

Title: Code of Conduct – All Employees

Summary: The Code explains the main standards of conduct that employees of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) are expected to adhere to in order to act in a professional manner.

Further Information:

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Evidence shows no potential or actual differential impact. The policy is in line with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services.13

5 Review.....13

1 Policy Statement

The public is entitled to expect conduct of the highest standard and have confidence in employee integrity.

This Code has been drawn up to provide employees with guidance on how they will be expected to conduct themselves when carrying out duties and responsibilities associated with their employment.

The Code explains the main standards of conduct that employees of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) are expected to adhere to in order to act in a professional manner. It is their responsibility to comply with this Code and managers are responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance as well as adhering to it themselves.

Failure to observe the standards of conduct set out in this Code may leave an employee vulnerable to disciplinary action.

As it is not practicable to establish requirements which apply to all situations and circumstances, the Code should be considered as covering only the basic principles to be followed.

2 Organisational Responsibility

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|-----|---|------------------------------|
| 2.1 | The Assistant Chief Fire Officer is the Principal Officer/department with the responsibility needed to be the designated manager responsible for ensuring this policy is effectively implemented. | Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| 2.2 | Adequate resources, including finance, will be made available to enable this policy to be effectively implemented. | Corporate Management Team |

3 Policy Text

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to advise employees of the minimum standards of behaviour expected of them and to maintain and improve these standards where necessary.

3.2 Scope

This Code applies to all Gold, Grey and Green Book employees.

3.3 Related Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures related to this Code should be read in conjunction with it and they are:

- Anti-Bribery Procedure
- Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures
- Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Secondary Employment Policy and Procedure
- Social and Business Networking Policy
- Performance Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
- Standards of Dress and Appearance
- Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure

These can be found on Sharepoint ([Policies and Procedures](#))

3.4 Core Code of Ethics, Service Values and Professional behaviours

This Code of Conduct seeks to ensure that all BFRS employees behave and conduct themselves in a manner that supports the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services, our Service values and professional behaviours.

The Core Code of Ethics has five ethical principles that are embedded into this Code of Conduct and form the basis of expected behaviours. The ethical principles are there to promote good behaviour and challenge inappropriate behaviour. The five ethical principles are:

Putting our communities first	We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.
Integrity	We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything we do.
Dignity and respect	We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
Leadership	We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate differences.

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This Code of Conduct also reflects the BFRS values:

We are accountable	We are transparent, trustworthy, and responsible for our actions.
We've got your back	Striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive.
Every contact counts	Making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism.
We dare to be different	We are bold, we welcome challenge, and we are open to innovative ideas.

To support the Core Code of Ethics and Service Values the Service has developed eight professional behaviours expected of all employees in order to underpin the Core Code of Ethics and make the Service Values a reality. These professional behaviours are expected of all employees and form part of this Code of Conduct.

I listen	I hear, I listen, I seek to understand everyone. I am clear about what I need to do, so that I can deliver a high-quality service to the community.
I am inclusive	I value inclusion and appreciate different opinions, encouraging everyone to have a voice. I treat everyone with kindness and respect and create a positive environment.
I am innovative	I strive to be the best I can be. I look for solutions to improve services for our community and encourage creativity and innovation. I am keen to develop and be part of a high performing team.
I am trustworthy	I am open and honest, building trust with others and deliver what is required of me. I build constructive working relationships to achieve our goals.
I am a role model	I am an ambassador for the Service and take pride and responsibility for the work I do. I act with integrity and impartiality, and I am aware of the impact I have on other people
I encourage continuous improvement	I work collaboratively with others to improve the service we provide. I make decisions based on the evidence and keep up to date with best practice, ensuring actions are beneficial to the community.
I am a team player	I value my colleagues and team and I am aware of our diverse skills. I look after myself and others and seek help if needed. Everyone's mental health and wellbeing is a priority and I am aware of the systems in place to support us.
I am confident and resilient	I have belief in myself, I am capable and resilient. I am able to move towards goals with flexibility and recover from setbacks. I remain calm under pressure and look for opportunity when faced with adversity.

3.5 Standards and Expectations

Employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public.

Advice to the Fire Authority Members and to fellow employees should be impartial.

Employees will be expected, through this Code to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management, any deficiency in the provision of service.

Employees must also report to an appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of this Code.

Employees are expected to report matters of concern which may constitute fraud or corruption, following the Service's Anti-Bribery Procedure.

All employees must:

- Follow the NFCC Core Code of Ethics and the five principles outlined in section 5 of the Code of Conduct.
- Understand and demonstrate the Service Values and Professional Behaviours promoting them in their behaviour and how they conduct themselves at work.
- Engage in the annual appraisal process where their behaviour will be assessed against the Service Values and Professional Behaviours.
- Comply with Service Orders and policies, procedures and practices and carry out reasonable and lawful instructions.
- Act in a safe manner and comply with all Orders and legislation relating to Health and Safety.
- Advise a manager about any action or behaviour which might discredit the Service or that they are concerned about.
- Ensure that their personal appearance is appropriate to the nature of the work undertaken and portrays a professional approach in which the public will have confidence and is consistent with their expectations.

Please note that if these and related standards are not met then employees may be subject to disciplinary action.

3.6 Confidentiality of Information

Employees are expected at all times to be aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality of information gained by them in the course of their duties.

Information about Service users should be released only on a strictly 'need to know' basis; failure to adhere to this could contravene the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Some useful guidelines are:

- Data protected information regarding Service users must not be disclosed either orally or in writing to unauthorised persons, and employees must ensure the authenticity of telephone enquiries;

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- Written and electronic records and correspondence relating to Service users or any other aspect of the organisation's activities must be kept securely at all times, including when removed from Service premises;
- Computer systems must be protected from inappropriate access e.g. by ensuring that personal access codes are kept secure;
- Where it is necessary for information to be shared with partners or other organisations in order for work to be carried out, this should only be done on a strictly 'need to know' basis and be used only for the purpose for which the information was given. Where information sharing protocols between the Service and its partners are in place, the terms of the protocol must be followed;
- Conversations relating to confidential matters affecting Service users should not take place in situations where they may be overheard by others in the vicinity e.g. in corridors, reception areas, lifts, etc.

Confidential information about Elected Members and employees is similarly governed by the GDPR and must be handled with extreme care between line managers and HR, with personal files and other personal data always kept secure.

Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others (such as internal or external contractors tendering for work) who might use it in such a way.

3.7 Political Neutrality, Religious and Personal Beliefs

Employees of BFRS are required to demonstrate behaviours which allow us to work effectively with all sections of the community in an inclusive way. As such expressing the views and opinions of organisations which are not consistent with these values (such as the British National Party, EDL) will not be tolerated in BFRS.

Employee's personal political opinions, religious or other beliefs should not bring BFRS into disrepute or interfere with their work. Employees are expected to maintain political and other neutrality in the work they undertake. If they are required to advise political groups, they must do so in a way which does not compromise this.

BFRS will not hesitate to act against unlawful, unfair discrimination or other unacceptable behaviour by an employee.

Certain posts and grades are restricted politically under the provisions of the 'Local Government & Housing Act'. This includes employees giving advice on a regular basis to the Authority, and/or speaking on behalf of the Authority. A complete list of politically restricted posts is held by Human Resources who should be contacted if you are uncertain. These postholders are subject to prescribed restrictions on their political activity. These are likely to be more senior posts within the organisation and these restrictions will not therefore apply to the majority of our employees. Where applicable such posts will be stated in the employees Contract of Employment where further details of the restrictions will be included.

Examples of roles that are politically restricted include the Principal Officer Team comprising the Chief Fire Officer, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Officer - Finance & Section 151 Officer, the

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Secretary/Monitoring Officer, Corporate Management Team members, the Communications and Engagement Team and Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager.

The main implications set out below are that employees cannot:

- Be a Member of a Local Authority except a Town or Parish Council;
- Be a member of the House of Commons;
- Hold office in a political party if it requires they participate in general management or act on behalf of the party;
- Canvass on behalf of a political party;
- Speak or write in support of or on behalf of a political party. This does not apply to Town or Parish Council level.

3.8 Relationships

Fire Authority Members

Employees are responsible and accountable to the Chief Fire Officer through the Service management structure. Mutual respect between employees and Fire Authority Members is essential to the conduct of Authority / Service business and to Service delivery.

Local Community and Service Users

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community that the Authority / Service serve. All employees should ensure that they are courteous, efficient and impartial in the delivery of services to all groups and individuals.

Contractors

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known by employees in line with the Service's [Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures \(V11 01/01\)](#). Contracts must be awarded on merit, following fair competition, and no special favour must be shown during the process of competition to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives. No potential supplier should be discriminated against.

Personal Relationships

Close personal familiarity between individuals in the workplace can damage professional relationships and prove embarrassing to other employees. Where such relationships develop, the individuals concerned should be sensitive to colleagues' feelings and continue to carry out their duties professionally and properly.

Employees are encouraged to disclose their relationship to their Line Manager who will assess the risk(s) before taking any action. Consideration will be given to the

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nature and frequency of contact between the employees involved, the impact on the quality of service provided, how the relationship influences operational decisions, the impact on colleagues and any specific health and safety risks to employees.

In exceptional circumstances, for example:

- Where one of the individuals has supervisory/management responsibility for the other, or
- Where one of the individuals has access to confidential and/or sensitive information, or
- Where one of the individuals has access to certain resources or can influence decision making which may affect the other and following completion of a risk assessment, it may be necessary to transfer one or both parties to another team or workplace or take other action as may be deemed necessary.

Working relationships between Members and officers should be kept on a professional basis. Close personal familiarity between Service employees and elected Members can damage professional relationships and could be prejudicial to the interests of the Service and must therefore be avoided.

Any inappropriate behaviour may lead to relevant formal action being taken.

Employees must ensure that they are not involved in a recruitment appointment procedure where they are related to an applicant or with whom they have a personal/close relationship.

If employees have a direct line management relationship with an employee with whom they are related or have a personal/close relationship and that line management responsibility is to remain, they must not have any influence or involvement in such matters as disciplinary and grievance proceedings; pay; training; promotion; reimbursement of expenses, regarding that person.

If employees are in such a position or have the potential to be in such a position, they are required to disclose the matter to an appropriate manager who will make appropriate arrangements so that a conflict of interests does not occur. If in doubt raise the issue anyway.

Roles and Responsibilities

Managers

Managers have a responsibility to set a good example for employees through their own behaviour and attitudes, especially in relation to upholding the Core Code of Ethics, Service Values and Professional Behaviours. Managers should ensure that they understand their responsibilities under relevant legislation, policies and procedures, maintaining the principles of accountability, continuous improvement, fairness, flexibility and inclusion in the workplace.

Managers should ensure that employees who report to them understand performance standards expected from them and objectively assess their performance against these standards.

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Managers must ensure that relevant legislation and BFRS policies and procedures are accessible to all employees in their workgroup.

Managers should ensure that all employees who report to them are familiar with the requirements and objectives of their job, and have access to the information, training, supervision, feedback and work conditions needed to achieve them.

Managers should be honest and objective in reporting the skills and qualities of employees in testimonials, references and performance reports, ensuring their decisions can be substantiated against objective standards and indicators.

Managers are required to act promptly, thoroughly and fairly when responding to, or investigating grievances and reports of breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Managers must be able to justify their instructions and decisions in line with their delegations, authority, and BFRS policies and procedures, and be open and respond promptly to constructive questions.

To avoid any accusation of bias, managers must not be involved in the appointment of any applicant if they are a relative or friend to them. Similarly, they must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee who is a relative, partner or friend. If managers are in any doubt, they should discuss the matter with their manager.

All employees

Employees are expected to follow all reasonable and lawful instructions related to their work given by a person with the authority to issue such instructions.

Employees should accept that they may not personally agree with all decisions made by their Line Manager and act professionally.

Employees may refuse to comply with an instruction that appears to be unlawful to them and report the matter to an appropriate senior manager. They should tell the person giving an unlawful instruction that the instruction is, in their view, unlawful and allow them the opportunity to respond. In the interim, employees are generally required to carry out the instruction unless:

- There is a danger to a person's health and safety; or
- A conflict of interest may exist; or
- It does not comply with BFRS policy and practice.

If employees object to an instruction on genuine conscientious grounds, or if there may be a perceived conflict with a professional code of ethics, they should attempt to negotiate and resolve the matter with their manager to achieve a mutually acceptable solution. If a local resolution is unable to be reached, refer the issue to the relevant Corporate Management Team (CMT) Member.

3.9 Gifts, Rewards and Entertainment

Any gifts, rewards or entertainment received or offered from clients, public officials, suppliers or other business contacts should be notified immediately to the

Governance Team for recording centrally. In certain circumstances, it may not be appropriate to retain such gifts or be provided with the entertainment and employees and associated persons may be asked to return the gifts to the sender or refuse the entertainment, for example, where there could be a real or perceived conflict of interest.

3.10 Appointment and other Employment Matters

Employees involved in recruitment and promotion of staff must ensure that appointments to posts are made on the outcome of a relevant selection process. An appointment which is based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post may be unlawful. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship outside work with them.

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a friend, relative or partner, etc.

3.11 Personal Interests

Employees must declare any financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with the Service's interests, for example work for which a fee is received. Similarly, employees must also declare non-financial interests which could conflict with the Service's interests, for example being involved in an official capacity with an outside organisation. The declaration should be made to HR who will seek guidance where necessary.

3.12 Use of Financial Resources

Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money for the Service and the local community.

3.13 Alcohol and Substances

It is paramount that employees are able to carry out their duties without compromising the health or safety of themselves and others. They are therefore not permitted to consume alcohol or other substances such as illegal drugs, solvents etc, or misuse prescribed drugs at work or on duty (including managerial duty and standby/callout) or during a period which would affect their fitness for work e.g. in the period before work or duty starts.

Employees on the Retained Duty System must not respond to calls or attend practical activities if they are or could be affected by the consumption of alcohol or drugs. For example, if they have consumed more than the legal limit of alcohol for driving purposes; an alcoholic drink has left them feeling unfit for duty.

Employee's must never drive Fire Service vehicles or operate equipment when unfit to do so due to the effects of drugs and alcohol.

If employees would like help, support or advice in reducing or giving up alcohol and/or drugs or other substances then please contact the Occupational Health for more details.

3.14 Sponsorship

If employees are involved in the seeking or receiving of sponsorship for BFRS activities, they must ensure that sponsorship is not accepted in circumstances where the integrity of BFRS may be seen to be being compromised.

Also, if employees are involved in awarding sponsorship or grant aid on behalf of BFRS, they should ensure that they give impartial advice and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

Sponsorship on a personal basis for charitable causes is allowed.

3.15 Outside Commitments

Any additional/secondary employment undertaken must not, in the view of BFRS, conflict with the interests of BFRS or in any way weaken public confidence in its conduct/bring BFRS into disrepute. Employees must declare personal interests (both financial and non- financial) or membership of any organisations which could conflict with the interests of BFRS to their Line Manager who will seek guidance.

Employees must not hold any other office or employment for gain or reward or carry on any trade or business without the express permission of BFRS. This may be granted subject to any restrictions or conditions BFRS thinks fit. See [V10 05/07 Secondary Employment Policy and Procedure](#) for further information.

If employees are employed on the Retained Duty System certain illnesses and injuries may mean that firefighting is excluded whilst their primary employment is unaffected.

3.16 Disclosure of Criminal Investigation or Charge

If employees are subject to a criminal investigation, arrested or charged with any criminal offence, they must follow the Service's Disciplinary Procedure relating to such matters.

3.17 Conflict of Interest

If a conflict occurs between an employee's private interests and public duties, they must resolve the conflict in favour of their public duties.

Employees must advise their Line Manager in writing of any personal or immediate private interests that may give rise to a conflict of interest with their official duties,

particularly if they are involved in making decisions affecting contracting, tendering or regulatory functions.

Employees should comply with any reasonable request from the Service to provide information relating to their personal interests or the interests of a dependent or spouse.

Decisions regarding any breach of this Code will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

3.18 Conduct Outside of Work

The Service does not seek to dictate how employees conduct themselves in their personal lives outside of work. However, unlawful, anti-social or other conduct by employees which may jeopardise the Service's reputation or position may be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure.

3.19 Compliance with Service Policies and Procedures

Employees must comply at all times with the Service Values, Professional Behaviours and the Core Code of Conduct as well as Service policies and procedures which will be brought to their attention and are available on the Service's intranet. Employment policies include the [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure \(V10 18/01\)](#), [Grievance Policy and Procedure \(V10 06/01\)](#), [Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure \(V10 06/07\)](#) etc., which contribute to the legality and probity of everything the Service does.

Breaches by employees of these policies and procedures is a serious matter and will be dealt with accordingly.

3.20 Disciplinary Action

A breach of any of the above provisions may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Service's [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure \(V10 18/01\)](#).

4 People Impact Assessment

Evidence shows no potential or actual differential impact. The policy is in line with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services.

5 Review

- 5.1 This Policy will be subject to review at 2 yearly intervals or following significant change to organisational structure, personnel, procedures or legislation, etc.



Bedfordshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Service Information System Policies and Procedures

Document Ref No: V10 06/04

Version: 2

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Issue date: 15.02.2023

Review date: 01.02.2025

Approved by: HHR