

# Standards of Behaviour

## The key things that you need to know

- [Standards of Behaviour](#): Mutual trust is the foundation of the employment contract between the Department and all its employees. The Standards of Behaviour policy provides direction on how to behave to avoid any action that could compromise this trust. These Standards of Behaviour are rooted within the Civil Service Code.
- The Standards of Behaviour are summarised within [Serving the public](#): You must act professionally and in a way that is beyond reproach adhering to your business [dress standard](#)
- [Information Security](#): There are key elements of the standards expected of you that you must adhere to when accessing, processing and handling information securely and safely. ([DWP and Security Rules](#)):
  - You must read and make yourself aware of your responsibilities under the [Departmental policies](#) to safeguard information [handling Official Information](#) and [disclosure of Information](#) and [data handling policy](#) and follow Security rules that are based on the [Data Protection Act](#) . This includes protecting your passwords and smartcard.
  - Official Information and Access to Data.  
You must not use official information for any purpose other than that for which it is intended, irrespective of whether it is security marked or not, or of a sensitive nature. Only deal with information that you need for your work.  
Make sure documents and official information is locked away where appropriate and in line with business rules.
  - Disclosure of Official Information.  
All information is subject to disclosure rules whether protectively marked or not. This does not prevent you from accessing, processing, handling and sending information in line with policy, but you are required to stop and think whether you have the authority to do this. Information must only be disclosed to people who have a legitimate business interest in that information and you must ensure the security rules for the handling and disclosure of that information are applied and satisfied.  
You are expected to treat all official information and knowledge gained through your employment or in the course of your official duties according to the rules of [confidentiality](#), [protective markings](#), [handling official information](#) and [disclosure of information](#).

You must not use official information, whether security marked or not or of a sensitive nature for any purpose other than that for which it is intended. You must not pass it to any person who does not have a legitimate business interest without express permission of your line manager or if they are in doubt the author of the document. Grade 7 (Band F) managers and above do not need permission. Information should be sent safely.

- [Participation on-line on the internet](#) – Social Networking – Blogging. As a civil servant, when you are online on the internet whether at work or in your private life, you are expected to follow the standards of behaviour and, when using the Department's computer systems, the [Electronic Media Policy](#).
- [Data Provided to the DWP](#): The Department is provided with a large amount of information, which we hold on customers (members of the public), which must be kept accurately, confidentially and securely. You must never use your official position or information gained in the course of your official duties (such as phone numbers, addresses), without authority to contact customers for any purpose unrelated to DWP business.

You must keep in absolute confidence any data provided to the Department and use it only for authorised purposes. Before revealing any information make sure the other person is authorised to share it.

- [Computer Systems](#). You must use [Departmental computer systems](#) only for their designated purposes and in compliance with security controls
- [Criminal convictions](#): If you are charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence you must report this immediately to your manager
- [Financial matters](#): When dealing with financial matters, you must follow the Department's procedures. This will protect you from questions about impropriety, such as [acceptance of gifts, rewards or hospitality](#) and ensure best use can be made of public resources
- [Property of the DWP](#): You must treat property of the Department with care and use it only for designated purpose
- [Attendance](#): You are expected to make all reasonable efforts to report for duty in a timely manner
- [Health and Safety](#): You must follow all [Health and Safety rules](#)
- [Acceptance of gifts, rewards or hospitality](#): These must only be accepted if this does not compromise your position or that of the Department
- [Working with fellow employees](#): You must show mutual respect and work together as effectively as possible and in accordance with our [Diversity and Equality policy](#)
- [Outside interests of employees](#): There may be situations where your outside interests could be seen to compromise your role or the reputation of the Department such as your [political activity](#) or becoming a [non-](#)

[executive director](#). In these circumstances, you must seek the advice of your manager to resolve any conflict of interest

- [Foreign travel](#): If you travel abroad in a private or official capacity, you must report any unusual incidents with security implications to your manager on your return to work.

## Standards of Behaviour Policy

1. Mutual trust is the foundation of the employment contract between the Department and all its employees. The Standards of Behaviour outlined below provide direction on how to behave to avoid any action that could compromise this trust.

2. All Civil Servants must follow the [Civil Service Code](#). The Department's Standards of Behaviour are based on this Code, and set out the fundamental standards expected from you at work and in your private life, which may impact on your work.

3. The Department takes its security responsibilities very seriously. There are varying policies, procedures ([Security portal](#)) and [rules you must make yourself aware of](#), as the consequence of failing to do so are serious and can result in penalties up to and including dismissal. The [discipline policy](#) sets out the consequences for breaches of security and the action that will be taken.

## Serving the Public

4. Most people will come into contact with the Department at some time in their lives. The Department's reputation depends on the quality of service provided and the way in which our employees conduct themselves. This includes treating all customers sympathetically and in a way that complies with the [Diversity and Equality policy](#).

5. The Department believes that its reputation and credibility with the public and colleagues is enhanced by employees adhering to their [business dress standard](#), presenting themselves in a professional and business-like way, prescribed by your business.

6. As part of the Department's customer service policy all customers are entitled to know the name of the person with whom they are dealing. If you deal directly with customers, you will be expected to provide your name when asked. In exceptional circumstances, where there is a significant risk, you may

be allowed to use an 'office name'. This must be used consistently and with full agreement of your manager. In some business areas it is the policy that all employees will wear a name badge at work.

7. You must take care to avoid putting yourselves in a position where your work and private life is in conflict. For example, you must not deal with anyone with whom you have family or personal connections. You must seek advice from your manager if you are unsure of whether or not someone is considered to be connected to you.

8. If a member of the public asks you to represent them in a private capacity at a Social Security appeal tribunal you must obtain permission from a senior officer (not below SEO/Band E).

## **Official information and access to Data**

9. Official Information is any information acquired in the course of your official duties. It may include information about customers, DWP employees, government, ministers or information generated within the Department to support its business

10. Official information includes all documents and employee and customer personal information, irrespective of whether it is has a security or protective marking must be kept securely. Employees must not disclose official information inappropriately.

11. In line with local business guidelines, official information must be locked away securely while not being used. It must also be disposed of correctly

12. Official documents must be handled in line with the Civil Service Code and Departmental policies about confidentiality, handling official information, and [protective markings](#) and disclosure of information.

## **Disclosure of Official Information**

13. All official information is subject to disclosure rules whether protectively marked or not.

14. You are expected to treat all official information gained through your employment in accordance with Departmental and Civil Service the rules on:

- [Confidentiality](#),
- [Protective markings](#),
- [Handling official information](#) and
- [Disclosure of information](#).

15. You must not use official information, whether security marked or not or if it is of a sensitive nature for any purpose other than that for which it is intended. You must not pass it on or make it available to any person who does not have a legitimate business interest including other DWP colleagues, without the express permission of your line manager or if they are unsure the author of the document. Grade 7 (Band F) managers and above do not need permission.

16. In certain circumstances there may be exceptions to the above rule and these are set out in the [Handling Official Information guidance](#) . Please note that these requirements do not affect your right to make a protected disclosure under the [Public Interest Disclosure](#) provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and requests under the Freedom Of Information Act.

17. Employees who disclose official information by failing to follow these Standards of Behaviour and any other rules about the security and confidentiality of documents, records, official and personal information and data will be subject to [disciplinary action](#).

18. [Disciplinary action](#) on disclosure of information will only be taken after the HR Business Partner team has been consulted.

## **Participating on-line on the internet – Social Networking – Blogging**

19. Employees should be careful that information placed on social networking sites does not conflict with any of the Standards of Behaviour, and to ensure that they restrict any information they wish to remain private.

20. When participating on line as a civil servant, you are expected to follow the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and, when using the Department's computer systems, the [Electronic Media Policy](#). When representing the Department in an official capacity you should conduct yourself online in the same way as you would with other media or public

forums, such as when speaking at conferences, and disclose your position as a representative of your department or agency.

21. You should not disclose any knowledge and official information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of government unless you are authorised to do so. Any postings must comply with DWP policies and you must be careful not to represent the Department when you are expressing personal opinions. Personal opinions including remarks about fellow employees that breach the Department's standards of behaviour policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken

22. If you are participating on line privately you should not be associating yourself with the Department in any way.

## **Data Provided to the DWP**

23. All information we hold on employees will be kept in compliance with legislation including the [Data Protection Act \(DPA\)](#). You must consult your manager if in doubt about [Data Protection](#).

24. The main elements of the DPA are to ensure that:

- Personal data must be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the Data Protection Act
- That appropriate individuals have access to other people's personal data and only use that only for legitimate reasons
- Data is retained for the appropriate amount of time as determined by the needs of the business
- An individual can request to see information stored by the Department about them by making a subject access request

## **Computer Systems**

25. The Department provides computer systems to enable you to do your job effectively. You are required to use the appropriate systems of the Department and you must use the computer systems and the data they contain only for the designated purposes required for your job. You must not access, or attempt to access, your own or other people's records without authorisation. You must not approve your own notifications using the Department's Resource Management system unless a specific policy permits you to do so. [Disciplinary action](#) will be considered if you fail to follow policy guidance. Delegated access to approve notifications can only be made in line

with Resource Management guidance. You must be mindful of the following standards, among other things, when using the Internet or e-mail facilities:

- You may use Internet or e-mail facilities for reasonable personal use in your own time and providing it does not interfere with your work
- You must not access any [information on the Internet](#) that is offensive or would/could be an embarrassment to the Department. In particular you are forbidden to access pornographic sites or those containing racist or other offensive content
- You must not send e-mails internally or externally that contain offensive messages or content. The Department reserves the right to routinely scan for potentially offensive and inappropriate material and to review e-mails you send using the Department's systems
- You must also not undertake activities that impair the operation of the computer, nor attempt to personalise the system in any way by installing software or screensavers. If any incident has occurred that compromises security, you must tell your manager immediately
- To maintain the integrity of the Department's computer systems, it is also important that you comply with all computer security controls. In particular, you must keep your password confidential, ensure that your Smartcard card is only used by yourself and that the answers to your security questions are not written down or otherwise accessible to anyone else.
- You must not use unencrypted memory sticks (USB sticks) in any circumstances - even if the data being stored would not be considered as sensitive. Using unencrypted memory sticks or sharing them with others will result in [disciplinary action](#)
- You must comply with the information on the use of computer systems that is included in the [Electronic Media Policy](#).

## Health and Safety

26. To do your job effectively, you need to operate in a safe and healthy working environment. To protect your health and safety and that of your colleagues you must:

- Follow all [health and safety rules](#) , report any potential danger to your manager and immediately record any accident that occurs on official premises
- Observe the [Department's smoking policy](#) . This prohibits smoking on Department premises, except in areas specifically designated as smoking areas. You are not permitted to smoke when dealing with customers or undertaking official duties outside the office

- Not consume [alcohol or illegal drugs](#) on Departmental premises or come to work whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Produce a building photo pass, if you have one, on entry to Department locations and wear it at all times. Employees that work in public areas or at reception counters are not expected to wear their photo pass when dealing with members of the public

## **Criminal Convictions**

27. If you are charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence you must report it immediately to your manager, even if the incident has no relation to your work for DWP. This would include;

- Any cautions you receive or administrative agreements you sign as a result of any charges
- Any traffic offences occurring on official duty or in an official car, or traffic offences in any vehicle at any time involving driving under the influence of drink or drugs, or
- One which leads to the loss of your driving licence and/or imprisonment.
- Other traffic offences need not be reported.

28. If you are arrested and refused bail, you must tell your manager as soon as possible. You must also tell your manager if you are arrested for any offences of a financial or fraudulent nature, regardless of whether bail has been granted.

29. Managers must record any [disciplinary action on RM](#).

## **Financial Matters**

30. It is important that you do not expose yourself or the DWP to any financial activities that could be seen as inappropriate such as gambling on official premises. You have a duty to use public money responsibly, equally, you are expected to report to your manager if you suspect any financial irregularity and co-operate with any subsequent investigations.

31. You must not lend money to, or borrow money, from colleagues, employees or customers. You must only organise collections, raffles and national lottery syndicates on a voluntary basis, and not for causes that could be construed as having a political affiliation. There are [rules governing this in](#)

[the staff clubs guide](#) that you must follow that are set out. Similarly, you may not apply for trade cards for your personal use in the name of the Department.

32. Any contracts must be handled in a transparent way. If there might be any perceived possible conflicts of interest due to personal interests, acquaintances, previous contacts, you must make your manager aware as soon as possible.

33. Equally, you must not have investments either directly or indirectly in companies about whom you have price sensitive and unpublished information through your official duties. Private financial interests must not be furthered as a result of your official position, for example in buying and selling surplus government property. Managers must be made aware of any business interests to prevent a perceived conflict of interest. It is also important to note that trading from official premises is not permitted. Defrauding the Department or colluding with someone else to do so will be treated as gross misconduct and will result in [disciplinary action](#). Action will also be taken to recover the funds and refer the case to the police or other appropriate authority.

34. If you have been, or become, bankrupt or insolvent, or you are experiencing serious financial difficulties, you must tell your manager who will consider any implication on your current role.

## **Property of the DWP**

35. You must use items of equipment and property only for their designated purposes and in accordance with instructions given. You must take care to ensure that no loss or damage occurs to them. If any loss or damage occurs, you must report this immediately to your manager. Theft from the Department is not acceptable and could result in referral to the police for prosecution. The Department will seek to re-coup any monies owing.

36. You may use the Departmental telephone systems for short local personal calls, or use a mobile telephone to make limited personal calls, or send text messages. The use of any electronic equipment must be in line with the [Electronic Media Policy](#).

## **Attendance**

37. You are expected to make all reasonable efforts to report for duty at your place of work in a timely manner; failure to do so without prior authorisation,

[\(unauthorised absence\)](#), is a [disciplinary offence](#) . Specific arrangements will apply if you do not attend work due to participation in [industrial action](#).

38. In the case of travel disruptions or bad weather, you are expected to consider alternative transport options including walking if less than one hour's walking distance, or secondly, to consider working from an office location closer to home, or from home if practicable. Consideration will be made for issues of diversity and equality, and for your health, safety and welfare.

39. When ill, you must agree arrangements with your manager for making regular contact with them while [not attending work](#).

### **Acceptance of Gifts, Rewards or Hospitality**

40. Gifts, rewards or hospitality must only be accepted if there is not a risk that the Department or employee will become obligated or be perceived to be obligated to any outside organisation or member of the public. You must consult with your manager if any gifts, rewards (including prizes) or hospitality are offered and agree the appropriate response. Any offers of this nature, other than small gifts such as pens and chocolates, must be recorded as with [acceptance of gifts, rewards or hospitality](#).

### **Working with Fellow Employees**

41. The Department is committed to providing the best possible services to all our customers. To achieve this, employees need to co-operate and work together effectively - you must be able to rely on your colleagues, as they must be able to rely on you. This means working conscientiously, as directed by your manager, and carrying out your duties in line with current policies and procedures.

42. A private relationship with colleagues is acceptable as long as it does not conflict with duties. This means you must not manage partners or close relatives.

43. The Department is also committed to providing services to the public that embrace diversity and that promote equality of opportunity. As an employer, the Department is committed to equality and valuing diversity within the workforce. The Department expects you to show respect for each other and to comply with the [Diversity and Equality Policy](#).

## Outside Interests of Employees

44. You are responsible for ensuring that there is no conflict of interest between your interests outside work and your role at the Department, and that you do not bring the Department into disrepute.

45. You must never request special treatment from any DWP customer that would benefit your outside interests. If your work involves contact with external business organisations, such as banks, you must never ask for special treatment for yourself or colleagues.

46. Equally, if you are planning to take up an additional paid post or membership of a non-political organisation, it should not require attendance during your normal DWP working hours, or be carried out on DWP premises. You must consider whether there is a conflict of interest. If you believe that there could be a conflict of interest, you must discuss it with your manager, so that they can satisfy themselves that it will not impact your duties or adversely affect the reputation of the Department. Any such post must not adversely affect your ability to carry out your duties effectively. You must ensure that it does not include any activity that involves handling the Department's instruments of payments, e.g. Post Office duties, or activity that involves debt collection, credit investigation or money lending. If you are involved in setting up or managing a board and lodging establishment/nursing home, this could cause a conflict of interest if public money is paid to that establishment. Therefore if you are considering this, you must speak to your manager who may grant permission depending upon your official duties.

47. Acceptance of a [Non-Executive Directorships](#) must also be reviewed with your manager in the same way as a paid post.

48. If you want to leave the Department and accept a job offer made by a person, company or firm with whom the relationship has been established during the course of your official duties, or if you are offered a job in these circumstances at any time during your employment you need to [obtain permission in advance from your manager](#). This applies if you are still working for DWP or within 2 years of having left DWP.

49. You must not represent the Department in any official capacity without prior approval from your manager. You must also seek your manager's permission to take part in [political activities](#) assuming that they comply with the Civil Service Code and do not affect or appear to affect the services you deliver to the Government of the day.

50. It is a personal decision whether or not to join a [Trade Union](#) but the Civil Service encourages employees to [join an appropriate Trade Union](#) and to play

an active part within it. You do not need permission to take part in Trade Union activities in your own time, but you will still be bound by the rules on disclosure of information.

51. You are encouraged to talk to local organisations about your work, however prior management approval is required. Before undertaking any talks including lectures, broadcasts or publishing material, your manager must be given the opportunity to agree the content and be supplied with a copy of the material to be used.

52. Do not take part in surveys or research in your official capacity, even anonymously, without prior permission from your manager.

53. Staff are reminded that care should be taken when using any social networking site. A Breach of the Standards of Behaviour is possible for instance if staff make derogatory comments about fellow staff members, or adverse comments about the Department, care should be taken to ensure that the confidentiality of the role performed in official capacity is not undermined.

## **Foreign travel**

54. Employees are not required to report to managers when they are travelling abroad unless the journey is to or via the Peoples Republic of China, including Hong Kong. In these cases employees must read [Departmental Security Office advice](#) before travelling.