

Employee Code of Conduct



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in Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service www.rbfrs.co.uk

Introduction

Every employee is expected to behave in a professional manner and to offer the highest standards of service to the public. The way you carry out your duties must promote and maintain public confidence and trust in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

This Employee Code of Conduct provides a framework for your behaviour, decisions and actions as an employee of RBFRS. It is based on the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England which has been developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to support a consistent approach to ethics and behaviours across Fire Services in England.

It is not an exhaustive list of what you can and cannot do, but aims to help every member of our Service understand how to act in the right way in our service, to the public and towards each other. It is linked to the Behavioural Competency Framework which describes how the Employee Code of Conduct translates into expected behaviour.

The Code of Conduct is supported by a number of policies which are highlighted through this document.

If at any time you are unsure about the 'right thing to do', you can:

- refer to this Code of Conduct and/or any policies, procedures, guidance or local rules and requirements that apply to your job
- discuss the situation with your manager
- contact Human Resources
- consult the Duty Officer (out of hours)

This Code forms part of your contract of employment and you must comply with it. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal. It is your responsibility to read this code and work in accordance with it. This Code applies to all employees and anyone engaged by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Fire Authority Members have their own Code of Conduct as laid out in the Fire Authority Members Handbook.

Seven Guiding Principles of Conduct in RBFRS

There are seven guiding principles that should be upheld by all staff, these are summarised below and the described in more detail later in the document.

1. **Putting our Communities First** – we put the interests of the public, the community and services users first.
2. **Integrity** – you should act with integrity and be open, honest and consistent in everything that we do.
3. **Dignity and Respect** – we treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence without discrimination or bias. We continually recognise and promote the value of equality, diversity and inclusion, both within the Service 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 difference
4. **Accountability** – you are accountable for your behaviour, decisions and actions and challenge behaviour that falls short of the highest of standards. You must use any funds entrusted to you in a responsible and lawful way that ensures value for money for the local communities we serve, and always act in accordance with financial and procurement rules.
5. **Representing RBFRS** – present yourself at all times in a way that brings credit to the Service. Never speak to the press or publish articles about the Service without express permission.
6. **Leadership** – we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for our behaviour, decisions and actions, and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
7. **Political neutrality** – you must be politically neutral and unbiased at all times when at work. Our Members have been elected by local people to represent them. You must respect their position irrespective of the parties they represent or your own views.

1. Putting our Communities First

We are here to serve the public and put the interests of the community and service users first. You are expected to offer the highest standards of service to the public at all times and consider if working in collaboration with others will be beneficial.

The public have a right to the services we provide. Always strive to be the best public servant you can be. Treat members of the public with dignity and respect.

You must promote the Service's aims for equality and inclusion and where appropriate for your role. Consider the diverse needs of the community in your work and tailor your work to best meet their specific needs.

Be honest, impartial and independent at work, regardless of your personal views on a matter. If your personal views conflict with the performance of your official duties and you believe that you cannot act impartially, you must contact your line manager

2. Integrity

You should act with integrity and be open, honest and consistent in everything that you do. Never place yourself in a position where your honesty and integrity may be questioned and avoid conflicts of interest between your private interests and your public duties.

Make all decisions objectively and without bias, fairly, consistently and on merit. This includes when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards, benefits or opportunities and ensure that they are recorded appropriately.

Never use your position or authority to seek to improperly influence a decision or action or for your own personal gain, and be open, honest and fair in dealing with everyone.

You must avoid conflicts of interests between your private interests and your professional duties.

Accepting gifts and hospitality is not normally acceptable. We prohibit the giving or receiving of any gifts or hospitality that are excessive or improper.

However, a proportionate approach should be taken to gifts or hospitality if the item or gift is small or is of a marketing nature with branded advertising e.g. diaries, calendars, pens or boxes of chocolates, given spontaneously by individual members of the public to show their appreciation for the service given. It is also acceptable to accept paid-for lunches or other meals while carrying out RBFPS business, and the scale of the meal is modest.

Any gift or hospitality offered or accepted must be declared and recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Always work in accordance with the Service's policies regarding:

- [Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy](#)
- [Outside Employment/Work Policy](#)
- [Drug and Alcohol Policy](#)
- [Criminal and Traffic Offenses Policy](#)
- [Drivers Rules – Hours and Working Time Policy](#)

3. Dignity and Respect

We work together collaboratively as one team, treating others with dignity and respect. You should promote equality by never discriminating against any person

and by treating members of the public, elected Members and colleagues with respect regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability or political affiliation. While you may have personal views that are not those of RBFRS, you must ensure that these are not expressed in a way that brings the Service into disrepute or adversely impacts on your ability to do your job. The Service will show zero tolerance for bullying or harassment.

You must treat the public, elected members and colleagues with dignity and respect. We are one team all working for the benefit of the public. You must never discriminate against, harass or victimise any person. There is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying in this Service. The Service's [Behavioural Competency Framework](#) describes the acceptable behaviours for the workplace.

You should carry out all reasonable instructions given by your manager but you must report to your manager anything that impairs your ability to do your job.

Managers will ensure that you understand what is required of you at work and fairly and objectively appraise your performance, promote the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace and recognise your need to balance your life at work and away from work.

Always work in accordance with the Service's Policies regarding:

- [Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Hours Policy](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Action Plan](#)

You should promote equality by never discriminating against any person and by treating members of the public, elected Members and colleagues with respect regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability or political affiliation. You behave in a way that celebrates diversity in all its forms and provide an environment where everyone has an equal voice.

You must promote the Service's aims for equality and inclusion and where appropriate for your role. Consider the diverse needs of the community in your work and tailor your work to best meet their specific needs.

4. Accountability

Always be at work and performing Service duties when you should be and in accordance with your contractual requirements. Agree in advance with your manager any leave requests, additional working, etc. Notify your manager if you are unable to attend work for any reason.

Never do private work when you should be at work for the Service or when you are on sick leave.

If you wish to carry out secondary employment you must get your manager's written approval before undertaking other employment. Any other employment must not conflict with the interests of the Service. The Service's time and/or resources may not be used for other employment.

Public funds entrusted to you must be used in accordance with the [Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders](#)

Never use the Service's facilities, property or equipment inappropriately; or waste, damage or lose it.

You must handle information, including personal and sensitive data, in accordance with the Information Governance, Security and Sharing Policies.

You have a responsibility for your own health and safety and that of members of the public or colleagues who may be affected by what you do.

You are accountable for maintaining your operational and/or professional competence required for your role.

Always work in accordance with the Services Policies regarding:

- [Outside Employment/Work Policy](#)
- [Drugs and Alcohol Policy](#)
- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Acceptable use of IT Resources Policy](#)
- [Security Classification and Handling Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Personal Data Breach Policy](#)
- [Sickness Absence and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Operational Competence Policy](#)
- [Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy](#)

5. Representing RBFRS

Never act in a way that could discredit the Service or bring it into disrepute – whether on duty or not.

All employees should be considerate of their appearance and dress appropriately. Where uniforms are provided, these must be worn in line with the [Work Wear Policy](#).

Any requests for information from journalists must be referred to the Communications Team. You must not publish articles or views in print or on the internet without express permission.

When expressing personal views you must not appear to speak for the Service e.g. by referring to your role in the service.

Always work in accordance with the Service's Policies regarding:

- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Talking to the Media – A Guide for Staff](#)

6. Leadership

You should act as a positive role model and demonstrate flexible and resilient leadership.

You are accountable for your behaviour, decisions and actions and challenge behaviour that falls short of the highest standards. You must use any funds entrusted to you in a responsible and lawful way that ensures value for money for the local communities we serve, and always act in accordance with finance and procurement rules.

Managers should set a good example for employees through their promotion of these principles. In doing so managers will make sure employees know what is expected of them and fairly assess their performance, and provide employees with learning and development opportunities.

Managers are expected to treat all employees fairly and with dignity and respect.

Managers will consult and inform employees about change and on matters affecting the Service (in accordance with the Service's [Organisational Change Policy](#))

Employees can expect managers to clearly outline what is expected of them and provide regular feedback on how they are doing and provide employees with opportunities for training and development.

Managers have a duty of care to provide a safe and secure working environment.

7. Political Neutrality

In carrying out your work, you must be politically neutral. Your performance should be unbiased when carrying out your duties. You must not allow your personal and political views to interfere with your work.

Note: Courses are available on understanding and working with Fire Authority members.

Reporting breaches of the Code and Whistleblowing

We are committed the highest standards of public service. If you are concerned about any practice that you think conflicts with this Code, you should report these to your manager or Head of Service.

Alternatively you can report your concerns anonymously and confidentially using the Service's independent reporting line managed by Say-so.

You can contact Say-So, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, on 0800 321 3546 or on-line at www.say-so.co.uk.

Further details can be found in our [Whistleblowing Policy](#)

Author: Nikki Richards – Deputy Chief Executive (ver.2 December 2021)

