

# Our Code of Values and Behaviours

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North  
Tyneside  
Council

This document does not form part of an employee's terms and conditions of employment and can therefore be reviewed, amended or withdrawn at the discretion of the council.

## **1. Introduction**

The Code of Values and Behaviours is a set of rules, standards and principles which outline how we expect all colleagues within the council to approach their work.

It sets out what our values are and how you should demonstrate these in your day-to-day practice and behaviour. This includes how you carry out your work and how you treat the people you work with, whether those are customers or colleagues.

The Code of Values and Behaviours applies to all colleagues working for North Tyneside Council. For the purposes of this document the term colleague means:

- employees
- agency workers and contractors
- workers
- volunteers

## **2. Our values**

Our values are central to our organisation's culture and are integral to our success in achieving Our North Tyneside Plan and delivering excellent customer service. They are embedded in how we work with our teams, ensuring we are all working towards the same goal with the same principles and standards.

We strive to be an organisation which listens and cares, so it's important that we all put these values at the centre of everything we do, to ensure we are all working towards the same goals and ambitions, with the same principles and standards.

### **We listen**

We listen to our customers and colleagues and understand their needs. We pay attention to messages and respond. We express information clearly; we are open and honest, and we encourage people to have their say.

### **We care**

We care for our customers by understanding their needs, we treat them with respect and safeguard those who are most vulnerable. We care for each other by being a positive role model. We respect each other and work well with colleagues. We care for ourselves by looking after our physical and mental health and asking for help when we need it.

### **We are ambitious**

We are ambitious by always looking for ways to do things better. We are positive and learn from our mistakes and successes. We can be ambitious by reflecting on our performance and acting on feedback to improve. We strive to reduce the carbon footprint in our services by using less energy in our buildings, travelling less in our vehicles and recycling as much as possible.

### **We are good value for money**

We are good value for money by delivering services in line with our customer promise and service standards. We use resources carefully, avoid unnecessary cost, try to get things right first time and share resources with colleagues.

## **3. Our responsibilities and commitments**

We all have responsibilities and commitments as colleagues and managers. Some responsibilities and commitments, such as embodying the council's values, apply to everyone, while others are specific to your level of responsibility in the council.

### **3.1 Colleague responsibilities**

Every colleague in the council is responsible for meeting these commitments. As a colleague of North Tyneside Council you are expected to:

- a. conduct yourself in a professional manner with the highest standards of honesty and integrity

- b. protect the council's reputation in everything you say and do
- c. embody and live our values – they are our framework for engaging with each other, our customers and our partners
- d. stay informed – read communications, engage in discussions, participate actively in your 1 to 1 meetings and IPR and undertake any training to support you in your role and personal development
- e. take ownership – you are responsible for yourself, think about the consequences of your actions and aim to have a positive impact on others
- f. be pro-active and open to new ways of working and opportunities – the council is changing rapidly, and you are part of making this a success
- g. raise issues – if you are concerned don't be afraid to speak up. This includes where you believe the behaviour of other colleagues is not in line with this code e.g. acts of bullying or harassment. (See the [Dignity and Respect at Work Policy](#) for details of how to report this)
- h. contribute to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment
- i. be courageous, don't be afraid to challenge and keep asking yourself "is there a better way"
- j. don't be a bystander – if you can see that others are struggling, offer help or support in a way that encourages and enables them.
- k. make and keep your commitments, show through your actions that you can be trusted – aim to meet and if possible, exceed expectations
- l. recognise the importance of our work with partners and contribute to the positive promotion of this wherever possible
- m. treat all our colleagues, residents and service users with dignity and respect. Embrace and value people's differences.
- n. act as an ally, educating yourself, empowering others and tackle discrimination

If you are unsure about a situation and how to deal with it, you should ask yourself:

- Is my behaviour consistent with the council's values and my responsibilities as a colleague?
- Does my decision feel like the right thing to do?
- Is my decision based on responsible and professional judgement?
- Does my action comply with the council's policies and procedures?

- How would I feel if my actions became known to my colleagues, my manager and the public?
- Will it affect the council's reputation?
- Am I being truthful and honest?

If you are still unsure always speak to your line manager – it is never ok to disregard this code and it is your responsibility to check.

### **3.2 Manager responsibilities**

Those with management roles have additional responsibilities. Whether you are a line manager, service manager, Head of Service or Director you should:

- lead by example by embodying and promoting our values – show through your actions what it means to act with integrity, and to manage tough situations with courage
- exercise judgement – respond thoughtfully, carefully and with respect in all situations
- be decisive – make the right decision at the right time not the easy one, consult with others and take them with you
- encourage questioning, embrace other perspectives and strive to be the best you can be
- be accountable for yourself and the people you lead – ensuring your team understand their role and work priorities, and are kept up to date through regular feedback, 1 to 1 meetings and IPRs
- drive quality and efficiency – always looking for improvements, encouraging ideas from your team about how to do things differently, giving credit and implementing improvements
- support and enable your team – providing leadership and direction for the future, enabling others to reach their full potential
- promote a safe and healthy working environment
- maintain a culture that is free from bullying, discrimination harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and individual contributions are welcomed and acknowledged
- ensure that you and your team are working towards the same goals, with the same principles and standards
- build an inclusive and fair workplace where all team members feel valued and accepted

- l. encourage team members, residents and service users to contribute their perspectives to our understanding of the borough and how best to support our people
- m. role model inclusive behaviour in your leadership style and champion equality

## **4. Special conduct standards**

### **4.1 Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Victimisation**

Any form of behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional, that constitutes bullying, harassment or victimisation is unlawful and will not be tolerated in the council. The council will take strong action regarding inappropriate behaviour which shows a lack of respect for others, or which leads people to feel threatened. For employees this includes using the Disciplinary Procedure and taking action up to and including dismissal.

**Bullying** is unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:

- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting
- an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone

**Harassment** is when bullying or unwanted behaviour is about any of the following 'protected characteristics' under equality legislation:

- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- disability
- age

**and** where the behaviour:

- violates the person's dignity, whether it was intended or not
- creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person, whether it was intended or not.

Remember that harassment and sexual harassment (below) include "banter" or "jokes" which can make others feel offended – even if the

person who is offended is not the subject of the joke. For example a racist joke can offend a person who is not of that race, and sexualised comments can offend someone even if the comment was not directed at them in particular.

**Sexual harassment** is

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment; and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

**Victimisation** happens when someone is treated unfairly because they have, or plan to, or they are thought to have;

- brought an employment tribunal claim alleging discrimination
- made or supported a complaint to do with a 'protected characteristic'
- given evidence or information in relation to someone else's claim about discrimination

For further information about harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation and the full list of protected characteristics please read the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy on [Learning Pool](#). This includes the full definitions and examples of these and how to raise any concerns you have about behaviour towards you or others.

If you have any problems accessing this document and would like a copy of this policy, you can ask your line manager or ask a member of the People Team on 0191 643 1111.

## **4.2 Anti-Bribery**

You should not take or offer any kind of payment, gift, or benefit that is meant to improperly influence someone's actions. This includes giving something to a decision-maker in the hope of getting a personal advantage which is not allowed or accepting something that could affect your own decisions. It's important to keep things fair and honest, without letting payments or benefits sway you or others from doing what's right.

### **4.3 Fraud**

Fraud is the deliberate action by any colleague to misuse their position (or deliberately allowing action to be taken by others) with the intention of obtaining money or assets for their own personal gain or for someone else's gain. This can include deliberately completing time recording systems or records inaccurately.

### **4.4 Social media**

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

When using social media, you have the responsibility to act in the best interests of the council and should therefore not post anything that could damage the council's reputation. You should not breach confidentiality, or post anything that would damage the relationship of trust and confidence between yourself and the council.

You should also ensure that your posts do not include discriminatory or offensive comments which could be considered as bullying or harassment, including those related to a protected characteristic e.g. sex, race or disability etc. See section 4.1 above for further details.

Further guidance is available in the Social Media Policy.

### **4.5 Conduct outside of work**

Unlawful, anti-social or other unacceptable conduct (as set out in this code) outside of work which either jeopardises the council's reputation or position and/or which impacts upon your ability to do your job will be dealt with formally. (For employees this will be through the council's Disciplinary Procedure and could include action up to and including dismissal.)

This includes behaviour during situations or events which are connected to work – for example socializing with colleagues such as birthday celebrations or attending work-connected events like Christmas parties or awards ceremonies.



These events can be important for team building and celebrating our successes, but colleagues should remember that any behaviour that could be considered to be sexual harassment is unacceptable and will be taken very seriously. See section 4.1 above for further details.

Where you are the subject of a criminal investigation, convicted of an offence, or referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) you **must** inform your line manager immediately so that a risk assessment can be carried out.

#### **4.6 Conflicts of Interest**

You should not put yourself in a position where you are involved in an activity (including those for personal gain to you, a member of your family, or someone you have a close association\* with) which conflicts with the council's interests. Any potential conflict of interest should be discussed with your line manager. This includes taking on additional employment.

A member of your family means:

- your partner (i.e. your spouse, civil partner or anyone with whom you live in a similar capacity)
- your parent or parent-in-law
- any child, stepchild or sibling of you or your partner
- your grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew or niece and the partners of those people.

\*You have a 'close association' with someone if your relationship is such that a reasonable member of the public might think you may be prepared to favour or disadvantage that person when you decide a matter which affects them.

#### **4.7 Political neutrality**

You must not favour or disadvantage any political group or politician in how you carry out your duties. There are exceptions to for posts where special rules apply. If you are unsure whether this applies to your role, please speak to your line manager.

#### **4.8 Confidentiality and keeping council information secure**

Data Protection legislation, including both the Data Protection Act the General Data Protection Regulations, deals with appropriate protection of personal and sensitive personal information. All colleagues are under an obligation to comply with legislation, and as such you should save, store, share and retain information in line with all corporate policies and guidelines which deal with data protection. You should also treat all information you receive in the course of your employment as confidential to the council.

You 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 in any doubt whether you are permitted to release information you must consult with your line manager before any disclosure is made.

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.

#### **4.9 Use of council equipment and resources**

North Tyneside Council's assets and facilities, including personal computers, laptops, mobile phones, photocopiers, vehicles and offices, must only be used for official North Tyneside Council business.

You should not use the council's ICT resources for personal use except where this is in accordance with the rules of the Acceptable Use of Council ICT Resources Policy.

You should use all the council's resources with care to avoid wastage, loss or damage, and you should return all council property when you leave our employment with us.

#### **4.10 Security and identification**

To prevent security breaches the council has an Identification Card (ID) scheme for all colleagues. You should ensure that you have your ID card

with you at all times and, if challenged, should show the ID card to confirm your identity.

#### **4.11 Copyright and intellectual property**

Any work that you create in the course of your employment, including any intellectual property, belongs to the council, unless the council specifically agrees otherwise. You should also ensure that nothing you create in the course of your employment infringes copyright. If you are in doubt, you should discuss the matter with your manager who may seek legal advice if appropriate.