

Code of Conduct for Staff

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Libraries NI Code of Conduct for Staff

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Related Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Conflicts of Interest Policy</i> • <i>Whistleblowing Policy</i> • <i>Anti-Bribery Policy</i> • <i>Anti-Fraud Policy</i> • <i>Code of Conduct for Board Members</i> • <i>Gifts & Hospitality Policy</i> • <i>Harassment Policy</i> • <i>Data Protection Policy</i> • <i>Freedom of Information Policy</i> • <i>Social Media Policy</i> • <i>Safeguarding Policy</i> • <i>Records Management Policy</i> • <i>Media Handling Policy</i> • <i>Staff Acceptable Use Policy</i> • <i>Library Computers Conditions of Use</i> • <i>Information Technology Security Policy, and related suite of policies</i> • <i>Disciplinary Procedure</i> • <i>Grievance Procedure</i>



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all staff who work for Libraries NI. Staff are required to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, respecting both the users of the service and each other, and recognising their responsibility, as public sector employees, to carry out their duties with honesty and integrity and according to the law. Staff should conduct themselves in a manner which will maintain and strengthen the confidence of the public and other stakeholders in the integrity of Libraries NI and should not undertake any action which would bring Libraries NI into disrepute.
- 1.2 This Code of Conduct has been developed in line with best practice and existing legislation, taking account of a range of guidance, including the seven principles of public life, articulated by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Principles), five further principles that have been adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Model Code of Conduct for Staff of Executive NDPBs, contained in Public Bodies: A Guide for NI Departments, published by the Department of Finance.
- 1.3 The provisions of this Code of Conduct apply to all staff who work for Libraries NI, including those working full-time and part-time on a permanent, temporary, fixed term or inward secondment basis and form part of their terms and conditions of employment. The Code applies also to agency workers, seasonal and casual staff and volunteers while they are engaged in carrying out duties for Libraries NI.
- 1.4 All staff should familiarise themselves with the contents of the Code and should act in accordance with the principles set out in it. Failure to adhere to any of the provisions of the Code or the related documents referred to in Section 5 may be deemed to be misconduct and result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.
- 1.5 The Code covers some of the most important issues relating to personal conduct, but it is not intended to be exhaustive. The Code should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures relating to behaviour and conduct including those set out in Section 5 below.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to:
 - provide a clear framework within which staff working for Libraries NI are expected to conduct themselves

- ensure staff know the minimum standards of behaviour and conduct that are required
- maintain high standards of conduct so as that the public and other stakeholders can have confidence in Libraries NI
- protect staff from unfair criticism and minimise the potential for misunderstandings.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 All staff working for Libraries NI are expected to uphold and comply with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan Principles). The principles are set out below.

Selflessness – Staff should act in the public interest at all times and take decisions based solely in terms of the public interest. Staff should not act in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families, or their friends.

Integrity – Staff should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their Libraries NI duties.

Objectivity - in carrying out Libraries NI business, including making staff appointments or awarding contracts, staff should make choices based on merit. Staff must not allow any private interest to influence decisions.

Accountability – Staff are accountable for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their role.

Openness – Staff should be as open as possible in all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it or where there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.

Honesty - Staff have a duty to declare any private interests that might affect their Libraries NI duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership – Staff should promote and support these principles by leadership and example and be prepared to challenge poor behaviour whenever it occurs.

- 3.2 All staff working for Libraries NI are expected to uphold and comply with the five additional principles of conduct adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly. These are set out below.

Public Duty – Staff should uphold the law and act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them and act in the interests of the community as a whole.

Equality – Staff should promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by reason of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.

Promoting Good Relations – Staff should act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations and that seeks to promote a culture of respect and equality, embracing diversity in all its forms.

Respect – Staff should show respect and consideration for others at all times.

Good Working Relationships - Staff must at all times be professional and courteous in their dealings with the public and with colleagues. Staff have a responsibility to recognise the sensitivities and feelings of others and avoid behaviour or any action that could cause offence or distress to the public or colleagues including any action that might influence others to discriminate unfairly.

3.3 **Employee Contractual Responsibilities**

Staff should not engage in any activity contrary to their contractual responsibilities and performance standards.

Staff should be open about approaching their manager in the first instance, or contacting the HR Department about any aspect of their job or responsibilities about which they require support.

3.4 **Confidentiality**

Staff of public bodies owes a general duty of confidentiality to their employer under civil law. They are therefore required to protect official information held in confidence. Nothing in this Code should be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep confidential, or in appropriate cases to disclose certain information. All notes, computer files, tapes, memoranda, correspondence, records, documents, and other tangible items made, used or held by staff during the course of their employment which relate directly or indirectly to the business and activities of Libraries NI shall be, and remain at all times the property of Libraries NI.

Staff should not publish any written work, deliver any lecture, discuss or debate in public nor give any interview to the press or other broadcast media on any subject relating to Libraries NI business or their work without the approval of the Chief Executive.

Staff should be aware of their obligations under the Data Protection Act (2018) and Freedom of Information Act (2000).

3.5 **After Leaving Employment**

Staff should continue to observe their duty of confidentiality after they have left the employment of Libraries NI and should be aware of, and abide by, any rules on the acceptance of business appointments after resignation or retirement, as appropriate.

4. **AUTHORITY**

4.1 **Policy Sponsor**

As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive has overall responsibility for propriety in the broad sense, including the conduct and discipline of staff.

4.2 **Policy Owner**

The Director of Business Support is responsible for ensuring the effective operation of the Code and for its regular review.

4.3 **Policy Contact**

Any member of staff who requires further information about the Code of Conduct should contact the Human Resources Manager.

5. **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

5.1 **Conflicts of Interest Policy**

Staff must be open and transparent about any overlap between their Libraries NI role and their private interests (including close relatives and friends) and must fully disclose any conflict of interest. The Conflicts of Interest Policy provides guidance on actual or potential conflicts of interest and how these should be managed.

5.2 **Whistleblowing Policy**

If staff have a concern about actual, potential or suspected malpractice or wrongdoing within Libraries NI they have a duty to raise that concern at an early stage, and assuming this is done in good faith, they will not suffer any detriment for raising the concern. The Whistleblowing Policy and associated guidance (Raising a Concern) explains how this can be done openly or confidentially and to whom the concern should be addressed.

5.3 **Anti-Fraud Policy**

The overall purpose of the Anti-Fraud Policy is to confirm that Libraries NI has a zero tolerance towards fraud and to detail responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud. This Policy covers fraud and loss within Libraries NI and applies to all staff, members of the public, Board Members and contractors. The procedures to

be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected are detailed in the Fraud Response Plan.

5.4 Code of Conduct for Board Members

As with staff, Board Members are bound by a Code of Conduct and this provides a clear framework within which Board Members are expected to conduct themselves.

5.5 Gifts and Hospitality Policy

The fundamental principle is that no member of staff should do anything which might give rise to the impression that they have been, or might be, influenced by a gift or hospitality or other consideration to show bias for, or against, any person or organisation while carrying out Libraries NI duties. Detailed guidance on Offers and Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality is shown in the policy documents.

5.6 Harassment Policy

The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness among staff as to what constitutes bullying and harassment in the workplace and to define the duties and responsibilities of Libraries NI and staff in implementing the policy. It emphasises that unacceptable conduct on any of the grounds outlined in the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with promptly and fairly. The policy sets out the advice and support which is available and establishes the procedures to be followed in relation to complaints of harassment.

5.7 Data Protection Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the personal information which Libraries NI processes as it carries out its business is dealt with properly and within the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018. It sets out how Libraries NI will implement its commitment to protecting the personal information it holds.

5.8 Freedom of Information Policy

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) provides a general right of access, subject to specific exemptions, to recorded information held by government departments and public authorities. Libraries NI is committed to ensuring an open and transparent approach to the provision of information about its aims and activities as it responds to information requests and by the routine publication of relevant documents. The purpose of this Policy is to support openness and ensure compliance with the Act.

5.9 Records Management Policy

As a public body Libraries NI is required by law to manage its records properly and is committed to doing so. This policy establishes a framework for the management of records in all formats and media, created or received and maintained by Libraries NI in the conduct of its business. It also applies to records

generated as a result of collaboration with partners, whether those records are held by Libraries NI or the partner organisation.

5.10 Safeguarding Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults when using library services. It sets out the responsibilities of staff and volunteers in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults and ensures that staff are supported in dealing with incidents of suspected or actual abuse. The policy sets out the structures and procedures in place to protect staff and the organisation from potential allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards children, young people or vulnerable adults.

5.11 Social Media Policy

The purpose of this policy and the associated guidelines is to set out Libraries NI's overall approach to the use of corporate Social Media and establish parameters for staff in relation to their personal use of Social Media in order to protect Libraries NI and individual members of staff. The general principles of this policy are also applicable to Board Members.

5.12 Media Handling Policy

The Chairperson and Chief Executive are the main spokespersons for Libraries NI. They will decide, in conjunction with the Marketing Team, if another officer or Board Member will be required to speak to the media on behalf of the organisation. This is particularly relevant with regard to meetings of the Board and Committees which may attract media attention.

5.13 Anti-bribery Policy

Libraries NI has a zero tolerance towards bribery and this policy details responsibilities regarding its prevention and covers arrangements to prevent attempts to bribe officers within Libraries NI as well as any attempt by Libraries NI officers to bribe external stakeholders. Staff at all levels and at all times are required to act honestly and with integrity, and to safeguard the resources for which they are responsible. Any level of fraud or corruption or any case of suspected bribery will be thoroughly investigated and dealt with appropriately.

5.14 Staff Acceptable Use Policy

This policy applies to all Libraries NI employees including seconded staff, temporary staff, agency workers, contractors, consultants, and associates. It details how Libraries NI will manage and monitor the use of its information assets and systems and the standards it requires from its users. Guidance is provided on what staff can and cannot do and the consequences of any breaches. It applies to all IT systems owned by Libraries NI and across the entire Libraries NI IT environment.

The above list is not exhaustive.