not restricted from taking part in surveys or projects in

² This should not preclude national, organisational or branch representatives of a recognised trade union from discharging their duty as representatives, provided that any information disclosed was not confidential.

their private capacity outside office hours, subject to their complying with the requirements set out above.

32. Employees who are elected national, organisational or branch representatives or officers of a recognised trade union need not seek permission before publicising union views on an official matter which, because it directly affects the conditions of service of members of the union as employees, is of legitimate concern to their members, unless their official duties are directly concerned with the matter in question. In all other circumstances they must conform to the standards set out above.

Section 3 Outside Occupations and Appointments

Outside occupations

33. You must seek permission as set out in paragraph 4 above before accepting any outside employment whilst also employed by the Welsh Government. Please refer to the [Financial Interests and Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) for more information.

Appointments to Public Boards

34. If you wish to accept an appointment to any public board or body financed wholly or in part from public funds, you must also seek consent as set out in paragraph 4 above. Further information may be found in the [Financial Dealings and Conflicts of Interest Policy](#).

Rules for Former Employees

35. You may have to obtain permission before accepting any offer of employment in business and other bodies including overseas governments and consultancy work, whether on an employed or self-employed basis and whether full time, part time or fee paid. If permission is required, you should not accept or announce a new appointment or offer of employment before permission has been granted. Please refer to the [Business Appointment Rules](#) for further information. The rules apply for **one year** (if you are below SCS) or **two years** (SCS) following resignation, retirement or otherwise leaving the employment of the WG. Current employees should contact their HR Business Partner Team for advice on whether a new employment opportunity would be subject to the rules. Former employees who are considering taking up new employment should contact the Shared Service Helpdesk in the first instance.

Section 4 Participation in Political Activities

Impartiality

36. For you to serve all Ministers and administrations, it is essential that the WG and the public have confidence that your personal views do not affect the discharge of your official duties. The aims of the rules set out below, are to allow you the greatest possible freedom to participate in public affairs without infringing this

fundamental principle. *[It should be noted that the Government of Wales Act 2006 disqualifies any member of staff of the WG from being a Member of the Senedd].*

General Rules Applicable to Political Activity

37. The following rules apply to you **at all times**:-

- You cannot take part in any political activity whilst on duty or on WG premises. This includes activity related to elections for a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- You must not attend outside conferences or functions convened by or under the auspices of a party political organisation, or PCC election related activity, in your official capacity;
- You must avoid any embarrassment to the WG by you bringing yourself prominently to public notice in party political or PCC related controversy as an employee of the WG;
- You must ensure that your personal political views are expressed with moderation so as not to inhibit or appear to inhibit loyal and effective service to Ministers.

Restrictions

38. You may not take part in political activities relating to policies and operations of the WG, although you may seek permission as set out in paragraph 4 above (page 4) to take part in other political activities. In considering such requests, the degree of contact you have with Ministers in the discharge of your official duties or whether you work in a 'sensitive' area will feature heavily.

39. You should note that participation in certain political activities may require you to resign from the employment of the WG in order for you to pursue them. Further details can be found in the policy on [Political Activities](#).

40. For the purpose of these rules, "political activities" are defined as follows:

41. *At National Level within Wales*

- announcement of your candidature for membership of the Senedd;
- holding office (other than membership) in a party political organisation, impinging wholly or mainly on party politics in a field relating to the WG or the Senedd;
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate or party standing for election to the Senedd;
- contributing to articles for publication, books or submitting letters to the press relating to debates on controversial political issues within the WG or the Senedd;

- speaking in public on matters of national political controversy³.

42. At National Level in the Rest of the UK

- announcement of your candidature for the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, any other regional assemblies or as a PCC;
- holding office (other than membership) in a party political organisation, impinging wholly or mainly on party politics in a field of the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament or the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- announcement of your candidature for the position of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate for the post of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate for the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly or the position of PCC;
- contributing to articles for publication, books or submitting letters to the press relating to debates on controversial political issues;
- speaking in public on matters of national political controversy.

43. At Local Level

- candidature for principal local authorities;
- holding office (other than membership) in a party political organisation
- canvassing on behalf of candidates for election to local authorities or a local political organisation;
- contributing to articles for publication, books or submitting letters to the press relating to debates on controversial local political issues;
- speaking in public on matters of local political controversy.

Exemptions

44. The Civil Service Management Code exempts two groups of staff from the restrictions at paragraphs 38 to 43 above. They are defined in grade terms, but in practice this is simply a blanket application of the "sensitivity" test to particular groups of staff. "Industrial and non-office grades" have blanket permission to take part in political activity. The Senior Civil Service, the Grade 6 and 7 staff

and Fast Streamers are precluded from ***national*** political activity, but may apply for permission to take part in ***local*** political activity.

Section 5 Other Rules

45. You must not bring the WG into disrepute by publicly making derogatory, adverse or objectionable comments regarding individuals (whether officials, Members of the Senedd, Ministers or others) or any part of the organisation.
46. You must not allow the expression of your personal political views to constitute so strong and so comprehensive a commitment to one political party as to inhibit or appear to inhibit loyal and effective service to Ministers of another party. You must take particular care to express comment with moderation, particularly about matters for which WG Ministers are responsible; to avoid comment altogether about matters of controversy affecting the responsibility WG Ministers, and to avoid personal attacks.
47. You must also take every care to avoid any embarrassment to Ministers or to their department or agency which could result, inadvertently or not, from bringing themselves prominently to public notice, as civil servants, in party political controversy.
48. Civil servants who are not in the politically free category and who have not been given permission to engage in political activities must retain at all times a proper reticence in matters of political controversy so that their impartiality is beyond question. These rules also apply to comments or posts made via social media (either official or personal channels). More information on acceptable use of social media in an official or private capacity [here](#), including guidance your responsibilities as a civil servant when using social media or similar platforms for personal reasons.
49. You should not make public any information relating to your employment in order to further a personal grievance case or issue you have raised unless to do so would fall within the scope of procedures under the Public Interest Disclosure Act as indicated in the WG's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Observing their duties and responsibilities as civil servants as set out in the Terms and Conditions of Service; the Civil Service Code and the policies and procedures referred to in this document;
- Advising their Line Manager or the Civil Service Code Nominated Officers of suspected breaches of the Civil Service Code;
- Informing their line manager if they are arrested, cautioned, refused bail or convicted of any criminal offence or found liable of any civil offence (with the exception of some traffic offences);
- Notifying their line manager of any accidents or incidents involving an official vehicle or hire car;
- Reporting evidence or concerns of wrongdoing within the WG as per the Whistleblowing Policy;
- Informing their line manager if they are declared bankrupt by a court of law;
- Reporting offers of gifts or hospitality over the thresholds set out in the Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality Policy to their line manager, and
- Seeking advice on the appropriateness of accepting such offers;
- Declaring (in writing) any relationship with, or interest in, an outside organisation or individual which will or may feature in a procurement exercise, and consulting their line manager or the Head of Procurement if in doubt over whether they have such an interest;
- Seeking permission from senior management **before**:
 - disclosing confidential official information;
 - participating in a broadcast regarding the business of the WG the Senedd or UK Government;
 - disseminating information which is passed to a journalist or media organisation for publication relating to the WG or the Senedd
- Only participating in opinion polls, market research or complaining/campaigning on local matters in a private capacity (with no indication that they work for WG / are a civil servant);
- Seeking permission before accepting any secondary employment while currently employed by WG;
- Seeking permission before accepting an appointment to a public board or body financed through public funds, while currently employed by WG;
- Obtaining permission before accepting any offers of employment or consultancy work that may trigger a conflict of interest under the WG Business Appointment Rules (within two years of leaving WG employment);

- Ensuring they understand the rules and obtain the necessary permission whenever they wish to become involved in political activities.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Assisting staff in understanding and complying with their duties and responsibilities under this Code;
- Ensuring that staff observe their duties and responsibilities at all times;
- Taking appropriate action if notified of a breach of the Civil Service Code (see the [Whistleblowing Policy](#) and [Civil Service Code](#));
- Seeking guidance from their HR Business Partner if a team member is arrested, cautioned, refused bail or convicted of a criminal offence, found liable of a civil offence, or involved in an accident/incident involving an official vehicle or hire car;
- Instigating the procedure outline in the [Bankruptcy or Insolvency Policy](#) where a team member is declared bankrupt;
- Ensuring that all offers of gifts, rewards or hospitality (other than those considered 'trivial' under the [Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality Policy](#) are recorded on Divisional Registers, and advising team members on the appropriateness or otherwise of accepting such offers;
- Giving permission to staff to participate in political activities in accordance with WG policy plus any guidance issued at the time of elections.

HR Business Partner and HR Case Advisory Teams are responsible for:

- Advising on all aspects of the relevant policies.

The Corporate Shared Service Centre (CSSC) is responsible for:

- Advising former staff on the application of the [Business Appointment Rules](#).