

Members' interests, investigations and sanctions for breach of rules

Request:

Re: Peers acting as Consultants

1. Please provide a copy of the conflict of interest rules that apply to sitting peers.
2. Please provide the number of investigations for breach of these rules from 2015-2019.
3. Please provide details of any sanctions for breach of these rules from 2015-2019.

Response:

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOIA") provides a right of access, subject to specified exemptions, to recorded information held by a public authority. In the case of the House of Lords, the rights of access apply to recorded information held by the House of Lords Administration.

The House Administration holds this information. The information is already publicly available on the Parliament website.

The House of Lords Code of Conduct sets out the requirement for members to "*register in the Register of Lords' Interests all relevant interests, in order to make clear what are the interests that might reasonably be thought to influence their parliamentary actions*". The Code of Conduct and accompanying guide can be found here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/code-of-conduct-for-the-house-of-lords/>

Investigations into alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct, including in relation to members' interests, are undertaken by the Lords Commissioner for Standards. The number of investigations per year is published in the Commissioner's annual reports here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/>

Full details of individual investigations, including the nature of the alleged breach (i.e. whether it related to a conflict of interest, paid advocacy or another area of the Code), the outcome of the investigation and any sanctions imposed where a breach has been proven, are published in the Commissioner's reports on individual cases.

The most recent reports are published here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/reports-on-complaints/>

Reports prior to February 2017 are published here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/privileges-committee-for-privileges/>

We consider this information exempt under section 21 of the FOIA, which provides an exemption from the duty to disclose information which is reasonably accessible by means other than making an FOI request.

Please note:

- The Code of Conduct provides guidance for members of the House of Lords on the standards of conduct expected of them in the discharge of their parliamentary duties; it therefore covers elements besides potential conflict of interest where members may be acting as consultants.
- The Commissioner's annual reports cover the period from 1 June to 31 May each year and are currently published for the years 2010-11 through to 2017-18. The report for 2018-19 will be published later this year, however, the investigations reports for this time period are already published.