



North Tyneside Council

widening
horizons

HR

Employee Code of Conduct

Link to policy	Employee Relations Policy
Effective date	6 September 2010
Review date	September 2011
Revision Number	2
Purpose	The way that employees conduct themselves influences the public's opinion of the council. This code of conduct is intended to support employees in maintaining standards and to help to protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.
Scope	This Code applies to all employees of North Tyneside Council except those who are subject to separate local management of school arrangements. Non-employees (e.g. agency workers, contractors and consultants) are also excluded as they are subject to separate arrangements from their primary employer.
Equality Impact Assessment	Compete
Related documents	Discipline Procedure Resolution Procedure Whistleblowing Procedure for Employees Procedure for Managing Under Performance and Attendance
Alternative formats	Alternative formats of this document may be available upon request e.g. Braille, large print (18 point) and audio. If you would like a copy of this document in one of these formats please contact Human Resources.
Document status	This document does not form part of an employee's terms and conditions of employment and can therefore be reviewed, amended and withdrawn at the discretion of the Council.

Code

Summary

1. Employees within North Tyneside Council are expected to:
 - a. treat others with respect
 - b. work with colleagues to achieve goals
 - c. maintain high standards of performance and behaviour
 - d. promote the values and aims of the council and implement relevant council policies and procedures
 - e. seek help if for any reason they are unable to do their job
2. Any employee, who is unsure about any aspect of the code, should check with their manager.

Treating others with respect

3. Treat people with courtesy and consideration. Respect an individual's right to privacy.

Councillors and the Elected Mayor

4. An employee must not do anything that compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of a councillor or the Elected Mayor.
5. North Tyneside Council's protocol on member/officer relations states that elected members should treat employees with respect. Employees should treat councillors and the Elected Mayor with respect and avoid over-familiarity, which may be unwelcome and embarrass others.

The local community and service users

6. Employees should deal with customers and service users in a courteous, efficient and unbiased manner and follow the policies and procedures of North Tyneside Council.

Colleagues

7. Employees should apply the same high standards to their dealings with colleagues and with the elected members of the council. They should treat their colleagues with respect and according to their individual needs.

Working with Colleagues to Achieve Goals

8. In order to meet the targets set in the council's performance plan, the council expects its employees to work together and to support each other.

Maintaining High Standards of Performance and Behaviour

Performance

9. The standard of work that employees are expected to deliver should be described in their job outline/role definition or in the personal targets agreed as part of the Individual Performance Review (IPR) process.

Behaviour

10. The public is entitled to and expects high standards of behaviour from Council employees. The following sections detail the standards in particular areas. If an allegation is made and it is proved that, for example, a gift has been given to an employee, he/she will have to demonstrate that the reward has not been corruptly obtained.
11. An employee must not bribe/attempt to bribe another individual, personally take a bribe or knowingly allow another to.

Gifts

12. Public employees are prohibited by law from accepting gifts or rewards, and must show neither favour nor disfavour to anyone in their official capacity. To safeguard themselves, employees must not accept any gift or other benefit offered to them, their partner or a family member by any person or organisation who has, or wishes to have, dealings with the council. Employees should refuse them with courtesy and tact (there may be exceptions, including gifts of token value. In these circumstances employees should check with a manager. However, if in doubt, they should err on the side of caution). Employees should give a proper explanation and failure to do so might put them or their job at risk. In declining the offer of a gift, a possible way for employees to avoid offending someone may be to suggest they write to the council expressing their appreciation.
13. Although the law does not allow individuals to accept gifts, the council is legally able to accept gifts, so another possible way of not offending someone who has offered a gift, which can be put into general use, may be for the employee to explain that he/she is accepting it on behalf of the council. This means the employee will have to hand it over to their manager where it will become the property of the council and could be used in one of the council's establishments.
14. Employees should check with their one-up (line) manager first if they are offered a gift, as this will need to be recorded on the Business Management System (BMS) ([click here to access](#)) or the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS), even if the gift / hospitality has not been accepted.
15. Employees should tell their one-up manager immediately if they become aware that they, their partner or a family member has been made a beneficiary in a customer's will, for example, the will of someone for whom they are or have been a carer – the employee's manager can tell them what to do in these circumstances.

Hospitality

16. Employees should accept offers of hospitality (which must be authorised) only in the circumstances described below:
- There is a need to pass on information or represent the council in the community.
 - Attend social or sporting functions only when these are part of the life of the community or where the council should be seen to be represented.
 - It is acceptable for an employee to accept hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses if it is clear that the hospitality is business rather than personal, where the council gives permission in advance and is satisfied that any procurement decisions are not compromised.
17. Be careful about timing as the host could be seeking to do business with the council or to obtain a decision from it. Employees should check with their manager first if they are offered hospitality, as this will need to be recorded on the Business Management System (BMS) ([click here to access](#)) or the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS), even if they have not accepted the hospitality or it is not authorised.
18. If employees are involved in visits to inspect equipment etc., they should avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions by ensuring that the council meets the cost of such visits.
19. To assist managers in applying the Code of Conduct fairly and consistently, the guidance below should be followed when considering the acceptance of gifts or hospitality:
- What is the context of the offer – any offer must be impartial, for example, if an offer is received from an organisation currently bidding for a Council contract, or has recently won a Council contract, this could be interpreted as not impartial and should be declined.
 - What is the value of the offer – high value offers would be questionable and should be declined
 - What reason is given by the employee for accepting the offer – there must be a clear business reason for acceptance
 - Should the employee attend the event but pay for the hospitality – for example, an employee attending an event to promote networking opportunities
 - Could the offer of a gift be accepted on behalf of the Council rather than by the individual
 - Is there any doubt about the appropriateness of accepting the gift or hospitality – if there is any doubt as to the integrity or honesty, the manager should refuse permission to accept

Sponsorship

20. The rules regarding the acceptance of gifts or hospitality also apply to an outside organisation that wishes to sponsor a council activity.
21. If the council wishes to sponsor an event or service, employees, and their partners, spouses or relatives must not benefit from it in a direct way. If an employee has an interest in an event or service that the council wishes to sponsor, he/she should inform their one-up manager. This can be done on the BMS ([click here to access](#)) or the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS), even if the sponsorship has not been accepted.
22. Where the council, through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, ensure that impartial advice is given and there is no conflict of interest involved.

Use of resources

23. The council is responsible for the safekeeping of public buildings and the control of public money. Employees should be open as far as possible, and be ready to answer for their actions. Employee should use council resources for authorised, official purposes only.

24. Employees should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and avoid any legal challenge to the council by using any public money in their care responsibly and lawfully.

Additional and Outside employment

25. The council has to be satisfied that conflicts of interest do not arise with an employee's additional / outside employment. For this reason, employees must inform their manager that they intend to seek any outside employment (paid or unpaid, and / or where expenses may be offered), which may have a conflict of interest with their role in the Council. This can be done via the BMS ([click here to access](#)) or on the Declaration of Interest Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS). If employees are unsure if their additional / outside employment does cause a conflict of interest they should seek advice from their manager.

26. Employees may be required to refund some or all of their income/expenses from their other activity if it is a function of their employment with the council.

27. The council will not unreasonably prevent employees from carrying out other employment. If a manager refuses an employee's request they will explain their reasons for doing so.

28. Employees should not take outside employment if it conflicts with or overlaps with their official duties.

29. Employees should be aware of the terms of their contract of employment

Personal interests

30. Employees must not make official decisions about matters in which they have a personal involvement.

31. Employees should declare it, on the BMS ([click here to access](#)) or on the Declaration of Interest Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS) if:

- a. they have any personal interests, whether financial or not, which could overlap or bring about conflict with the council's work; or
- b. they belong to any society or organisation which is not open to the public without formal membership and which has secrecy about rules, membership or conduct, with a commitment of allegiance to the organisation. The purpose of this declaration is to protect employees from allegations of bias, interest or favouritism.

Relationships with suppliers and contractors

32. In circumstances where an employee has a financial interest in a contract to which the council is a party, or which is proposed to be entered into by the council or any of its committees, or if an employee has any relationships of a personal or a business nature with external contractors or service suppliers, or possible contractors or suppliers, he/she must declare this on the BMS ([click here to access](#)) or on the Declaration of Interest Form ([click here to access](#) - if the employee does not have access to the BMS).

Communicating information

33. Employees must not use information gained at work for their personal gain or pass it to others who do not have a legitimate work involvement.

34. Employees should be aware of what information they can and cannot release. If an employee needs guidance on this, they should speak to their manager.

35. Employees should only reveal information regarding other employees if they have obtained the approval of the person concerned first, or the law permits the information to be disclosed.

36. The Marketing and Communications team (located within Quadrant East) deals with all media enquiries.
37. When completing and responding to reference enquiries employees should give an honest and factual response, if in doubt contact Human Resources for assistance.
38. Employees should also be aware that failure to comply with this obligation could result in a criminal offence.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

39. If an employee's employment entails them creating items of intellectual property, such as literary, musical and dramatic works, works of art, original drawings or design, performances and broadcasts (including material placed on the Internet) they belong to the council, unless the council specifically agrees otherwise. Employees should also ensure that nothing they create in the course of their employment infringes copyright, beyond that which would be accepted as "fair dealing" i.e. normally copies of parts of a work. If an employee is in doubt he/she should discuss the matter with their manager who may seek legal advice if appropriate.

Data Protection

40. Employees must observe the requirements of the data protection legislation and follow the council's computer security policy. Employees may disclose personal data about an individual, from which he or she can be identified and which is held on computer equipment or manual records, only to those who are registered as receivers of such information.

Giving fair advice

41. When asked, employees should give fair advice - without bias.
42. Employees should serve all councillors in the same manner and respect their rights.
43. If an employee is required to advise a meeting of a political group of Elected Members they should first seek the authority of the Chief Executive to attend the meeting. The employee must remain politically neutral by ensuring that he/she does not show bias towards any particular group. Employees are advised to keep a summary of the key points of their advice. If he/she offers a briefing to one political group he/she should offer one to the other groups on the same topic, within an appropriate timescale. Employees must follow any rules set out in the Council's constitution, which is available on the Intranet ([click here to access](#)) or from a manager (for those employees who do not have access to the Intranet).

Political neutrality

44. Employees must in the discharge of their duties (save for political assistants and mayor's assistants where special provisions apply – see guidance on politically restricted posts – [click here to access](#)) act at all times in a politically neutral way. In doing so they must not favour or disadvantage any political group or politician in how they undertake their duties.

Promote the values and aims of the council and implement relevant council policies and procedures

45. The council expects its employees to promote its values and aims and to make their contribution towards achieving its goals and implementing its policies and procedures.

Seeking help

46. If anything prevents an employee from doing their job with the council he/she should inform their one-up manager.

Breaches of the Code

47. Breaches of this code of conduct may lead to action being taken under the council's Discipline Procedure.

