

The Professional Standards Statement

Purpose

Prison Service staff are expected to meet high standards of professional and personal conduct in order to deliver the Prison Service Vision. All staff are personally responsible for their conduct. Misconduct will not be tolerated and failure to comply with these standards can lead to action which may result in dismissal from the Service.

This document therefore identifies and clarifies the key standards of professional and personal conduct expected of all staff.

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list. Any conduct that could undermine the work of the Service is not acceptable.

Prison Service Principles

The Prison Service Principles underpin the work of the Service and all staff are expected to act in accordance with them. Staff must therefore:

1. Deal fairly, openly and humanely with prisoners and all others who come into contact with them.
2. Encourage prisoners to address offending behaviour and respect others.
3. Value and support each other's contribution.
4. Promote equality of opportunity for all and combat discrimination wherever it occurs.
5. Work constructively with criminal justice agencies and other organisations.
6. Obtain best value from the resources available.

Conduct Expected

The following sets out the professional and personal standards of conduct expected of all staff.

General

Staff must carry out their duties loyally, conscientiously, honestly and with integrity. They must take responsibility and be accountable for their actions.

Staff must be courteous, reasonable and fair in their dealings with all prisoners, colleagues and members of the public. They must treat people with decency and respect.

All staff must comply with Service policies and procedures. Managers must ensure that standards of behaviour and conduct are maintained.

Discrimination, Harassment, Victimisation and Bullying

Behaviour of this kind is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff must not:

- Discriminate unlawfully against individuals or groups of individuals because of their gender, racial group, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other irrelevant factor.
- Harass others through behaviour, language and other unnecessary and uninvited actions.
- Victimise or bully others through their actions and behaviour.

Further explanation of what is expected of staff in this area is contained in PSO 8010 and the Director General's letter to staff of 11 May 2001.

Relationships with prisoners

Staff must exercise particular care to ensure that their dealings with prisoners, former prisoners and their friends and relations are not open to abuse, misrepresentation or exploitation on either side. Staff relationships with prisoners must be professional. In particular staff must not:

- Provoke, use unnecessary or unlawful force or assault a prisoner.
- Use offensive language to a prisoner.
- Have any sexual involvement with a prisoner.
- Give prisoners or ex-prisoners personal or other information about staff, prisoners or their friends and relatives which is held in confidence.
- Have any contact in or outside work with prisoners or ex-prisoners that is not authorised.
- Accept any approaches by prisoners for unauthorised information or favours and must report any such incidents.

Corruption

Corrupt behaviour is not acceptable. Staff must not solicit or accept any advantage, reward or preferential treatment for themselves or others by abusing or misusing their power and authority.

Conflicts of Interest

Staff must not have private interests that interfere or could interfere with the proper discharge of their duties. This includes financial and business interests but also any personal relationships which could compromise or be perceived to compromise them in the discharge of their duties. Staff must bring any potential conflicts of interests to the attention of a Senior Manager. Governors and Heads of Groups should maintain a register of conflicts of interest for their staff.

Criminal Activity

Staff must not be involved in any criminal activity. They must inform the Governor or Head of Group as soon as possible if they are charged with or convicted (including a police caution) of any criminal offence.

Use of Information

Staff must protect any information which they have obtained through their work in the Service.

Personal Finances

Staff must conduct their financial affairs in a proper and responsible way. If difficulties occur they must inform their manager. The Staff Care and Welfare Service and a "Debtline" are available to staff for advice and support.

Conduct that affects the Performance of Duties

Staff must not take any action on or off duty that could affect, cast doubt on or conflict with the performance of their official duties. For example, outside activities or membership of organisations which promote racism.

Discredit on the Service

Staff must not bring discredit on the Prison Service through their conduct on or off duty.

Civil Service Requirements

Staff must behave with discretion in matters of public and political controversy. They must observe the Civil Service-wide rules relating to political activities and the acceptance of outside appointments.

Staff Responsibility

All staff are personally responsible for ensuring their conduct is in line with the above standards. If staff are in any doubt as to what is acceptable conduct they must seek advice from their line manager.

Staff must challenge and report any possible suspicion of misconduct to their manager. If they are not able to do this they must report it to the Service's Reporting Wrongdoing hotline.

Issues of Conscience

If staff feel that to act or abstain from acting in a particular way would raise for them a fundamental issue of conscience and the problem cannot be resolved by any other means, they may take up the matter with the Director General. If the matter still cannot be resolved on a basis which the member of staff is able to accept, they must either carry out the instruction or resign.

Supporting Documents

This document underpins and complements other Service documents which staff should refer to for further information.

These include:

The Staff Handbook
The Code of Conduct and Discipline
PSO 8010 Equal Opportunities for Staff
Director General's letter to staff of 11 May 2001.