



# 0212 Code of Conduct

## WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

## 02/12 CODE OF CONDUCT

### Overview of Amendments 0212

## STRATEGY

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees of the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS). Employees are expected to observe certain standards of behaviour and to bring to light any irregularity in behaviour or procedure. An employee of West Midlands Fire Service should not put themselves in a position where duty and private interests conflict.

## AIMS/PURPOSE

We expect all employees to follow our code of conduct. They should avoid offending, participating in serious disputes and disrupting our workplace. We also expect them to foster a well-organised, respectful and collaborative environment.

### Core Values

West Midlands Fire Service has adopted the National Fire and Rescue Service Core Values to give the Service a clear and consistent picture of its guiding principles. The Corporate Strategy is about what we will do, and the Core Values are about how we will do it. The Core Values are concerned with the behaviours we wish to support and develop within the organisation and we expect all employees to adopt and demonstrate these behaviours which include:

- honesty;
- integrity;
- mutual trust;
- co-operation;
- respect;
- taking responsibility;

- open mindedness;
- learning from our experience;
- including and consulting others;
- considering constructive criticism; and
- challenging prejudice and discrimination.

This is not an exhaustive list.

This policy relates to employees of the WMFS; the elected members of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority have adopted the National Code of Local Government Conduct as set out in the schedule to the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 (SI. 2007 No.1159).

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of West Midlands Fire Service

## RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all employees to follow and uphold the principles of the code of conduct. It is also the responsibility of all employees to challenge behaviour that goes against the code and report it to their line manager.

## PROCEDURES

As a public sector organisation, WMFS must provide a transparent and ethical service, one which is cost effective and efficient. Employees are accountable for the behaviour they demonstrate when carrying out their responsibilities. Therefore, employees must:

- be diligent, honest and ethical in the performance of their duties;
- give their services in a professional and competent manner in willing co-operation with others;
- co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their role;
- make sure their personal and professional life does not adversely affect the Service's standing and reputation;
- comply with WMFS policies, procedures and legal requirements, including those on equality and diversity;
- be accountable for their actions and decisions;
- make sure public funds and Service resources are used in a responsible and lawful manner;

- be polite and courteous in their behaviour at all times; and
- dress appropriately maintaining a high standard of tidiness.
- should treat our property, whether material or intangible, with respect and care.
- Employees must refuse hospitality where any suggestion of improper influence is possible particularly if the hospitality is offered by a person or body having, or seeking, business with, or a decision from, the West Midlands Fire Service, particularly where the offer is to an individual employee.

In addition, employees must be aware of and maintain political neutrality, not allowing their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Some posts are politically restricted and must comply with any statutory restrictions on political activities (see [Restrictions on Political Activities](#) ).

### Disclosure of information

The law requires that certain information must be available to Members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Information must only be disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. Please make reference of our policy, 0105 Management of information in which details how we manage our information and data.

Employees should not use or pass on any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit.

### Political neutrality

Employees serve the WMFS as a whole and serve Members of the Fire Authority equally. Any dealings with Councillors and/or political groups should not compromise the employee's political neutrality.

Employees must follow every lawful expressed policy of the Authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their own work. However, it is recognised that this does not include personal opinions that reflect the Core Values of the organisation, for example, valuing diversity. If you have any questions you can speak to the DICE Business Partner.

See [Restrictions on Political Activities](#) which details posts that are restricted under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

### Appointment

Employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her there is further information relating to close personal relationship.

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, or pay adjustments for another employee who is in a close personal relationship.

## Outside commitments

### Outside Employment

Employees should not take outside employment which conflicts with the Authority's interests and Core Values, irrespective of whether or not the work is paid. See [Outside Employment and Secondary Contracts Policy](#) for guidance.

## Networking sites

Employees using all social networking platforms on own or work devices, need to ensure that their representation (for example, comments, groups, pictures, and so on) does not conflict with that of the WMFS Core Values or has a negative impact on the reputation of WMFS or the Authority. Any photography that is taken at an incident should not contain any personal information, i.e. no street name, no door number, no car registration or any information that can identify a person or their location (this will be classed as a data breach).

All employees should be aware that the Service, takes the posting of offensive material, the harassment, bullying or victimisation of its employees or the public via the internet, social media sites and face to face during personal time, as seriously as if they had occurred in the workplace or during work time. See [Internet Acceptable Use Policy](#) and [Dignity at Work](#).

## Personal interests

Employees must declare to their line manager any personal interests that could bring about conflict with WMFS reputation and interests. Such an interest may be financial or non-financial.

Personal interests would include the following:

- acting as a school governor;
- membership or involvement with an organisation receiving grant aid from the Authority;
- memberships of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct (for example, Freemasons); and
- membership of any organisation which is involved with the Authority in any formal way such as through any decision making process.

Employees needing to declare interests should see [Anti-Fraud Corruption and Bribery Policy](#).

## Procurement

Employees who have responsibility to both procure and provide services must be clear on the separation of the roles related to the provision of services within the WMFS and be aware of the need for accountability and openness. Fairness and impartiality must be exercised when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors. Please refer to [Procurement Procedures](#).

### Corruption

It is a serious offence for employees to ask for or receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity.

See [Procurement Procedures](#) and [Anti-Fraud Corruption and Bribery Policy](#).

### Use of financial resources

Employees must ensure that they use public funds in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money before any financial commitment is made, if you require further information, you may wish to speak to the finance team.

Employees should also be aware of policies on contracts and financial and administrative regulations and any other Routine Notices and comply with them.

### Social events

Employees must be mindful that inappropriate conduct outside of work may affect their work, their working relationships and can reflect on the image and reputation of WMFS and bring it into disrepute. When representing WMFS at official functions or taking part in work-related social events employees should be aware of their conduct and the fact that such events are viewed as an extension of the workplace. Therefore, any incident which occurs during them, may be treated as having happened at work.

Employees who attend work-related social events must adhere to our Code of Conduct policy and their Terms & Conditions' of employment.

Any breaches may lead to disciplinary action under the Service's policies and procedures. The principles are to make sure that everyone can enjoy work-related social events in an atmosphere of friendliness without feeling uncomfortable about anyone else's conduct. See [Misuse of Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substances](#).

### Dress and appearance

All employees are required to be clean, tidy, presentable and safe whilst at work, either at WMFS premises or elsewhere. Uniformed employees should adhere to the principles outlined in [Wearing](#)

**of Uniform** Non-uniformed employees should dress appropriately to the situation, circumstances and environment in which their work takes them, taking into consideration the professionalism and image of the Service and business conventions.

If an employee's appearance is considered by the Manager to be unacceptable, the employee will be asked to return home to change. In these circumstances, the employee will not be paid for the duration of his or her absence from work. Any decision by the Manager on an employee's appearance will take into consideration issues of race, gender, age, disability, religious belief and sexual orientation, whilst ensuring that the professionalism, image, health and safety regulations and public perceptions of the Service are maintained.

WMFS uniform must not be worn to canvass or promote other causes for personal gain by using their position as a WMFS employee to gain sympathy and therefore potentially gain financial or other rewards.

### Working relationships

All employees are entitled to enjoy harmonious working relationships with colleagues and managers without fear of bullying, harassment or prejudice.

See the [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) and [Dignity at Work](#).

### Close personal and family relationships

The Service values, and relies upon, the professionalism and integrity of its employees and should employees have a close personal or family relationship with another employee, their behaviour must be appropriate. Improper behaviour, abuse of authority or conflicts of interest will not be tolerated.

Close personal relationships are defined as employees who are married, dating or co-habiting. Family relations are defined as immediate family members (parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews).

#### Employees

Close personal relationships where an employee manages, or is managed by, an employee with whom they share a close personal relationship must be declared.

Employees should make sure that their relationship does not interfere with their work. They are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and to deal sensitively with any confidential information which they may possess.

#### Managers

Managers should deal with close personal relationships at work sensitively and effectively, looking at the individual circumstances and taking into account natural justice and equal opportunities.

Managers need to consider whether operational employees who share a close personal or family relationship should work on the same watch. This is in the interest of health and safety and any

conflict of interest.

### Responsibility for learning and development

Employees will be supported by their Manager and the Service to maintain their skills and competence through joint discussions, for example, at IPDR meetings. Employees are accountable for their effectiveness at work and career development. They are responsible for ensuring skills and competencies are maintained to ensure they can do their job effectively and efficiently.

### Canvassing Members of the Authority

To ensure that WMFS is impartial and unbiased, restrictions are placed on employees of WMFS having, or seeking, contact with Members of the Authority in relation to their work in WMFS.

Employees should only attend meetings with Members of the Authority, or a constituent authority, in their official capacity, unless a meeting is convened by, or with the approval of, the Chief Fire Officer. This does not preclude attendance at Authority meetings as a member of the public or where employees are constituents of the Authority Members. An exception to this would be a trade union official acting in accordance with their trade union duties.

Employees should not make personal appeals, written or oral, direct or indirect to Members of the Authority or co-opted members of a Committee or Sub-Committee and should not canvas support from other employees for matters concerning their employment with the Authority. Employees should utilise internal employment procedures and policies to resolve workplace disputes.

### Publications, broadcasts, distribution of information and lectures

Employees, who choose to share their opinions, must make it clear that they are their personal views and not the views of the WMFS. No opinions should be expressed about the Service or Authority policies and any interviews given to the media about incidents attended by the Service should be purely factual and in line with the guidance in 0135 Corporate Communications Policy.

Employees should ensure that policies relating to equality issues are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law.

### Criminal charges

WMFS employees facing criminal charges, including for example arrests and cautions will give notice of this, without delay, to their line manager. Employees are required to give notification in all circumstances, whether they personally feel the matter is relevant or not.

All employees who find themselves party to such knowledge must at all times maintain the strictest confidence.

See [Disciplinary Procedure](#) .

## Confidentiality

Employees must be aware which information the WMFS is, and is not, open about and to whom it can be released. They must also be aware of their legal or professional duty to disclose information.

Employees should not use any Service information for personal gain or benefit, nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. All employees should be aware of the legal requirements covered by the General Data Protection Regulation, see [0105 Management of Information](#)

Breach of this code by an employee will be regarded as a disciplinary offence. Serious breach will be regarded as gross misconduct.

## CROSS REFERENCES

[0108 Procurement Procedures](#)

[0113 Restrictions on Political Activities](#)

[0115 Copyright, Design and Patent Act](#)

[0122 Anti-Fraud Corruption and Bribery Policy](#)

[0125 Corporate Communications](#)

[0201 Disciplinary Procedure](#)

[0202 Grievance Procedure](#)

[0213 Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[0105 Management of Information](#)

[0217 Dignity at Work](#)

[0220 Whistle Blowing Policy](#)

[0225 Outside Employment and Secondary Contracts Policy](#)

[0234 Criminal Records Information](#)

[0703 Wearing of Uniform](#)

[1611 Misuse of Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substances](#)

## KEY CONSULTEES

Fire Brigades' Union



Fire Officers' Association

Unison

Policy Team

People Support Services

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There was no requirement to carry out a EIA

## RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

Responsible Strategic Enabler/Department

Strategic Enabler - People

Created/fully reviewed/amended

This policy has been reviewed by the People Support Services Business Partner July 2019