

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CONSERVATIVE PARTY REPRESENTATIVES

PART 1: CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose of this Code of Conduct

- To set out the minimum standards of behaviour expected from anyone representing the Party as an elected or appointed official or office-holder.
- To support equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion, and the absence of any and all inappropriate behaviour, in all aspects of the Party's activities.

This Code of Conduct sets out the framework of behaviour expected of those Party representatives (listed under 'Who is the Code of Conduct for?' below), who are required as a strict condition of their ongoing representation of the Party, membership of, engagement with and/or (in the case of any organisation which is formally recognised by the Party) recognition by the Party, to adhere to this Code of Conduct in their activities representing the Party.

Who is the code of conduct for?

This Code of Conduct is for anyone who formally represents the Party as an elected or appointed official. This includes, but is not limited to: Members of Parliament, Peers, Members of the European Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of the Welsh Assembly, Members of the Greater London Assembly, Police & Crime Commissioners, elected Mayors, Councillors and Association, area, regional, and national Party officers. This Code of Conduct will be presented to the Party Board, which will consider the views of each of these categories of Party representatives, at its meeting in November 2017 with a view to its formal adoption, and will be the process followed until then.

What standards are expected of individuals covered by this Code?

They should:

- follow the Seven Principles of Public Life established by Lord Nolan and the Committee on Standards in Public Life:
 1. **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
 2. **Integrity** – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
 3. **Objectivity** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
 4. **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
 5. **Openness** – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs;
 - lead by example to encourage and foster respect and tolerance;
 - treat others with civility, courtesy and respect;
 - act with honesty and probity and in a manner which upholds the reputation and values of the Conservative Party. Such duty is fundamental. Conduct which the public may reasonably perceive as undermining a representative’s honesty and probity is likely to diminish trust and confidence placed in them, and the Party, by the public;
 - not use their position to bully, abuse, victimise, harass or unlawfully discriminate against others (see further the interpretation annex);
 - take reasonable steps to ensure that people who wish to raise concerns about bullying, discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation by others feel able to do so, and know how to follow the complaints procedure set out in this Code;
 - co-operate fully with any process set down by the Party Board should a grievance process be instigated. This Code will be made publicly available on the Conservative Party website.

PART 2: PROCEDURE FOR ALLEGED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

If any individuals wish to make a formal complaint against elected representatives or officers of the Party they should email **complaints@conservatives.com**. Alternatively, they can call our confidential hotline on **020 7984 8050**.

There may be instances where an individual feels able to raise the problem informally with the person responsible and explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes them uncomfortable. If informal steps are not appropriate or have been unsuccessful, then the following formal procedure may apply.

When we receive a formal complaint, we will investigate it in a timely and confidential manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint. The investigation should be thorough, impartial and objective, and carried out with sensitivity and due respect for the rights of all parties concerned.

The following process will be adopted in so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so:

Stage 1: We will obtain written statements from the complainant and notify the respondent(s) that a complaint has been made about them. The respondent will be given the opportunity to provide any evidence or details that will help to establish their position. It may be necessary to interview witnesses to any of the incidents mentioned in the complaint. If so, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.

Stage 2: A panel consisting of no fewer than three people, appointed by the Party Chairman, will examine the complaint and evidence gathered. This must include representation of both the voluntary and professional Party alongside at least one independent person. If the complaint regards a Member of Parliament, the panel must include at least one person nominated by the Chairman of the 1922 Committee.

- If there is an allegation of criminal wrongdoing, we will strongly advise the complainant to report this to the relevant authority as soon as practicable. In certain instances, we may have a duty to contact the relevant authority directly.

- The panel will collectively determine whether the complaint warrants further investigation and/or whether there is a potential breach of the Conservative Party's Code of Conduct, or whether it is vexatious or malicious.
- If it is agreed that the Code of Conduct has not been breached, and the complaint does not warrant further investigation by the Party, then the complainant will receive written notification of this, explaining the decision.
- If it is agreed that the Code of Conduct may have been breached, the process will move to Stage 3.
- Records of meetings and decisions will be kept for a minimum of 5 years or as required by law.

Stage 3: The panel established under Stage 2 will examine further the complaint and evidence gathered.

- The panel will provide their findings to the Party Chairman, recommending the appropriate level of the Party at which the complaint should be resolved and/or dealt with according to the Party's Constitution, and will continue to monitor the complaint to its conclusion.
- If the panel cannot agree collectively on its findings, the dissenting views must be presented as well as the majority view.
- If appropriate, the complaint may then be referred by the Chairman to the Leader and/or to the Board of the Conservative Party, who shall take such action as they see fit. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, suspension of membership or expulsion from the Party.
- Any hearing of any panel or body established to hear a complaint under the Code of Conduct will be provided with Terms of Reference and Notes on Procedure to be adopted at the hearing. The panel will be obliged to consider an application on behalf of the respondent for the matter to be dismissed on the grounds that the complainant's case is vexatious or malicious, or for any other reason. In considering such an application for dismissal, the panel may seek qualified legal advice.
- Any removal of rights of membership will only be made after due considerations of natural justice.
- Schedule 6 (23) of the Constitution of the Conservative Party provides for an appeal process in the event of the Board of the Party determining that an individual should be suspended or expelled from membership of the Party. Any member whose membership is suspended, withdrawn or refused by the Board of the Party has 28 days to lodge an appeal to the Individual Member Review Committee which shall exist for the purpose of hearing such appeals under a process determined by it and whose decision shall be final.
- Records of meetings and decisions will be kept for a minimum of 5 years or as required by law.

In no way should anything in this Code interfere with an elected representative carrying out his or her duties and exercising his or her judgement in relation to his or her work, nor to any individual's right to a private life within the law.

ANNEX: INTERPRETATION

Discrimination includes victimising or harassing any other person because of race (including colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship), sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, disability, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity status.

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive situation or environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

Harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Victimisation provisions protect certain individuals who do (or might do) acts such as bringing discrimination claims, complaining about harassment, or getting involved in some way with another complaint (such as giving evidence).

Victimisation may therefore occur where a person subjects another person to a detriment because either that person has acted in such a way and/or is believed to have acted in such a way, or may act in such a way.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength, influence and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.