

Code of Conduct Policy

This Code of Conduct Policy has been produced to ensure high quality and safe practice as befits any public office body.

The Forum will adopt working practices, policies, and principles required to ensure that Forum activities are conducted respectfully, safely, and fairly at all times.

Members should conduct themselves in a manner that cannot bring the Forum in to any form of disrepute.

A useful framework for conduct is the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life which are detailed in the Constitution and in Appendix 1 of this Policy.

Members' Behaviour

It is important that members conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful way when representing the Forum.

This includes how members interact with each other, members of the public and representatives of other groups.

This policy applies to conduct in meetings and at events and covers the full range of activities that members are involved in.

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The behaviour of all people attending any meeting or event is important to the success of the meeting or event. This applies to meetings and events organised by the Forum or events organised by a third party at which a member is representing the Forum.

Many people lack the confidence to express themselves fully in a meeting with other people, whereas some may feel more confident. It is important that Forum members encourage and respect people's contributions to meetings and events.

Where the word 'meeting' is used within the context of this Policy, members are asked to also apply the same principles and considerations to events, consultation activities, and other forums including articles published on the Forum's website.

Effective meetings can be achieved if all individuals are committed to simple ground rules for behaviour before and during meetings.

Participants at meetings must agree to abide by the Forum's code of conduct and act in a manner that supports equal opportunities for all.

How Members are expected to act

Members must:

- Act appropriately and treat people and organisations with respect, never being derogatory in their speech or manner;

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- Act in the public interest, and not seek to gain any advantage for themselves, their family or friends;
- Act in a way that is fair and unbiased;
- Allow everyone to take part without interruption or intimidation and treat everyone equally;
- In contributing to the work of the Forum participants will ensure that comments they make do not amount to a personal attack on another individual and should avoid using heated, emotional and value loaded language and behaviour;
- Be open and honest about their actions and decisions, and give reasons for them;
- Be clear and honest about whether they are giving their personal view or the views of an organisation;
- Declare any private interests or interests of their organisation relevant to their involvement with the Forum and seek to resolve any conflict in the public interest.

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Members must not:

- Act or speak in a way that may be perceived as bullying, abusive, discriminatory or derogatory;
- Disclose confidential information;
- Prevent anyone getting information they are entitled to;
- Bring the Forum into disrepute (see **Footnote 1.**); ¹
- Speak or claim to speak or give the impression that they speak on behalf of the Forum or claim to be representing the Forum or giving the views of the Forum unless they have been authorised to do so by the Executive Group. (The Executive Group recognises that express authorisation to attend meetings is not always practical but would expect members attending meetings to represent the ideals of the Forum and its Executive Group.);
- Attempt to dominate the meetings for their own purpose or the purpose of a group or organisation they are representing;
- Allow individual and personal disputes to affect conduct within the meeting but resolve these elsewhere;

¹ **Footnote 1:** Disrepute: noun the state of being held in low public esteem (taken from Compact Oxford English Dictionary webpage:

http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/disrepute?view=uk

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- Have meetings within meetings by discussing issues with other individuals or groups of individuals;
- Interrupt when someone is speaking.

All contributions at meetings should be addressed to the meeting via the Chairperson (see **Footnote 2**).²

All participants are required to respect the ruling of the Chairperson or the meeting if the Chairperson has put an issue to the meeting.

All participants must accept that the time available for Forum meetings is finite. The Chairperson of a meeting is therefore empowered to set the time a contributor is permitted to speak if this is necessary to support the conduct of business.

When participating in Forum meetings and when representing the Forum at meetings or networks then Members will need to accept and abide by the decision of the majority.

Failure by a Forum member to comply with this code of conduct may lead to the need for complaints and disciplinary procedure to be applied.

² **Footnote 2:** Although in respect of equality the terms chairperson and vice chairperson are used in this document, in practice the executive and task group officers may choose to use any term they feel more comfortable with at their meetings for example chairman or chair.

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Declarations of Interest

It is important in meetings that members clearly declare any vested interest in issues being debated.

The Executive and Topic Focused Groups agenda will include an item allowing members to declare whether they have any personal, financial or other material interest in any item on the agenda.

The Chairperson and the remaining voting members (registered members) of the meeting will then decide whether individuals declaring an interest must leave the meeting for the relevant item or just not take part in the discussion or decision making.

Decisions taken in meetings must be well informed by having appropriate, accurate information and debate on the topics concerned.

The wider community and relevant stakeholders must be able to feel that decisions, particularly those affecting the spending of public funds, are fair and have not been influenced by the vested interests of those making these decisions or based on misinformation.

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Confidentiality

Meetings may occasionally receive information which is not in the public domain often relating to individuals, organisations, or financial matters.

It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that this information remains confidential to the meeting unless prior authorisation has been given by the Chairperson for this to be discussed elsewhere.

Individuals must never use confidential information for their personal advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of anyone known to them or to disadvantage or discredit the Forum.

Training, Support and Advice

New Forum members will be directed to the suite of Forum policies and documentation on the Forum's website, that includes the Code of Conduct.

Appendix 1: Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends;

Integrity Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties;

Objectivity In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit;

Accountability Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office;

Openness Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it;

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Honesty Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest;

Leadership Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.