

# Wakefield Council Employee Code of Conduct

## 1. Introduction

- a) The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for Wakefield Council.
- b) This framework code of conduct, supplemented by directorate specific variations, is aimed at ensuring that employees are aware of the standards of behaviour expected of them by Wakefield Council.
- c) Some of the issues covered by this code will affect senior and managerial employees more than it will others. However, it covers all employees who have an employment contract with Wakefield Council, including relief and casual employees, and as such it forms part of their conditions of service.
- d) Similarly the code aims to ensure that employees in community and community special schools are aware of the standards of behaviour expected of them by Wakefield Council. Their governing body and head teacher will make sure the code is followed and will deal with any breaches of the code within their school.
- e) Failure to observe the standards set out in this code may be regarded as serious and any breach could lead to disciplinary action under the Council's agreed disciplinary procedure as appropriate, up to and including summary dismissal.
- f) All employees in community and community special schools have responsibilities to their governing body and the Council. Any reference to the Council within the code extends to the governing body of the school, and any reference to the role of a senior manager or Service Director includes the similar role of a headteacher.
- g) The Council recognises that some employees will be required to work to their own professional code of conduct. In exceptional circumstances there could be a conflict between this code and the requirements of a professional code of conduct. In such circumstances, employees must discuss the conflict with their Service Director before taking any actions which could be contrary to the code.

## 2. Council Core Values and Standards

The Code reflects the Council's core values and behavioural expectations which are as follows:

### Core Values:

#### (I) **Respect for all**

All employees will be polite and supportive to each other. Everyone's contributions will be valued and employees will listen to and hear others, and be sensitive to their position.

#### (ii) **Ambition**

All employees will set high standards and aim to continually improve. Feedback on performance will be sought and acted upon and employees will be encouraged to put forward new ideas to support further improvements to service delivery.

#### (iii) **Integrity**

Every employee will, in acting as an ambassador for the Council, maintain high standards of personal conduct demonstrated through an honest, open, impartial and tolerant approach when dealing with colleagues, the public and other organisations.

### Standards:

- a) Council employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees are expected to make the appropriate level of management aware of any deficiency in the provision of service. This will be through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination.
- b) Employees should be aware of the Council's Customer Care Standards and ensure they apply these standards when dealing with all service users.
- c) It is the duty of each employee to report to an appropriate manager any impropriety, breach of procedure, unlawfulness or maladministration.
- d) Employees should be aware of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy which gives support and protection for any employee who reports any wrongdoing, including impropriety, breach of procedure, unlawfulness or maladministration.

### **3. Disclosure of Information**

- a) The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government services, service users and the public. The Council may decide to be open about other types of information. Employees must be aware of which information the Council is and is not open about, and act accordingly. If an employee is not sure they should ask for guidance from their Service Manager.
- b) Any requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act should be referred to Legal and Governance, Information Management Team which will provide appropriate advice and guidance.
- c) Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use this information in such a way. Any personal information received by an employee from a Councillor, which does not belong to the Council, should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that Councillor, except where disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.
- d) The public is excluded from certain proceedings or meetings associated with the business of the Council. Employees cannot tell the public about the content of the proceedings or corresponding documents relating to the Council, unless required by law or authorised by the appropriate Service Director to do so.
- e) All employees must adhere to the Data Protection Act at all times and specifically not disclose personal information about other employees or a member of the public to a third party without their agreement to do so (unless exempt under the Act).

### **4. Political Neutrality**

- a) Employees have a responsibility to the Council as a whole. It follows that they have responsibilities to all Councillors not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure their individual rights are respected.
- b) Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every policy of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

## **Relationships, Employment and Other Employee Matters**

### **Relationships**

#### **I) The local community and service users**

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community and at all times ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of the Council.

#### **b) Contractors**

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the appropriate manager. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition, against other tenders. Special favours should not be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against. Employees who engage with, supervise or have any official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a private or domestic relationship with contractors, should declare that relationship to the appropriate manager.

#### **c) Other employees**

Employees must declare any personal relationship with other employees of the Council to their manager where the relationship could cause or be perceived to cause, a conflict of interests. In these circumstances there may be a need to consider alternative employment or a change of duties. Employees must treat colleagues with courtesy and respect. Verbal or physical abuse, bullying and insubordination to colleagues will not be tolerated.

#### **d) Audit Commission or Local Authority Inspectorate**

Officers who are related to, or a close friend of, any member of the Audit Commission or Local

Authority Inspectorate, should declare a conflict of interest if that relative or friend is involved in an audit or inspection of the service within which they are employed.

### **Appointment and Other Employment Matters**

- a)** Employees involved in appointing for roles should make sure they are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to do the role. To avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with them.
- b)** Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner etc.

## **6. Outside Commitments**

- a)** Officers graded above Scale 6 have conditions of service which require them to get written consent to take any outside employment including unpaid/voluntary work and self-employment such as consultancy work.
- b)** All employees, regardless of grade, should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside employment which conflicts with the Council's interests.
- c)** Employees taking other employment must ensure that the total number of hours worked in a week is not, (or is not perceived to be) a risk to their own or colleagues' health and safety. Specifically the Council expects all employees to notify their manager of any other employment which may result in their total working time going above an average of 48 hours a week.
- d)** An employee's declaration of other employment does not remove the right of the Council to take action against any employee if it is deemed to be, or has been, detrimental to the Council's interest of reputation, or where the other employment affects the employee's work performance for the Council.
- e)** The use of Council employees and resources, (e.g. computers, telephone, photocopier, etc.) for unofficial purposes is forbidden unless appropriate arrangements are made and approval is given by the appropriate manager. Communication relating to other employment is not permitted during working hours.
- f)** Employees should follow the Council's rules on ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment. Intellectual property is a generic term that includes inventions and patents, creative writings and drawings. If these are created by an employee during the course of their employment as part of their role, then as a general rule they belong to the Council.
- g)** Employees are sometimes requested to give presentations/advice using their professional skills and expertise, for organisations other than the Council. If the work forms part of their Council duties and is done as an official duty, they must ensure the Council receives any fee paid. If the presentation or advice does not form part of their duties, employees may keep any fees, provided that the preparation and the presentation/advice is done in the employee's own time and the employee is not acting as a representative of the Council.
- h)** This code recognises that teachers produce materials used in the classroom which they view as their own.

## **7. Personal Interests**

- a)** Certain employees, as designated by their Service Director, must complete the Register of Employees' Interests (see 'Related Downloads') with respect to any personal financial or nonfinancial interests that may be deemed to conflict with the Council's interests.
- b)** The Council respects the rights of employees to a life outside work. It requires employees to clearly separate their employment from activities in their private life. Employees should only present their views, or act on issues outside work, e.g. communications with the media or as a member of a pressure group, as a private individual. Council employees should ensure that when engaging in such activities or endorsing a product or service, it is clear that they are not seen as a representative of the Council but as private individuals.

- c)** Employees are expected to raise concerns about work-related issues through the Council's official procedures (including trade unions). It is not acceptable for employees to pursue work related issues which affect them as a private individual, where there is a conflict between their private interest and their contractual duties as a Council employee.
- d)** All activities undertaken during working hours should help, not conflict with, the work of the Council. For example, during work hours employees must not try to persuade clients to come to a view about a service that is against the accepted Council view, or involve clients in campaigning activities that go against Council policy. This paragraph does not restrict employees having the right to legitimate protest on issues relating to their security of employment or changes to their conditions of service.
- e)** Employees should declare membership of any secret societies to the Council, via their Service Director. The definition of secret society is as follows: *"Any lodge, chapter, society, trust or regular gathering or meeting which:*
- is not open to members of the public who are not members*
  - includes a requirement to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance in order to gain membership*
  - includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy in regard to rules, membership or conduct."*

## **8. Equality Issues**

- a)** The Council is an equal opportunities employer and all employees are under an obligation to ensure they are aware of workplace policies relating to equality issues and ensure that they are complied with.
- b)** All members of the local community, clients and colleagues have a right to be treated with fairness and equality.
- c)** Employees should be familiar with the Council's policy on discrimination and harassment, and ensure they treat all colleagues, clients, and members of the local community with dignity and respect.
- d)** If employees consider that they have been subject to discrimination and/or harassment in the course of their employment, they should report this to an appropriate manager at the earliest opportunity so the concerns can be investigated and responded to as appropriate.

### **I. Tendering, Corruption and Financial Information**

#### **Separation of roles during tendering**

- a)** Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with external contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Council. Where tendering involves an in-house contractor, service employees should be mindful of the need for accountability and be aware of the Council's commitment to providing best value at all times. Employees who have both client and contractor roles must be aware of the need for equality.
- b)** Employees must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.
- c)** Employees who have access to confidential information on tenders or costs for internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.
- d)** Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.
- e)** Employees must not buy items for personal use through the Council's contracts with external contractors.

#### **Corruption, fraud and theft**

- a)** It is a serious criminal offence for employees, in their official capacity, to corruptly receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, something or showing favour or disfavour to any person. If an allegation is made, the employee should show that any benefit has not been dishonestly gained.
- b)** The deliberate falsification of documents is not acceptable. If an employee does this for pay or other financial benefit for themselves or others it may be regarded as a criminal offence requiring police investigation as well as being a serious disciplinary matter. Where deliberate falsification is intended to gain a non-financial benefit such as flexitime credit, this will equally be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter.

**c)** Theft of either the Council's, or service users' funds or property is considered gross misconduct under the Council's disciplinary procedure. Borrowing Council money, even when the employee has every intention of returning it within a very short period of time, is also considered as theft.

### **Use of financial information**

**a)** Employees must ensure they use public funds in a responsible and lawful manner at all times. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Council.

**b)** The application of financial regulations safeguard the Council's assets and use of financial and other resources. All employees must comply with the regulations when using or collecting public funds. When placing orders for goods and services employees must ensure that all rules are complied with, in particular the Financial and Contractual Procedures Rules.

## **I. Relationships with Clients/Service Users**

### **Boundaries between personal and professional relationships with client/service users**

**a)** Employees must understand the importance of establishing and adhering to boundaries between personal and professional relationships with client/service users to avoid being open to allegations of favouritism to, or in some cases abuse of such clients/service users.

**b)** Employees should always inform their line manager of a present or previous personal relationship with a client/service user or a prospective client/service user. Employees should then avoid having a professional relationship with any clients/service users where there is, or has been, a personal relationship.

**c)** If an employee enters into a personal relationship knowing that the other person is a client/service user which relates to their role in the Council, they must inform their line manager immediately. Similarly if an employee has a personal relationship with someone who later becomes a client/service user they must again inform their manager and ensure they do not have a professional involvement in the case.

**d)** The following are examples of prohibited behaviour which fall outside the boundary of what is acceptable behaviour with regard to maintaining a professional relationship with clients/service users. This list is not exhaustive but indicative of behaviour deemed to be unacceptable.

- sexual relationships.
- kissing and intimate touching.
- indicating your affection or love for a service user.
- planned or pre-arranged social meetings in public or in private which are not directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the employee eg employees in Family Services accompanying service users on an outing.
- using illegal drugs with a client/service user.
- On-line (internet) contact with service users which is of a social nature, such as becoming 'friends' on social networking sites.
- Inviting service users in to employee's homes.

Whilst it is recognised that service users may occasionally come in to contact with friends, relatives and partners of staff, any further relationships of this nature should not be encouraged.

**e)** Employees with a caring role or providing a direct personal service may be placed in situations where they could benefit financially either directly or indirectly. Employees should refuse gifts other than tokens of a very small cash value (under £5.00) where it would be difficult to avoid causing offence. The employee should explain that it is against Council policy to accept gifts and ask that no further gifts are offered in the future. The employee should notify their manager of any gifts offered or received.

**f)** Under no circumstances should an employee accept a gift of money of any value.

**g)** Under no circumstances should employees solicit gifts from clients/service users by informing them of a forthcoming birthday or personal event.

**h)** If an employee has been made a beneficiary in the will of a service user or former service user, they must immediately tell their Service Director, who will decide on the appropriate action.

i) Employees must not have any financial dealings with any service user except where it is a specific requirement of their post, and then only within the boundaries of their duties, therefore they must not borrow money or other property or act as executor of a service user's will.

## **11. Safeguarding**

### **a) General**

The Council and all of its employees have a responsibility to create and maintain a culture that will help deter, prevent and detect inappropriate or abusive behaviour. These responsibilities include:

- ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place;
- following the regulations as set out in the Independent Safeguarding Authority's vetting and barring scheme;
- setting acceptable standards of behaviour;
- taking concerns seriously;
- increasing awareness/commitment to safeguarding.

### **b) Safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults**

i) Further to the provision of section 9 above it is important to highlight the responsibilities of the Council and its employees in safeguarding both children and vulnerable adults who depend on the Council's services.

ii) Where a child or a vulnerable adult is dependent upon the Council and its employees the carer role must always be placed above all other interests. An employee must not compromise their relationship with vulnerable service users by pursuing conflicts of interest such as unprofessional, emotional or physical interaction and/or sexual interaction.

iii) Any behaviour or action on the part of the employees working with children and vulnerable adults should be open to scrutiny. Consequently any behaviour or action which involves secrecy is almost certainly inappropriate and is likely to constitute serious misconduct.

iv) If an employee has difficulty enforcing or maintaining appropriate boundaries in terms of their relationship with a client /service user because of the actions or responses of the client/service user, the issue should be referred to the employee's line manager immediately to allow appropriate action to be taken and recorded.

v) Employees assisting children and young people to break the laws in relation to the use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs will be deemed to have committed serious misconduct under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

vi) If an employee reasonably suspects another employee is acting contrary to the provisions set out in i)-v) above they must inform an appropriate Service Director immediately. Employees may also refer to the Whistleblowing Policy.

vii) Employees working with children or vulnerable adults must inform their managers immediately if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, police enquiry or pending prosecution. This will be considered within the context of the duties of the post held and is essential in helping to safeguard the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

## **12. Gifts and Hospitality**

a) Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to pass on information or represent the Council in the community. Similarly they may attend events hosted by organisations with which the Council has formal partnership working arrangements if this is seen to be helping to strengthen the partnership. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the Council should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and recorded by their Service Director.

b) When hospitality has to be declined those making the offer should be politely but firmly informed of the Council's procedures and standards.

c) Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers. Keeping insignificant items of token value such as pens or diaries is acceptable. Accepting personal gifts of small value from outside suppliers or private individuals may be allowed if it is provided for under a service policy, which may supplement the framework set out in this code.

d) If an employee receives a gift with more than a token value without warning, it should be reported immediately to their Service Director, who will decide whether the gift should be returned.

- e) When receiving authorised hospitality employees should be particularly sensitive to timing in relation to any decision which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.
- f) Accepting hospitality by attending relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, and where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment etc are required, employees should ensure the Council meets the cost of such visits to avoid risking the integrity of future purchasing decisions.
- g) Employees accepting offers of hospitality are acting as ambassadors for the Council. They must act appropriately, including acting responsibly when drinking alcohol.
- h) Care must be taken to make sure that any hospitality provided by the Council is seen to be appropriate and justifiable in terms of the costs and value for money. Any spending relating to providing hospitality must be authorised by the appropriate budget holder. They will keep a record of the spending and the justification for it, in a way which allows for an open and transparent audit of such expenditure.

### **Sponsorship**

- a) When an outside organisation wants to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic rules about accepting gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.
- b) Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service employees, their partner, spouse or relatives, must not benefit in a direct way without there being full disclosure to an appropriate manager of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council gives support to the community through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and there is not a conflict of interest.

## **13. Contact with the Press and Media**

- a) Unless specifically nominated and authorised by the Chief Executive or their Corporate Director, employees cannot give reports or speak to the press and media on matters relating to employment with the Council, Council business or decisions of the Council (see however section 6 in “Also In”). The Corporate Director for Culture and the Service Director (Access and Culture) are responsible for dealing with the press and media. They may specifically nominate other officers. Employees with this responsibility should not give views which are contrary to a position taken by the Council and which may be deemed to be critical of any Council decisions.
- b) This Code is not intended to inhibit or restrict the reasonable and legitimate role of trade union representatives (when acting in this role and not in their capacity as an employee) but they are bound, in carrying out their role, to honour the intent of the code.

## **14. Use of Electronic Equipment**

### **Context**

- a) All electronic equipment and systems provided by the Council are for the use of employees in relation to their work, or for users not directly employed by the Council, but authorised to use the equipment by the Council. Employees should be encouraged to use electronic equipment at work for personal learning and development. This should be approved by their manager and comply with the expected standards and restrictions on use as set out in the full policy document.

### **Standards expected**

- b) The Council expects all employees to use the equipment in a responsible and legal manner. The use of offensive, abusive or inappropriate language in emails or other communications is forbidden.
- c) All material stored on the Council’s systems are confidential, and subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Council expects the highest standards of confidentiality to be observed. Employees should clarify any queries about storage and the use of information with their managers.
- d) User codes and passwords are allocated to allow individuals access to only those parts of the system that they need to access. Codes or passwords should not be made known to any other user.

## **Restrictions on use**

Internet and information systems (devices capable of accessing the Internet or running software, including computers and WAP phones etc).

**e)** Using the Council's electronic equipment for any of the following purposes is strictly forbidden:

- knowingly sending, receiving, accessing, downloading or posting any material that is illegal, obscene, indecent, abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or libellous, in breach of copyright, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate.
- pursuing personal business interests.
- engaging in gambling.
- knowingly engaging in any activity which threatens the integrity or availability of the Council's systems.
- using automated internet based information services which push information to the desktop, e.g. news ticker tape services (except for legitimate business use).
- attempting to breach security systems (hack) whether inside or outside the Council.
- transmitting, receiving, copying or storing digital media (including software, music, video etc) except for legitimate business purposes in a way that complies with the copyright and licensing regulations.
- playing computer games, accessing chat rooms or similar entertainment.

## **Security Clearance for Data Usage**

**f)** Some posts may require an employee to undertake specific security checks, e.g. Baseline Personnel Security Standard or e-CRB, where access to specific electronic channels eg GovConnect or ContactPoint is a requirement of the post.

**g)** If any such employee becomes subject to a criminal conviction, caution, pending prosecution or police enquiry, they must notify their Service Director immediately.

**h)** Any information provided will be considered within the context of the duties of the post and is essential in helping to safeguard the Council and general safeguarding as specified in Section 10.

## **Personal use**

**i)** Internet and information systems (computers etc) are provided for work purposes, and their use for work will always take precedence. Some personal use will be allowed, but any personal use should be in the employee's own time before or after working hours, or during unpaid lunch breaks and all personal use shall be carried out in line with the restrictions set out in the policy.

**j)** The private use of telephones and faxes will be allowed but incoming and outgoing calls should be kept to a minimum and made during non-working time.

**k)** The Council's messaging systems (email, SMS etc) are primarily for business use. Occasional and reasonable personal use is allowed. However, in line with the Use of Electronic Equipment Policy (see 'Related Links'), any personal use in an employee's own time should be agreed if it incurs a cost. This should not interfere with the performance of duties and all personal use must comply with the standards and restrictions set out in the policy. Outgoing private messaging must, whenever possible, be made during non-working time.

## **15. Health and Safety**

**a)** Employees must not act either wilfully or unintentionally in a way which could put service users, the public, colleagues and themselves at risk. They must adhere to the duty of care set out within the Council's Health and Safety Policy (and associated procedures). These are available from the Council's Health and Safety Officers or via the Council's intranet (see Health Safety and Well Being pages under 'Related Links').

**b)** Employees required to drive a vehicle as part of their contractual duties (Council fleet vehicle, hire vehicle or private vehicle) must observe all aspects of the Council's Driver Competency Procedure and the appendix to the conditions of service issued to drivers.

## **Smoking**

The no smoking policy is available via the Related Downloads. The essence of the policy is that smoking is not permitted in any Council building or vehicle. Anyone who wishes to smoke must do so in their own time.

If you need any help and assistance implementing the policy please contact the Health & Safety Team:

01924 305850

healthandsafety8@wakefield.gov.uk

### **Alcohol and drugs**

- a)** All employees are expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or have their work performance impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- b)** Service Directors will identify roles where drinking alcohol immediately before, or during the work day, will not be allowed on health and safety grounds (due to the nature of the job). Such jobs will be identified to the employees concerned as a condition of service for that role. Where jobs that are safety critical have been identified then the consumption of alcohol during the working day is not allowed under any circumstances.
- c)** Where involvement with illegal drugs or excessive use of alcohol by an employee takes place outside working hours, the Council will consider the impact this may have on their employment. This will include a consideration of any impact on the Council's reputation and/or public confidence.
- d)** The Council will seek to provide appropriate support to any employee who recognises they have an alcohol/drug dependency problem in accordance with the Council's policy on such issues.
- e)** Where individuals are found to be in breach of the policy then normal disciplinary processes could be pursued.

## **16. Conduct and Standards**

### **Conduct outside working hours**

- a)** Serious misconduct or criminal offences, committed outside working hours which bring the individual as a Council employee or the Council into disrepute, may be subject to appropriate action under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure up to and including dismissal.
- b)** All employees are required to notify their manager of any issues of this nature to enable early consideration of their situation.
- c)** Where employees are acting in other capacities e.g. School Governors, they must be mindful of maintaining the reputation of the Council at all times.
- d)** Employees should not 'post' sensitive, confidential or critical information relating to work on 'blogs', social networking sites or by other electronic means, or information from which any individual or piece of work can be identified or the identity inferred.

### **Standards of dress and appearance**

- a)** Employees must ensure their standard of dress i.e. the type and style of clothes, accessories, body art etc – is appropriate to the nature of their duties. Inappropriate dress can create the view that the Council is inefficient, create offence or be interpreted as disrespectful by the public.
- b)** Individual services will determine an appropriate dress code to public and service user expectations. Where there are codes employees are expected to meet the set standard.
- c)** The Council values and welcomes the ethnic diversity of its workforce. Dress codes will be sensitive to and take account of cultural and religious dress requirements where it does not negatively impact on service delivery.
- d)** In all cases employees will be expected to conform to requirements for dress codes which apply for health and safety reasons or which requires a uniform to be worn, to clearly identify Council employees.
- e)** This code recognises the need for a consistent approach to standards of dress and appearance within each service so employees can be clear about the service's expectations.

### **Language**

- a)** The use of swear words, offensive language and/or gestures in conversation and communication with other service users or colleagues is unacceptable at all times.
- b)** Language which is perceived by service users and/or colleagues as patronising or overly familiar is also unacceptable. Examples of this type of language will include calling a service user "dear" or "love" and the suggestion that such terms are widely used within the geographical area of the Council is not an argument for professional staff being permitted to use them in the course of their employment.

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