

## Part 5B - Code of Conduct for Employees

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## Code of Conduct for Employees - Code of Our Values, Behaviours and Conduct

### Introduction

At Durham County Council we are all committed to delivering excellent services to the people of County Durham and our employees are key to this commitment. Everyone who uses council services is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from council employees and we are all responsible for improving life for local people by delivering high quality services.

We have developed a clear set of values and behaviours around what is important to us as a council and they apply to all employees. Our values are at the heart of everything we do and ensure that we do the right things in the right way and our behaviours have been designed to support and embed these values.

In addition to our values and behaviours it is important that we have standards of conduct to help guide us all in our behaviour and actions at work.

This Code explains our values, sets out the responsibilities we all have, and the standards of behaviour that are expected of us. It is vital that we are all familiar with and understand this Code and the supporting council policies and guidance.

We are a team and we are all responsible for the quality and integrity of the services we provide. This Code together with the supporting council policies has been developed to ensure that we are all clear re: the council's values and our individual responsibilities so that in turn the people of County Durham can be confident that they are receiving an excellent standard of service.

At Durham County Council we are committed to delivering excellent services to the people of County Durham within the resources we have available and our values reflect this commitment.



## Our values

The council values are at the heart of everything we do. They are the guiding principles that define our culture and commitment to the highest standards of behaviour.

### **O** – Outcome Focused

We work together to achieve the best for people

### **P** – People Focused

We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees

### **E** – Empowering

We value, trust and support each other

### **N** – iNnovative

We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Our values are supported by the council's behaviour framework which sets out clear expectations in terms of the core behaviours for all employees. Managers and leaders have supplementary behaviours within the framework to reflect their additional responsibilities.

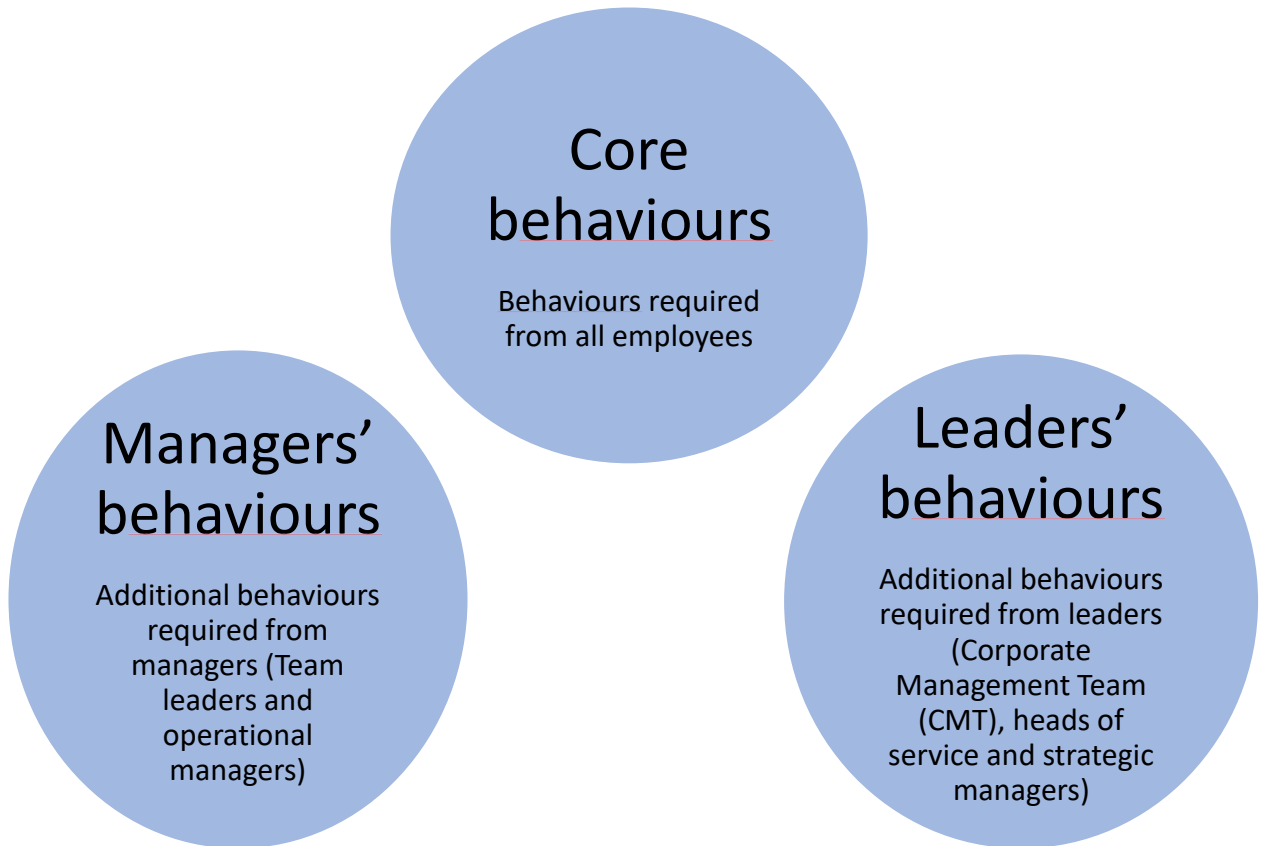
Our values and behaviours are therefore an intrinsic part of the council's Code of Our Values, Behaviours and Conduct.

The behaviour framework includes behavioural examples that we expect our employees to display every day to achieve the expected standards of performance. The behaviours demonstrate the approach we take to our work including:

- How we do things.
- How we treat others.
- What we say and how we say it.
- How we expect to be treated.
- How we work together.
- Our approach to work.

By demonstrating the behaviours, we can provide the best possible service to our people and communities and create a great place to work.

## The behaviour framework and core behaviour



## One council: Core values and behaviours

### Outcome focused

We work together to achieve the best for people.

You will:

- Contribute to Council, service and team objectives.
- Try to find solutions to problems and issues.
- Make the best use of council resources.
- Share information and work effectively with others to get things done.
- Help people to access council services in different ways.
- Be flexible and use my skills to help and support others.

You will not:

- Speak about the Council, my colleagues, partners or the public in a negative way.
- Focus on problems instead of solutions.

- Blame others when things go wrong.
- Leave people to deal with difficult situations when they need help.

## People focused

We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees.

You will:

- Provide a customer focused service to people both internal and external.
- Respect and value differences.
- Achieve results within agreed timescales and keep people updated on progress.
- Actively listen so I understand people's needs.
- Communicate clearly and appropriately with others.
- Care about my own and others health, safety and wellbeing.
- Protect the confidentiality and security of information.

You will not:

- Make decisions or act without considering the needs of others.
- Act in a way that puts others health, safety and wellbeing at risk.
- Ignore, exclude or treat people unfairly.
- Avoid ownership by passing people around the Council or by not responding enquiries.

## Empowering

We value, trust and support each other.

You will:

- Take ownership and be accountable for my own actions and performance.
- Seek opportunities to learn and develop.
- Share my skills and knowledge with others.
- Act on feedback and learn from mistakes.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour and attitudes.
- Show appreciation and give praise and recognition to others.
- Influence others through my positive behaviours.

You will not:

- Ignore the impact my actions or behaviour has on others.
- Forget to say thank you to others for their contribution.
- Be reluctant to learn new things.
- Ignore feedback and keep on making the same mistakes.

## Innovative

We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services.

You will:

- Identify better and more effective ways to deliver services.
- Be prepared to take on new challenges.
- Adapt smarter working practices and new ways of working.
- Think creatively and share ideas for improvement.
- Be open to change.

You will not:

- Discourage ideas and suggestions for new ways of doing things.
- Say 'this is the way we have always done it'.
- Change things without thinking it through.
- Be unwilling to do things differently.

## Our responsibility and commitments

We all have responsibilities and commitments as employees of the council. Some responsibilities and commitments, such as applying the council values, meeting the competencies required for your role and adhering to your contract of employment apply to everyone whereas others are specific to your level of responsibility in the council.

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself and comply with this Code and all relevant council policies and procedures. If you are in any doubt about your responsibilities you must seek clarification from your manager.

## Working with the public, service users and colleagues

You must:

- follow the council Customer Services Charter and Standards when dealing with service users in order to ensure the delivery of services as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with all members of the local community, service users and colleagues.
- treat all groups and individuals with respect, value their opinions and beliefs and behave in an appropriate manner.
- treat others in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with the council's Equality Policy and the wider requirements of the law.

- keep all service users' money, personal records, information and correspondence secure in accordance with council policies and procedures, and the General Data Protection Regulations.

## Individual responsibilities

As an employee of the council, you are expected to conduct yourself to the highest standards and act with honesty, integrity and professionalism.

You must:

- carry out the full requirements of your role, as detailed in your contract of employment (statement of particulars), job description and within council policies and procedures.
- complete all mandatory training as required.
- give the highest possible standard of service to the people of County Durham and provide appropriate and impartial advice.
- raise issues – if you have any concerns don't be afraid to speak up.
- act in an appropriate manner in any situation where you can be readily identified as a council employee, whether at work or otherwise.
- contribute to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment.
- report any concerns or suspicions you have to your manager or the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager.
- declare any relevant interest, outside employment or receipt of gifts or hospitality as outlined in this Code.
- maintain professional relationships with councillors, employees, contractors or partners, potential contractors and/or service users.

## Leader and manager responsibilities

Those with leadership roles have additional responsibilities. Whether you are a team leader, manager or head of service you should:

- set a positive personal model of behaviour.
- ensure that standards in the Code are established and communicated.
- provide clarification, where required, to improve employee understanding.
- take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity to manage non-compliance with the standards set out in this Code.
- promote a safe and healthy working environment.
- maintain a culture that is free from bullying, discrimination and harassment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and individual contributions are welcomed and acknowledged.

## Other responsibilities

### Confidentiality and keeping council information secure

Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential and all employees are under an obligation to comply with Data Protection legislation. The General Data Protection Regulations is the most significant update of data protection laws in the last two decades and deals with appropriate protection of personal and special category data/information.

You must ensure that you save, store, share and retain information in line with corporate policies and guidelines and treat all information you receive in the course of your employment as confidential to the council. Employees are only permitted to disclose confidential information where it is required by law or where the council has agreed to do so. If you are unsure you must consult your manager before any disclosure is made.

As the council moves towards smarter ways of working and more open office environments shared by different teams, the highest levels of confidentiality will be required. We need to respect others to undertake their work and to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

The use of information to further private interests or the deliberate disclosure of confidential information may be considered gross misconduct and may result in dismissal under the council's Disciplinary Procedure. It may also be a criminal offence and lead to criminal proceedings.

You must not compromise the security of council information, for example by installing unauthorised software, inappropriately securing information or interfering with standard security settings. Under no circumstances should you use council information or facilities for unauthorised personal use, improper or commercial gain or for fraudulent or malicious activities.

### Internet and social media

The council understands that employees may use social networking sites in their personal time both in and outside of work. Whilst these sites can be a way of keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, you should be aware that information posted on these sites is often public and may be viewed by colleagues, residents and the media/press.

As an employee, you have responsibility to act in the best interests of the people of the County and not breach any confidentiality or post anything that could damage the council's reputation.

Further guidance is available in the Personal Use of Social Media Policy.



The council may monitor the use of the internet for legitimate business reasons, including compliance with this Code. By using the internet employees are deemed to have consented to the monitoring, recording and auditing of internet use.

## Political neutrality

Employees of the council are required to work with all councillors. Employees must not favour or disadvantage any political group or politician in how they undertake their duties.

You must:

- Remain politically neutral and objective in your work role.

You must not:

- Allow your personal or political opinions to interfere with your work.
- Display political posters, including election material, in council buildings.

Certain posts within the council are deemed to be politically restricted due to the nature of the job. Your job description will state whether your post is politically restricted, and you will have been notified of this in your Statement of Particulars. Further information is available in the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

If you hold a politically restricted post you must not:

- stand as a candidate for public elected office (other than to a Parish/Town council).
- hold office in a political party.
- canvass at elections or act as an election agent or sub-agent for a candidate for election.
- speak or write publicly, demonstrating support for a political party.

## Working with councillors

Mutual respect, trust and courtesy between employees and councillors is essential to good local government.

You must:

- give appropriate and impartial advice to councillors when requested.
- ensure working relationships are kept on a professional basis.
- speak to your manager and/or refer to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations if you are unsure about the information you are able to provide to councillors.

You must not:

- form close personal relationships with councillors which could damage your working relationship.

## **Criminal convictions/loss of driving licence or qualification**

You must inform your manager immediately if:

- you receive any criminal conviction, caution or are subject to a police investigation, or placed under bond during your employment with the council, either within or outside of your normal working hours.
- you receive any driving convictions that result in the loss of your driving licence.
- you are subject to medical restrictions or changes to category entitlements in your driving licence that may impact on your ability to carry out the duties of your contracted role.
- you have engaged in behaviour that has resulted in loss of licence, affiliation, accreditation or qualification that may impact on your ability to carry out the duties of your contracted role.

If your post is subject to vetting and barring checks, as well as the above, you must also inform your manager immediately if you are subject to a criminal investigation. All information you provide in this regard will be dealt with in strict confidence.

## **Council contracts and personal interests**

Where your role involves procuring, managing or administering council contracts or you have any other professional or personal relationship with contractors you must:

- comply with the Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules which are part of the council's Constitution, Financial Management Standards and any other relevant council procedures of orders and contracts.
- exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.
- declare any current or previous private or personal relationships with contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers by completing form CCE1.

Other financial interests include when money other than your salary is paid into your bank account by the council or where your address is linked to a business receiving payment from the council. In these circumstances you must declare any financial or non-financial interests which could conflict or be seen to conflict with the council's interests to your Head of Service by completing form CCE2.

## **Handling council money or sponsorship**

Durham County Council is a publicly funded organisation and as such, all employees who are authorised to be involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of

the council must be familiar with its Financial Procedure Rules and Financial Management Standards.

You must not benefit from any contract or sponsorship that is given to or by the council, or show any favour to a partner, spouse, relative, friend or associate.

You must ensure that any sponsorship accepted is related to council business and is approved by your Head of Service.

### **Intellectual property**

'Intellectual property' is a generic legal term, which refers to the rights and obligations in relation to: inventions, patents, creative writings and drawings, including for example - reports, policy, training, computer programmes and technical documents and materials. Some aspects of the work you carry out or produce on behalf of the council will be classed as 'intellectual property' and therefore belongs to the council, rather than to you personally.

You must not make use of the council's intellectual property to conduct private work.

### **Commitments outside of work**

Outside work means any paid or unpaid work, including voluntary work, undertaken in addition to your council employment. Any requests to undertake outside work will be considered and will not be unreasonably refused, however the council must consider whether or not such outside working would be in conflict with council interests or weaken public confidence in the council, or adversely impact upon your ability to carry out your role with the council.

Approvals will be reviewed should any concerns arise as to the impact the outside commitment on your ability to carry out your role within the council.

Before doing any outside work, you must complete form CCE3 for authorisation and if there are any subsequent changes relating to your outside work you may need to complete a further CCE3 form.

### **Gifts and hospitality**

Gifts, hospitality or benefits in kind offered to you must be treated with caution to avoid any suggestion of improper motives or conduct. Approval must be given by the appropriate authorising manager, as detailed in the CCE4 form.

#### **You must always:**

- declare to your Head of Service, by completing form CCE4, if you are offered, or you wish to offer, any gifts, hospitality (for example attendance at sporting events, formal dinners or conferences), or other advantage.

- inform your Head of Service, by completing form CCE4, if you have been offered gifts, hospitality or advantage, even if your intention is to reject the offer, and you are not seeking permission to accept.
- use tact and courtesy if you need to refuse a gift or hospitality. Even where gifts are refused, this should still be recorded using the CCE4 form.
- report to your Head of Service any approaches made to you which may be an attempt to gain some form of preferential treatment.

#### **Specifically, in relation to gifts:**

- in circumstances where a gift is delivered and cannot be declined or returned, you should complete a CCE4 form to request permission to personally accept the gift or for the gift to be passed on to the Chairman's Charity.
- there is no requirement to seek approval for token gifts such as chocolates, mugs, key rings, mouse mats, pens, flowers etc from service users.
- you must not accept gifts or legacies from current or former service users/clients (you personally or members of your family).
- gifts of money or alcohol should never be accepted (but alcohol may be donated to the Chairman's Charity if refusal to accept would cause offence).

#### **Specifically, in relation to hospitality:**

- only accept hospitality (eg meals/refreshments/event tickets) if there is a genuine need to convey information or to represent the council.
- you need to be sure that accepting the hospitality does not create a conflict of interest.
- there is no requirement to seek approval to accept light refreshments which are offered during meetings, conferences, etc. (eg tea/coffee/snacks/sandwiches).
- if invited to attend and/or speak at conference or events where travel expenses, accommodation costs and subsistence expenses are paid for by the organiser, these should be declared as hospitality in advance of the event.
- should hospitality be offered at short notice and it is not possible to decline without causing offence, a declaration must be made immediately after the event.

### **Using council equipment, materials and property**

Council assets and facilities, including computers, laptops, mobile phones, photocopiers, vehicles, and offices must only be used for official council business and not for personal use. You must comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required. All council resources must be used with care to avoid wastage, loss or damage and, where applicable, returned on leaving employment.

## Declaration forms

The following declaration forms (CCE1 – CCE4) are to be completed as detailed in this Code.

<b>Form CCE1</b>	Declaration of Relationships with External Contractor or Supplier
<b>Form CCE2</b>	Declaration of Personal Interests
<b>Form CCE3</b>	Request for Approval to Undertake Outside Work
<b>Form CCE4</b>	Declaration of Offers of Hospitality/Gifts

Declarations are to be made online via MyView and will be authorised by your line manager, Strategic Manager and appropriate Head of Service. All forms will be recorded on your personal file. Where a Head of Service is required to submit a form, this will go to their line manager for approval only.

If you do not have access to MyView, your Manager can complete the required form(s) on MyView on your behalf.

All council HR policies and guidance can be found on the HR Policies page on the intranet. If you are unable to access the intranet, please speak to your manager.