

Local Government Association

Code of Conduct for Political and Independent Appointees

Purpose

1. The LGA values the contributions of the many councillors and independent appointees undertaking formal LGA roles. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the conduct expected of them and to help them understand the types of behaviours that could lead to complaints being made against them.

Scope

2. This Code of Conduct covers:
 - Councillors elected by the General Assembly or appointed by the LGA's political groups to a formal LGA role;
 - Independent appointees to a formal LGA role and
 - Former councillors continuing as a LGA member peer after standing down from political office.
3. The LGA's president and vice presidents are serving Members of Parliament, Peers or Welsh Assembly Members. All are bound by, and required to operate in accordance with, their respective Codes of Conduct in the course of their work on behalf of the LGA.
4. The LGA is a company. Directors on the LGA and IDeA company boards have additional responsibilities as Directors set out in the Companies Act 2006, which take precedence over the provisions of this code. These are set out in the **Directors' Responsibilities**.

Definitions

5. For the purposes of this Code of Conduct,
 - "Councillor" means a member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor.
 - "Local authority" includes county councils, district councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, the City of London, combined authorities, combined county authorities, fire and rescue authorities, joint authorities, town and parish councils and National Park authorities.
 - "Formal LGA role" means (1) place on a board, committee or task and finish group; (2) LGA appointment to an outside body; (3) National and Regional Lead peer; (4) Member peer.
 - "Independent appointee" is a person appointed or elected to a formal role, in a voting or non-voting capacity, who does not fall within the definition of councillor above.

General principles of councillor conduct

6. Everyone in public office who serves the public or delivers public services must uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, known as the Nolan Principles (Appendix 1). Building on these, the following principles have been developed for anyone appointed or elected to a formal LGA role.
7. In accordance with the trust in and responsibility placed on me:

- I act with integrity and honesty;
 - I act lawfully;
 - I treat all persons fairly and with respect;
 - I lead by example and act in a way that secures confidence in the LGA;
 - I act as a champion and advocate for the sector and I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the LGA and local government;
 - I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person;
 - I declare conflicts of interest and remove myself from activity where appropriate;
 - I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
 - I ensure that the LGA's resources are used prudently in accordance with its Articles of Association, priorities and policies and in the interest of local government.
8. The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction conducted as part of, or referencing, the LGA role, including but not limited to:
- face-to-face meetings
 - online or telephone meetings
 - written communication
 - verbal communication
 - non-verbal communication
 - electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

Standards of conduct

9. You are expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct in your formal LGA role. This section sets out the standards required of you.

9.1. Respect

I treat other councillors, LGA employees, and representatives of partner organisations with respect for them and for the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.

Debate and different views are part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can constructively challenge, express concerns and hold officers and other councillors to account in a robust but civil manner but you should not subject any individual(s), group(s) or organisation(s) to personal attack.

In return, you have the right to respectful behaviour from those with whom you interact in your LGA role.

9.2. Bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination

I do not bully, abuse or harass any person; I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse of power that undermines or humiliates. It can be a regular pattern or one-off incident, take place face-to-face, on social media, by email or phone and in any work-related setting. It may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

Abuse and harassment are defined as a single act or repeated conduct that causes alarm, distress or fear of violence. It can include unwanted contact or communications in a manner that could cause distress or fear in a reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is treating a person unfairly because of a protected characteristic - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

9.3. Impartiality of officers

I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the LGA.

With the exception of group office staff, LGA officers must be politically neutral. You must not seek to coerce or persuade them to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality or try to force them to change their advice if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

9.4. Confidentiality and access to information

I do not use information gained through my LGA role for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family, my employer or my business interests; I do not disclose information given to me in confidence, or acquired by me which I should reasonably be aware is confidential.

The LGA works by political consensus and its work includes developing confidential policy lines, negotiating national agreements and supporting councils with particular challenges. You must not disclose confidential information, which could damage not only the LGA but also individuals, individual councils and the wider sector.

The LGA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act so consider this when entering into any communications, including on social media, text, WhatsApp or other written channels.

9.5. Disrepute

I do not bring the LGA, or my role in it, into disrepute.

The LGA relies on being able to speak as the national voice of local government to fulfil its purpose to support, promote and improve councils.

You should be mindful that some actions, both inside and outside your formal LGA role, could have an adverse impact the reputation of the LGA and may lower the confidence others place in the LGA to fulfil its functions.

Such actions could include openly and persistently acting contrary to any of the standards of conduct set out in this section or being subject to formal police investigation.

9.6. Use of position

I do not use or attempt to use my position improperly to my advantage or the disadvantage of others or to promote views that are my own and are not the agreed LGA position.

The responsibilities of your LGA role may bring enhanced profile and opportunities. You should not take advantage of these to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

Before accepting invitations to speak, give interviews or write articles in your LGA capacity, first notify the Director of Communications or to your lead LGA contact officer to secure approval.

9.7. Use of LGA resources

I use LGA resources to deliver my role effectively and in accordance with LGA policies and the role profile of the position I have been appointed or elected to.

Depending on your role, you may receive a Special Responsibility Allowance, be able to claim expenses, have access to LGA equipment such as phones and laptops or to LGA expertise and facilities. These are intended to recognise the time and expertise that you devote to your LGA role, reimburse you for expenditure you incur and enable you to deliver your role effectively. They must not be used for business or personal gain.

9.8. Gifts and hospitality

I do not accept gifts or hospitality received in relation to my LGA role for a real or substantive personal gain; I register with the Member Services any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.

To protect your position and the reputation of the LGA, you should exercise caution in accepting gifts or hospitality which are or could reasonably be believed to be offered to you because of your LGA role.

9.9. Declaration of Interests

I register and disclose my interests on the LGA register of interests and I update the register if my circumstances change within 28 days of receipt.

The LGA maintains a register of councillors' interests, which will be sent to you annually with your letter of appointment. You should complete (or for existing members update) the register, in accordance with the accompanying guidance. For transparency the register is published on the LGA website, allowing you to demonstrate openness and willingness to be held accountable.

At the start of each meeting you should also declare any interest in any item being discussed.

9.10. Complying with the Code of Conduct

I undertake to comply with the LGA Code of Conduct and with any sanction imposed on me in the event that I am found to have breached the Code. I undertake not to attempt to intimidate any person carrying out an investigation on behalf of the LGA in relation to any complaint received against me.

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct

10. Individuals failing to comply with this Code of Conduct may be subject to investigation by the LGA. The LGA reserves the right to suspend the individual during the investigation and subject to the outcome, to remove them from office.

Supporting policies and protocols

11. This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with

LGA Complaints policy and procedure

Sets out the process for handling complaints, including against LGA elected members, president and vice presidents.

Member-Officer protocol

Sets the framework for positive working relations between LGA members and officers.

12. The Code also aligns with the provisions set out in

Resolutions policy

Sets out the process for officers wishing to raise a grievance against a colleague, manager or LGA elected member.

Directors' responsibilities

Sets out the additional responsibilities of members who sit as directors on company boards.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

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 disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

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.

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.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

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.