

## PBNI Code of Conduct for Staff

<b>Policy Identification</b>	
<b>Policy Ownership</b>	
Department:	Human Resources
Owner:	Head of Human Resources
Author:	Human Resources, Staff Officer
<b>Screening and Proofing</b>	
Section 75 screened:	28 January 2021
Human Rights proofed:	28 January 2021
<b>Consultation</b>	
	NAPO NIPSA
<b>Approval</b>	
SLT	9 February 2021
PPC:	26 February 2021
Board:	19 March 2021
<b>Version</b>	
Version:	2
Date of Issue:	1 April 2021
Implementation date:	1 April 2021
Review date:	1 April 2025

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## Document Control Sheet

### Document Amendment History

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
0.1	July 2016	First Draft
Final 1.0	November 2016	Final approved by Board
1.1	November 2020	First draft review
1.2	January 2021	Second draft post consultation
2	March 2021	Final approved by Board

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This document sets out the Code of Conduct for staff of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and forms part of the contractual relationship between PBNI and its staff. It sets out the standards and behaviours required of all PBNI employees and workers, (permanent, temporary, or fixed term, and whether employed directly by PBNI or through an agency).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Code is to protect PBNI and its staff in carrying out its functions, to provide clear information on the conduct and behaviour required and to encourage consistent standards throughout the organisation.
- 1.3 The code forms part of the broader collection of terms and conditions, legislation, practice standards and PBNI policies and procedures that are applicable to all staff.
- 1.4 Under their terms and conditions of employment, staff are expected to comply with this Code, in addition to all PBNI policies, procedures and processes.
- 1.5 PBNI has responsibilities as an employer and these are set out in its own Code of Practice.

## **2. Duties and Responsibilities**

- 2.1 Staff must familiarise themselves with the contents of the Code and act in accordance with the principles set out in it.
- 2.2 Staff must ensure that they understand this document and if they have any doubts about any aspect, they should in the first instance approach their Line Manager for clarification, and thereafter, the Human Resources Department.
- 2.3 It is important to note and understand that any breach of the terms of the Code will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the PBNI's Disciplinary Procedure or in the case of staff employed through an agency, an immediate termination of the placement.
- 2.4 Staff of PBNI have a duty:
  - to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law;  
and
  - to recognise ethical standards governing particular professionals, particularly those relating to the Social Work profession.
- 2.5 The Chief Executive, as accounting officer, has overall responsibility, working under the Board, for propriety in a broad sense, including conduct and discipline.

### **3 Principles and Values**

This Code builds on, and is in keeping with PBNI's Core Values as set out in its Corporate Plan and the Seven Principles of Public Life outlined by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. PBNI staff must abide by and demonstrate commitment to these principles and values in the course of their employment.

#### **3.1 The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)**

##### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

##### **Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

##### **Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

##### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

##### **Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

##### **Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects public interests.

##### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the public and to ensure the integrity of PBNI in conducting business.

## 3.2 PBNI Core Values

PBNI's aim is 'Changing Lives for Safer Communities'.

Our core vision statement is:

'We will lead in the reduction of reoffending by tackling the root causes of offending behaviour and rehabilitating people. We will be collaborative and transformative to reduce the number of victims of crime and building safer communities'.

Our organisational values are key to our way of working and outline how members of the public, service users and staff can expect to be treated when engaging with PBNI. Our values are supported by guiding principles. Our values act as the foundation for our principles:

### **Respect**

We will treat everyone with respect and dignity at all times and value diversity and differing viewpoints.

### **Integrity**

We will act in a way that engenders trust with all. We will be honest in what we say and do.

### **Openness**

We will encourage people to speak up and make suggestions about practice and we will be open about our decision-making.

### **Accountability**

We will be accountable for our decisions and actions.

## 3.3 Guiding Principles

### **Recognising and encouraging people's capacity to change**

We believe all people, given the right circumstances, have the ability to transform their lives.

### **Partnership and Collaborative Working**

We value partnership and collaboration across statutory, community and voluntary sectors and where appropriate the private sector.

### **Equality and Diversity**

We recognise, understand and respond to peoples unique needs.

### **Professionalism of Staff**

We will carry out our role professionally adhering to professional standards and do our jobs effectively.

## **4. Accountability**

### 4.1 Staff of PBNI should be aware:

- of their accountability (through the management structure) to the Board
- of the respective roles of PBNI and its sponsor department, the Department of Justice as set out in the Management Statement along with its associated Financial Memorandum.
- that the Minister responsible for PBNI is ultimately accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly for its independence, effectiveness and efficiency.

4.2 PBNI staff should at all times conduct themselves with integrity, impartiality and honesty and must display the highest standards of behavior in all dealings with members of the public, service users and colleagues. They must not deceive or knowingly mislead the Board, Government Departments, Ministers, the Assembly or the public.

4.3 Staff are, at all times, expected to use their best endeavours to promote and protect the interests of PBNI and must perform their duties and exercise powers vested in them in a manner which is consistent with the principles and core values set out in Section 3. They must avoid acting in a manner, which is likely to be, or is detrimental to the effective operation of its business, reputation or undermine public trust and confidence in the proper discharge of its functions.

4.4 PBNI staff are accountable for the quality of their work and should where possible, take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.

## **5. Conflicts of interest**

5.1 PBNI staff must not misuse their official position, or information acquired in the course of their official duties, to further their private interests or those of others.

5.2 In carrying out their duties, PBNI staff must ensure that private interests do not influence their decisions or actions in any way and must not use their position, or PBNI's activities to obtain a personal or business financial gain or some other advantage either for themselves or for others.

5.3 Where a conflict of interest arises, PBNI staff must declare the interest to the Human Resources Department so that a decision can be made on the best way to proceed.

5.4 In considering the need to declare an interest, PBNI staff must be mindful of whether or not it may reasonably be perceived that any such interest could influence their judgement.

5.5 Staff are required to keep their interests under review and consider whether a declaration must be made as those interests and/or their role within PBNI change or develop over time.

5.6 If staff have not sought advice, and information becomes known through other means, PBNI has the right to consider the potential conflict of interest and to determine any action which should be taken.

## **6. Objectivity and Impartiality**

- 6.1 PBNI staff must not allow their personal views to determine any advice they give or course of action they take in their work.
- 6.2 While PBNI recognises and respects the rights of all employees to hold personal or political opinions, employees should ensure that the expression of those opinions does not constitute a conflict of interest for their role within PBNI. This also extends to the use of social media outside of work (please refer to PBNI's Social Media policy)
- 6.3 All contacts with the media should generally be handled through PBNI's Communications Department. In that context, PBNI staff must not make any public statements, or publish or broadcast any material, which may, or may not, involve the disclosure of official information, or draw upon experience gained in their official capacity, without the prior approval of the Communications Department.
- 6.4 It is essential that all PBNI stakeholders and the public should have confidence that the personal views of PBNI staff do not improperly influence the discharge of their official duties. The purpose of the rules governing political activities is to allow staff the greatest possible freedom to participate in public affairs without infringing these fundamental principles. The rules are concerned with political activities that are liable to give public expression to political views, rather than the privately held beliefs and opinions.
- 6.5 Employees who have concerns about whether or not there is a potential conflict of interest should raise the matter with an appropriate manager.

## **7. Integrity**

- 7.1 Staff of PBNI should conduct themselves with honesty and impartiality in the exercise of their duties, should always act in a way that is professional and that deserves and retains the confidence of all those with whom they have dealings.
- 7.2 In general employees' private interests must not be such as to have the potential for allegations of impropriety or partiality to be sustained thereby bringing PBNI into disrepute.
- 7.3 As a consequence, staff should never receive benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be thought to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. In this field, perception is as important as reality. For further guidance, please refer to PBNI's Procedures and Guidance on the Provision of Hospitality, Gifts and Events.
- 7.4 Under the Bribery Act 2010 employees of public bodies may be required to prove that the receipt of payment or other consideration from someone seeking to obtain a contract is not corrupt.
- 7.5 PBNI staff must not only be honest in fact, but must also ensure that no act, omission or error leaves them open to any reasonable suspicion of dishonesty.

- 7.6 PBNI staff have a duty to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law and to recognise ethical standards governing particular professions.
- 7.7 PBNI staff must at all times act in a professional manner to colleagues, employees and customers and be mindful of their actions, language and general conduct. In particular, staff must not be verbally or physically abusive, make derogatory remarks, display offensive written/pictorial materials, or make discriminatory statements. For the avoidance of doubt, this also extends to the use of social media outside of work. Please refer to PBNI's Social Media policy for further guidance.
- 7.8 Staff of PBNI who deal with the public should do so as sympathetically, efficiently and promptly as possible, and without bias or maladministration. The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct and service from all PBNI staff.

## **8. Use of resources, including financial resources**

- 8.1 Staff of PBNI should try, at all times, to ensure the proper, economic, effective and efficient use of resources, having proper regard to the best interests of the public.
- 8.2 PBNI staff must strive to ensure value for money, to safeguard public resources, and in so doing avoid the basis for any successful legal challenge to PBNI or damage to PBNI's reputation.
- 8.3 The procurement of goods, works and services should be based on value for money, having due regard to propriety and regularity. Please refer to PBNI's Procurement Policy for further guidance.
- 8.4 Whilst there is a responsibility on PBNI to provide appropriate training as required Officers must ensure that they understand and are competent in the financial procedures relating to their role.
- 8.5 Staff must adhere to the highest principles of integrity and, in particular, they must comply with all relevant PBNI rules in relation to expenses, travelling and mileage allowances.
- 8.6 Staff should be mindful that serious or recurring non-compliance with PBNI rules will constitute a breach to the terms of the Code and will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the PBNI's Disciplinary Procedure or in the case of staff employed through an agency, an immediate termination of the placement
- 8.7 Staff are expected to conduct their private financial affairs in a judicious manner. If a member of staff becomes bankrupt or insolvent, they must at once inform the Human Resources Department. Failure to do so is a disciplinary offence. Staff will be required to submit such details as may be required. If public funds have been, or are likely to have been involved (but not otherwise), suspension may be considered. If there is evidence that public funds have been misappropriated, PBNI will consider prosecution. Staff who are bankrupt or insolvent, may be removed from duties where the handling of public funds is involved.

8.8 Staff are personally responsible for the safekeeping of security passes, information, documents, and equipment which may be issued or entrusted to them in the course of their duties. Loss or damage of a pass or any such material must be reported promptly to PBNI's IT Department. Likewise all such material must be returned promptly on the termination of employment.

## 9. Confidentiality

9.1 In the course of their duties with PBNI, staff are required to exercise due care in all matters relating to the acquisition, compilation, use, storage, retrieval, transfer or disposal of confidential information in line with such instructions and guidance as may from time to time be issued by management.

9.2 Such instructions and guidance will reflect PBNI's adherence to and obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations. (GDPR)

9.3 It is a condition of their employment (or placement in the case of agency workers), that staff agree to be bound by the provisions set out in PBNI's [Confidential Information](#) Agreement.

9.4 Staff shall not, except as authorised by the appropriate line manager or as required in the normal course of their duties, use for their own benefit, gain or interest, or divulge by any means or by any method of communication to any person, organisation or body whatsoever, confidential information acquired by them in the course of their employment/placement with PBNI.

9.5 The protection of confidential information is an important part of PBNI's business. If at any time staff are unsure how to deal with a particular issue, they should consult their line manager before disclosing the information concerned.

9.6 The unauthorised disclosure of confidential information is a significant matter and such disclosure is likely to merit serious consideration and appropriate action which can include consideration under the Board's disciplinary procedure or immediate termination of the placement in the case of agency workers.

## 10. Data Protection

10.1 Staff of PBNI should be aware of their obligations under the Data Protection Act (2018) and Freedom of Information Act (2000) as set out in PBNI's Data Protection Policy.

10.2 In short, all information held by PBNI, including the personal information of employees and service users, will be fairly and lawfully processed to enable PBNI to comply with its legislative and policy responsibilities in this area.

10.3 All staff of PBNI are responsible for applying the correct procedures when dealing with the information that they process and hold. For further guidance on this subject, please refer to PBNI's Data Protection Policy.

## **11. Dress Code**

11.1 PBNI does not operate a formal dress code for its employees, however employees must ensure that their dress is appropriate for the situation in which they are working and that they present a professional image to the public and service users.

## **12. Staff concerns about improper conduct**

12.1 PBNI is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of quality, honesty, openness and accountability in all of its practices.

12.2 If staff of PBNI believe that they are being required to act in a way or have concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice which:

- is improper, illegal or unethical
- is in breach of a professional code
- may involve possible maladministration, fraud or misuse of public funds
- is otherwise inconsistent with this Code

they can raise the matter through the routes outlined in PBNI's Whistleblowing Policy.

## **13. After leaving employment**

13.1 Owing to the nature of the services provided by PBNI, disclosures of confidential information may have implications for individuals and the public over many years.

Staff should therefore continue to observe their duty of confidentiality after they have left PBNI, regardless of how or why their employment or placement ended.

## **14. Linkages**

The Code of Conduct links with the following:

- PBNI's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- PBNI's Social Media Policy
- PBNI's Procedures and Guidance on the Provision of Hospitality, Gifts and Events.
- PBNI's Procurement Policy
- PBNI's Data Protection Policy
- PBNI's Confidential Information Agreement.
- PBNI's Whistleblowing Policy