

Code of Conduct

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Code of Conduct

PHSO recognises that employees need clear guidelines as to the standards of behaviour and conduct expected of them. PHSO has a number of policies regarding matters such as; use of internet, dignity and respect and health and safety, etc. All employees, contractors and agents are expected to familiarise themselves with those policies and comply with them. In addition, this Code of Conduct sets out PHSO's standards of behaviour and defines levels of misconduct but does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of examples of misconduct. Employees should contact HR, People & Talent if they need further information or clarification.

PHSO core values

PHSO employees are expected to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the organisation's core values which support our objectives and ensure the achievement of the highest possible standards in all that we do. These values are:

Independence - we are independent from organisations we investigate, holding them to account for service failure or injustice.

Fairness - we listen carefully to complainants and the organisations we investigate and we make impartial and fair decisions based on relevant evidence.

Excellence - we learn from engagement with complainants and organisations we investigate to improve our accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness and the quality of our decisions

Transparency - we communicate with those using our service and then publish information about our findings, how we are performing, and how organisations we investigate have implemented our recommendations.

Rights and responsibilities

All employees have a right to:

- be treated with consideration and respect;
- speak out without fear of victimisation if they have been discriminated against, harassed or bullied, and expect their complaint to be dealt with promptly and fairly;

- raise concerns without fear of victimisation in accordance with the ‘Whistleblowing’ policy about serious misconduct within or by PHSO.

All employees have a responsibility to:

- maintain the appropriate degree of professionalism in all their actions at, on behalf of or relating to PHSO;
- behave in a way that reflects PHSO’s core values of independence, fairness, excellence and transparency;
- ensure at all times that they do not jeopardise the reputation of PHSO through their actions or omissions;
- ensure that confidentiality of information is preserved at all times, as appropriate;
- treat all colleagues, complainants and third party contacts, with consideration and respect;
- take prompt action if they witness or are made aware of discriminatory behaviour, harassment or bullying.

Comply with the PHSO policies and procedures in place.

Furthermore, PHSO requires that its employees:

- do not misuse information acquired in the course of their official duties nor disclose without authority information received in confidence from other individuals or organisations;
- do not accept gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind, that would be in contravention of the PHSO policy in effect.
- do not use alcohol or other intoxicants/substances in a way that results in incapacity for work, inappropriate behaviour or conduct, or jeopardises the reputation of PHSO;

do not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their work to further their personal interests or those of others, during or after their employment at PHSO. Any conflict of interest must be declared at the earliest opportunity and all employees are subject to the Official Secrets Act 1989;

- do not undertake any work, or accept any appointment, outside of PHSO (whether paid or unpaid) that may create a conflict of interest.

Relationships at work

PHSO recognises that relationships at work between colleagues are an inevitable fact of working life and, in most cases, contribute to constructive working relationships. Furthermore, employees are responsible adults, capable of managing any difficulties that arise, and PHSO has no wish to interfere in what is essentially a private matter.

The exception to this is when two employees form an intimate or personal relationship, or have a close family connection. This may interfere with work, or lead to a perception of unfairness or favouritism. Such a relationship must be disclosed to their line manager. PHSO reserves the right to transfer one or both employees, where reasonably practicable. Any such move will be subject to full consultation with both employees and any other parties concerned.

Levels of misconduct

There are 3 broad categories of misconduct:

- **Gross misconduct** - behaviour that damages the relationship between PHSO and the employee to the extent that continued employment may no longer be possible. May result in dismissal without notice (summary dismissal).
- **Serious misconduct** - behaviour that damages trust and confidence between PHSO and the employee but the damage is not necessarily irretrievable. May result in a First or Final Written Warning.
- **Minor misconduct** - unacceptable behaviour which, as an isolated incident, requires corrective action but does not in itself seriously damage the employment relationship. May result in a noted Oral warning or a First Written Warning.

The following is a list of examples of conduct which are likely to be regarded as gross misconduct where they occur; during work, at work, in connection with work, or where they can adversely affect work. Once the allegations have been investigated managers will take all relevant factors into account to determine which category the conduct falls within before deciding the appropriate sanction.

Examples of Potential Gross misconduct

- theft, dishonesty, or fraud;
- assault, act of violence, aggression or intimidation;
- unacceptable use of obscene or abusive language;
- possession or use of illegal substances on PHSO premises or during working hours;
- possession or consumption of alcohol on PHSO premises or during working hours, other than on occasions approved by the PHSO;
- under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances at work;
- wilful damage to the PHSO's property or the property of its employees or customers, suppliers or business partners;
- serious insubordination;
- falsification of records or other PHSO documents, including those relating to obtaining employment;
- discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation;
- refusal to carry out reasonable management instructions;
- bribery, corruption or tax evasion facilitation;
- acts of indecency;
- serious breach of the health and safety policies and procedures, or endangering the health and safety of a fellow employee, client or third party;
- breach of confidentiality, including the unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information or disclosure of PHSO business to the media or any other party, subject to PHSO Whistleblowing Policy;
- unauthorised access to or use of computer data or computer hardware;
- copying of computer software, other than when authorised in the normal course of employment;
- bringing PHSO into disrepute or conduct which is likely to bring PHSO into disrepute;
- serious breach of PHSO's policies or procedures, the Accreditation Handbook or regulatory requirements;
- serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage or injury; or
- conviction of a criminal offence (except for minor road traffic offences) that impacts on the suitability (or the perception of unsuitability) of an employee to do their job or their relationship with PHSO, their work colleagues or PHSO's customers, suppliers or business partners.

Policy information

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Related policies and guidance: Disciplinary Policy
Disciplinary Procedure
Managers' Training Notes
Recruitment Procedure
Conflict of Interest Policy
Social Media Policy
Anti-Fraud & Bribery Policy

Version control

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