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# Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords

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The following Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords was adopted by resolution on 30 November 2009 and amended on 30 March 2010, 12 June 2014 and 25 February 2016.

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## Introduction

1. The House of Lords is the second chamber of the United Kingdom Parliament. As a constituent part of Parliament, the House of Lords makes laws, holds government to account and debates issues of public interest.
2. Membership of the House is not an office and does not constitute employment; most members' primary employment is or has been outside Parliament. In discharging their parliamentary duties members of the House of Lords draw substantially on experience and expertise gained outside Parliament.
3. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is:
  - (a) to provide guidance for members of the House of Lords on the standards of conduct expected of them in the discharge of their parliamentary duties; save for paragraphs 16 and 17, the Code does not extend to members' performance of duties unrelated to parliamentary proceedings, or to their private lives;
  - (b) to provide the openness and accountability necessary to reinforce public confidence in the way in which members of the House of Lords perform their parliamentary duties.
4. This Code applies to all members of the House of Lords who are not either:
  - (a) on leave of absence;
  - (b) suspended from the service of the House; or
  - (c) statutorily disqualified from active membership.
5. Members are to sign an undertaking to abide by the Code as part of the ceremony of taking the oath upon introduction and at the start of each Parliament.

## General principles

6. By virtue of their oath, or affirmation, of allegiance, members of the House have a duty to be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen, Her heirs and successors, according to law.

7. In the conduct of their parliamentary duties, members of the House shall base their actions on consideration of the public interest, and shall resolve any conflict between their personal interest and the public interest at once, and in favour of the public interest.

8. Members of the House:

- (a) must comply with the Code of Conduct;
- (b) should act always on their personal honour;
- (c) must never accept or agree to accept any financial inducement as an incentive or reward for exercising parliamentary influence;
- (d) must not seek to profit from membership of the House by accepting or agreeing to accept payment or other incentive or reward in return for providing parliamentary advice or services.

9. Members of the House should observe the seven general principles of conduct identified by the [Committee on Standards in Public Life](#). These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of breaches of the provisions in other sections of the Code is under investigation and should act as a guide to members in considering the requirement to act always on their personal honour:

- (a) Selflessness: holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- (b) Integrity: holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- (c) Objectivity: holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- (d) Accountability: holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- (e) Openness: holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- (f) Honesty: holders of public office should be truthful.
- (g) Leadership: holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Rules of conduct

10. In order to assist in openness and accountability members shall:

- (a) 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;
- (b) declare when speaking in the House, or communicating with ministers or public servants, any interest which is a relevant interest in the context of the debate or the matter under discussion;
- (c) act in accordance with any rules agreed by the House in respect of financial support for members or the facilities of the House.

11. The test of relevant interest is whether the interest might be thought by a reasonable member of the public to influence the way in which a member of the House of Lords discharges his or her parliamentary duties: in the case of registration, the member's parliamentary duties in general; in the case of declaration, his or her duties in respect of the particular matter under discussion.

12. The test of relevant interest is therefore not whether a member's actions in Parliament will be influenced by the interest, but whether a reasonable member of the public might think that this might be the case. Relevant interests include both financial and non-financial interests.

13. Members are responsible for ensuring that their registered interests are accurate and up-to-date. They should register any change in their relevant interests within one month of the change.
14. A member must not act as a paid advocate in any proceeding of the House; that is to say, he or she must not seek by parliamentary means to confer exclusive benefit on an outside body or person from which he or she receives payment or reward.
15. Members are not otherwise debarred from participating in proceedings in regard to which they possess relevant interests, financial or non-financial; but such interests should be declared fully. In participating in such proceedings they should ensure that there is no conflict between their declared interests and the public interest.
16. A member sentenced to imprisonment in the United Kingdom for a term of up to and including one year, or given a suspended sentence of imprisonment in the United Kingdom of any length, shall be deemed to have breached the Code; such a case shall be referred to the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct for it to recommend a sanction.
17. A member sentenced to imprisonment outside the United Kingdom, whether the sentence is suspended or not, shall be presumed to have breached the Code; such a case shall be referred to the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct for it to consider whether the presumption should apply in that case and, if it should, for the Sub-Committee to recommend a sanction.

## Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

18. A [House of Lords Commissioner for Standards](#) is appointed to investigate alleged breaches of this Code, or of the rules governing members' financial support or use of parliamentary facilities. Any such investigation is conducted in accordance with procedures set out in the [Guide to the Code of Conduct](#).
19. After investigation the Commissioner makes a report of her findings. If the member is found not to have breached the Code, or if the member and the Commissioner have agreed remedial action, the report goes to the [Committee for Privileges and Conduct](#). If the member is found to have breached the Code (and remedial action is inappropriate or has not been agreed), the Commissioner's report goes to the [Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct](#); the Sub-Committee reviews the Commissioner's findings and, where appropriate, recommends a disciplinary sanction to the Committee for Privileges and Conduct. The member concerned has a right of appeal to the Committee for Privileges and Conduct against both the Commissioner's findings and any recommended sanction.
20. The Committee for Privileges and Conduct, having heard any appeal, reports its conclusions and recommendations to the House. The final decision rests with the House.
21. In investigating and adjudicating allegations of non-compliance with this Code, the Commissioner, the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct and the Committee for Privileges and Conduct shall act in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness.
22. Members shall co-operate, at all stages, with any investigation into their conduct by or under the authority of the House.
23. No member shall lobby a member of the Committee for Privileges and Conduct or the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct in a manner calculated or intended to influence their consideration of a complaint of a breach of this Code.

## Advice and review

24. The operation of the Register is overseen by the [Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct](#), assisted by the [Registrar of Lords' Interests](#). The Registrar is available to advise members of the House, and may consult the Sub-Committee when necessary.

25. A member who acts on the advice of the Registrar in determining what is a relevant interest satisfies fully the requirements of the Code of Conduct in that regard. However, the final responsibility for deciding whether or not to participate in proceedings to which that interest is relevant rests with the member concerned.
26. The Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct reviews the Code of Conduct once each Parliament. Its findings, along with any recommended changes to the Code, are reported to the House.
27. The Sub-Committee also keeps the [Guide to the Code of Conduct](#) under regular review; recommended changes are reported to the House and will not take effect until agreed by the House.