



Public Health  
England

# Public Health England Code of Conduct for Staff

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## Introduction

Public Health England (PHE):

- is the expert national public health agency which fulfils the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's statutory duty to protect health and address health inequalities, and executes the Secretary of State's power to promote the health and wellbeing of the nation
- is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Care and the authoritative national voice and expert service provider for public health
- is an organisation whose culture and values will demonstrate scientific, clinical and analytical rigour, and which is dedicated to providing impartial and objective advice, evidence and expert judgement and taking action on the basis of the best available evidence
- will have operational autonomy. It will be free to publish information and advice it obtains from any source and provide it to whomever it wants

This Code of Conduct incorporates both the [Civil Service Code](#), which also applies to all our staff, and professional regulation responsibilities.

This Code of Conduct applies to all staff employed by PHE, secondees, agency staff and individuals holding honorary contracts.

All staff must abide by this Code of Conduct as it is a contractual responsibility and therefore forms part of an individual's contract of employment. This PHE Code applies to all staff employed by PHE, secondees, agency staff and individuals holding honorary contracts.

## PHE shall:

- lead on the design, delivery and maintenance of systems to improve health and protect the population against existing and future threats to health
- operate transparently, providing expert, evidence-based information, advice and services to national and local government, public health professionals and the public, showing national leadership for the public health system
- commission and deliver safe and effective services for which it is responsible and public health programmes across the whole life course and across care pathways
- lead on the development of a science and research strategy for the public's health, vibrant educational programmes for under and post-graduates and continuing professional development

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- transform the public health system to rely on a strong and capable workforce, building on the core professionalism and high standards of current practice while working in new ways and with new partners
- be an organisation which operates with the highest standards of professional and scientific independence, rigour and integrity; for example, there will be no barrier to PHE staff joining relevant committees subject to the usual selection procedures and processes, or being a member of any appropriate professional body
- ensure all staff are aware of policy and guidance on the development and delivery of scientific and clinical advice
- appoint jointly with local government the best and most able directors of public health and support them professionally
- work with the Local Government Association to ensure that the interests of local government, as a key element of the new public health system, are fully represented in the development of standards and ways of working

## **PHE staff shall:**

- discharge our statutory functions effectively, efficiently and economically and in line with principles of sustainability
- accept and comply with PHE terms and conditions of employment and associated policies and procedures, including this Code of Conduct and the Civil Service Code
- encourage an ethical culture by committing to uphold the standards governing our own professions and respecting those of other professional groups
- be accountable through the relevant PHE Director to the Chief Executive. In this the Chief Executive is supported by the PHE Advisory Board and PHE Leadership Team. Arrangements will be put in place for professional accountability to the relevant professional lead
- adhere and abide by the standards of competence, honesty, integrity and other professional behaviours as defined by our respective professional bodies or regulatory bodies and retain the freedom and duty to follow their professional codes.
- conduct ourselves openly and transparently, with integrity, impartiality and honesty - we shall never deceive or knowingly mislead others including customers, the public, colleagues, the Department of Health and Social Care, Ministers or Parliament

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- demonstrate our understanding of and commitment to the Civil Service and PHE values and standards of behaviour (The PHE People Charter – attached as Appendix 1), alongside our relevant professional codes, which will be assessed through our recruitment, selection and appraisal processes
- not misuse our official position or information acquired in our official duties to further our private interests or those of others. Private relationships with colleagues are acceptable as long as they do not give rise to conflicts with our duties at work. Any situation where bias would or could reasonably appear to have influenced any decisions or outcomes must be avoided. This means that staff must not manage or undertake management action (e.g. take part in a selection exercise) in respect of partners or relatives
- comply with the PHE Conflict of Interest Policy
- deal with public enquiries efficiently, promptly and without bias or maladministration and offer the public the highest standards of conduct and service
- provide objective information to the public at the earliest appropriate stage to enable them to make decisions about improving or protecting their health, giving the greatest regard to the public's interest when deciding what information to place in the public domain and when to do so
- be aware of all PHE policies and guidance, for example PHE media handling guidance, refer all media calls from the outset to the PHE Communications Directorate and involve the PHE Communications Directorate in all activities which may require media handling. Similarly, all Freedom of Information (FOI) requests must be referred to PHE's Public Accountability function in the Corporate Affairs Directorate. Nothing in this Code shall, however, override professional, statutory or common law obligations to keep confidential or to disclose certain information
- many staff are also covered by a number of professional bodies for example, General Medical Council (GMC), General Dental Council (GDC), Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) and The Society for Radiological Protection (SRP); these are not part of an individual's contract of employment, but are recognised as having a valuable role for those staff covered by them. PHE welcomes and supports those who are registered with a regulatory body

## Rights and responsibilities

- PHE has a duty to make you aware of the PHE Code of Conduct, and of the Civil Service Code. If you believe that you are being required to act in a way which conflicts with this Code, PHE must consider and deal with your concern, and make sure that you are not penalised for raising it

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- You have a duty to speak openly and clearly to the public to improve the public's health to the best of your ability. This is consistent with PHE's role set out in this Code. The Civil Service Code reinforces this responsibility
- If you have a concern or become aware of actions by others which conflict with this Code of Conduct, you should start by talking to your line manager or someone else in your line management chain. If for any reason you would find this difficult, you should raise the matter with PHE's Speak Up Guardian or one of our Speak Up Advisors as set out in PHE's Raising Concerns including Whistleblowing Policy. These advisors, and your line managers, will always seek a way to resolve any concern you raise informally and through mutual agreement where appropriate and possible. You should report evidence of criminal or unlawful activity to the police or other appropriate regulatory authorities
- If you have raised a matter in accordance with this Code of Conduct, and do not receive what you consider to be a reasonable response, you should report the matter to the PHE Chief Executive (or the Chair of the PHE's Audit and Risk Committee, a non-executive member) in line with the process outlined in the PHE Raising Concerns including Whistleblowing Policy.