

Code of Conduct FAQs

Standards of Behaviour

Q1. What are the Civil Service Values and what do they mean for Parole Board Staff?

As an NDPB we are aligned to the Civil Service values which are:

- 'Integrity' is putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests
- 'Honesty' is being truthful and open
- 'Objectivity' is basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence; and
- 'Impartiality' is acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well Governments of different political persuasions.

Q2. What are the Nolan Committee Standards?

Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (May 1995)

- Selflessness: Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- 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 public interest clearly demands.
- Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Q3. What happens if I breach the Code of Conduct?

The Parole Board operates a zero tolerance policy which means that we will:

- Always investigate and treat allegations of unacceptable behaviour seriously; and
- Take action appropriate to how serious the breach of the code is.

Q4. What would constitute unacceptable conduct?

Serious breaches of any of the Parole Board's policies relating to an individual's conduct. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Health and Safety offences
- Insubordination
- Failure to obey reasonable instructions, including Board policies, procedures and financial regulations
- Unauthorised absences, including abuse of holiday provisions
- Misuse of Board facilities or property including computer facilities e.g. inappropriate use of the internet
- Misuse or improper release of confidential information, including breaches of the Data Protection Act
- Timekeeping problems
- Failure to treat a person or group with an appropriate level of respect and dignity
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone.
- Misuse of power or position such as making impossible work demands or providing too much unnecessary supervision
- Having another job without permission or working for someone else when you are contracted to work for the Parole Board, for example, during sickness or study leave
- Membership of an organisation which has secrecy about rules, or membership and conduct which leads you to behave in a way that has a negative effect on the Parole Board or seriously affects the way in which you carry out your work.

Q5. What would constitute gross misconduct?

Particularly serious breaches of any of the above may be regarded as gross misconduct, which can be defined as actions considered so unacceptable that they may lead to dismissal for a first offence. Additionally, gross misconduct could include but is not limited to:

- Theft, fraud and deliberate falsification of records
- Physical violence or assault
- Deliberate damage to property
- Fraudulent misuse of the Board's property or name
- Abuse of authority or status for personal gain
- Serious incapability brought on by alcohol or drug abuse
- Serious negligence which causes or might cause loss, damage or injury
- Serious breach of confidence and trust, including actions bringing the Parole Board into disrepute
- Harassment or bullying of colleagues or other persons, especially when associated with a protected characteristic as defined under the Equality Act 2010, for example; race, sex, disability, religion/belief or sexual orientation.
- Serious negligence which causes loss, damage or injury

This is not a full list and unacceptable behaviour related to harassment, bullying or victimisation could take place face-to-face, on the phone, by email or letter. If you are not sure what is acceptable conduct you should get advice from your line manager.

Q6. What happens if my behaviour and conduct does not meet the high standards as set out in the Code of Conduct?

If your conduct and behaviour does not meet the high standards set out in the Code of Conduct, your manager will take appropriate action to stop the misconduct continuing and to prevent it from happening in the future. Managers will use the disciplinary procedure if they feel that it is necessary. If you keep breaking the conduct policy or you break it in a serious way you may receive a formal warning or be dismissed without notice.

Q7. How do I report poor conduct?

If you decide to report unacceptable behaviour or conduct to your manager then your manager will decide on the best way to deal with the complaint. This can include mediation or, if this is not possible or has been tried and has failed, the disciplinary policy may be applied.

You may also raise a concern about wrongdoing under the Whistleblowing Procedure if your concern is in the public interest meaning that the issue must affect others, for example, the organisation, work colleagues or the general public.

Q8. How do I report my manager?

If you decide that your manager's behaviour or conduct is unacceptable then you should report this to your manager's manager (countersigning officer) or a manager that you feel you can trust.

Q9. How do I make an official complaint?

If you feel you need to make an official complaint, you may do so using the grievance procedure. If your complaint is a very serious and one that you believe is in the public interest, you may be able to raise the complaint through the Whistleblowing procedure.

Fraud

Q10. What is fraud and what will happen if I commit fraud in the workplace?

Fraud is a criminal offence under the Fraud Act 2006, which came into force on 15 January 2007. There are three ways in which fraud can be committed:

- False representations;
- Failure to reveal information when there is a legal duty to do so; and
- Abuse of position.

In each case a person must plan to make a gain for themselves or another, or to cause loss to another, or expose another to a risk of loss. The Fraud Act applies to offences committed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but does not include Scotland.

We will investigate any case we suspect involves fraud or corruption. Each employee is responsible for taking appropriate preventative measures to reduce and manage the risk of fraud. If you suspect fraud is being committed, you should speak to your line manager immediately or follow the guidance in the Whistleblowing procedure.

Dress Code

Q11. Why do we need a dress code?

The main reason for introducing a dress code is to bring everyone onto a common platform where the dress of an employee does not create a division or the perception of a physical divide. Other benefits are:

- Creating a team atmosphere;
- Engendering standards of professionalism, and
- Creating a corporate image.
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Q12. What happens if my religion requires me to dress a certain way?

The Parole Board acknowledges that members of certain groups may be subject to strict religious or cultural requirements in terms of their clothing and appearance. Contingent upon necessary health and safety requirements, the Parole Board will not insist on dress rules which run counter to the cultural norms of religious groups and those with beliefs protected under The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. If you are uncertain as to whether items of clothing are acceptable or not, please speak to your manager.

Q13. What happens if I can't follow policy due to a medical condition?

If an employee is pregnant or has a medical condition then it may be necessary to make exceptions to this policy to enable them to wear clothing or footwear that is appropriate to their needs. If these circumstances apply to you please speak to your manager.

Q14. What happens if I don't adhere to the dress code?

An employee who deliberately and persistently disregards these rules may be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, where an employee's appearance is, in the opinion of his or her manager, unacceptable, the employee will be required to return home to change. In these circumstances, the employee risks not being paid for the duration of his/her absence from work and/or required to make up the hours.

Internet, email and mobile phones

Q15. What is Quantum?

Quantum is the name given to the partnership arrangement Enterprise Services to provide IT and telephony systems to the Parole Board. The GSI (Government Secure Intranet) connects the Core System to other services with the Criminal Justice System and other government departments.

Q16. Throughout the documents it refers to the Board being bound to PSI 9010. Can we be bound by the PSI as an independent body?

We are bound by PSO 9010 when we use Quantum. This has been confirmed by Quantum and the Parole Board IT department. If we had an IT Security Policy which was more stringent than PSO9010, we would not be bound. This should not affect our judicial independence.

Q17. Can I use the internet for personal use?

Internet access has been supplied for use in relation to your work, but reasonable private use, not involving commercial gain or other inappropriate activities, is permitted, as long as it does not interfere with the performance of your duties, does not take priority over work responsibilities and does not bring the reputation of the service into question. Private access to the internet is only permitted during lunch breaks or when you've finished work for the day.

Access to the internet is intended for official use and must not be used in ways which could expose the Quantum network to hostile attack or which may cause offence to other users. Access to the internet is restricted to a list of 'approved' website.

Q18. Can I use my work email account to send personal emails?

Email has been supplied for use in relation to your work and we would prefer that your Parole Board email address was not used for private matters. However, we do understand that from time to time, you may need to send or receive personal email via your Parole Board account. Limited private use in exceptional circumstances is therefore permitted as long as it does not involve personal gain or other inappropriate activities.

Q19. Mobile phones- if I can't use my phone at work then how can urgent calls reach me?

Whilst you are at work, you are being paid to undertake Parole Board work. In most situations you should not need to access your mobile phone during work hours. The use of your mobile phone is not allowed in the workplace, however you have the freedom to use your phone during your lunch break.

As with many other situations there may be an occasion when you need to take an important call during working hours. We ask that you inform your manager so that he or she can exercise their discretion in allowing such calls to be made or received. If you do take a call without your manager's permission, which you believe is an urgent call, then you must inform your manager after you have taken the call so that he or she knows that the call was a necessity and not an issue of lost productivity.

If you are worried that your family and those close to you may not be able to reach you in case of an emergency then it may be sensible to ensure that you provide them with a telephone number to call in such circumstances. This number may be your work telephone number, your manager's number or the Human Resources Team for example.

Attendance

Q20. If I am sick what should I do?

If you are sick you should follow the Absence Management policy and call your line manager as early as possible but in any event, no later than 10am. You should explain the broad nature of your illness, whether you have sought medical advice and your likely date of return. You should also advise of any urgent work that needs to be covered during your absence. Your line manager will agree with you how often you should make contact and the method of keeping in touch. You should not leave a voicemail message, instead

you should speak to another manager or to the Human Resources team. You are requested to keep a note available at home of:

- Your line manager's office number
- Another manager's office number or someone who can pass on a message
- The Human Resources team office

Working for yourself and other organisations

Q21. Why do I need to get written permission from my manager if I want to get a second job?

You will need to get written permission from your manager before taking up another job, whether paid or unpaid, while you are employed by us. This is because your manager needs to make sure that it does not:

- Affect you negatively because it breaks the Working Time Regulations or health and safety regulations;
- Have a negative effect on your work with the Parole Board; or
- Conflicts with your role, or is detrimental to the Parole Board's interests, or damages public confidence in the Parole Board.