



CODE OF CONDUCT

Adopted at NC on 14th December 2010

Preface

This guide is based on a Code of Conduct put together in 2007 by the Standards Board for England.

Our Code of Conduct applies to all our trustees, staff, volunteers, and any member of Families Need Fathers (hereinafter collectively referred to simply as 'members') who engage with anyone else at FNF, contractors, outside agencies or members of the public.

All members are required to conform with the Code as part of their declarations of acceptance of membership and / or on taking up of /employment or office.

The following pages aim to provide you with a general understanding of the Code of Conduct and its requirements.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction.

Chapter 2 outlines your obligations under the Code of Conduct, referencing specific paragraphs of the Code of Conduct for further information.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with general issues surrounding interests, and aim to clarify a number of provisions which you will find in Parts 2 and 3 of the Code of Conduct.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Adopting the Model Code

The Code was adopted by trustees at the National Council Meeting on 14th December 2010 and applies with immediate effect from the publication of those Minutes on the FNF Website.

The Code of Conduct will give certainty to FNF members as to what standards are expected. It will ensure consistency throughout the organisation, hopefully avoiding any confusion for members.

Deciding when the Code of Conduct applies to you

The Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you act in any capacity as a member of Families Need Fathers, including whenever you conduct the business of FNF, or act, claim to act, or give the impression you are acting, in an official or unofficial capacity or as a representative of FNF. It also applies to your interaction with others during engagement in FNF activities.

The Ten General Principles of Public Life

- Selflessness – members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
- Honesty & integrity – members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly, and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.
- Objectivity – members should make decisions on merit, in the best interest of members, groups, branches, the Charity as a whole, and the public (i.e. non members, other organisations, and other interested third parties).
- Accountability – members should be accountable to each other and the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.
- Openness – members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.
- Personal judgement – members may take account of the views of others, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.
- Respect for others – members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the charity and all its members.
- Duty to uphold the law – members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the charity and the public is entitled to place in them.
- Stewardship – members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that they use their resources prudently, and in accordance with the law.
- Leadership – members should promote and support these principles by leadership where appropriate and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

Chapter 2: General obligations under the Code of Conduct

Treating others with respect

You must treat others with respect.

In politics, rival groupings are common, either in formal political parties or more informal alliances. It is expected that each will campaign for their ideas, and they may also seek to discredit the policies and actions of their opponents. Criticism of ideas and opinion is part of democratic debate, and does not in itself amount to bullying or failing to treat someone with respect.

This applies to FNF, as it does with any other organisation of any size. Ideas and policies may be robustly criticised, but individuals should not be subject to unreasonable, excessive or sustained personal attack. This also applies to branch officers, workshop facilitators etc. in applying the rules to how meetings around the country are conducted.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some members of the public, or of FNF can make unreasonable demands on members of FNF, members should, as far as possible, treat each other and the public courteously and with consideration. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers expectations and confidence in FNF's representatives, elected, appointed, or otherwise.

Members must not seek to undermine the work or reputation of others, and ensure that performance related or other genuine concerns are raised through the correct channels. They should also take care not to libel others whether members or external organisations and their representatives.

Complying with equality laws

You must not do anything which may cause any equality laws to be breached.

Equality laws prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

The provisions of these laws are complex. In summary, there are four main forms of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination: treating people differently because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age.
- Indirect discrimination: treatment which does not appear to differentiate between people because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age, but which disproportionately disadvantages them.
- Harassment: engaging in unwanted conduct on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age, which violates another person's dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- Victimisation: treating a person less favourably because they have complained of discrimination, brought proceedings for discrimination, or been involved in complaining about or bringing proceedings for discrimination.

Equality laws also impose positive duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality.

Under equality laws, FNF may be liable for any discriminatory acts which you commit. This will apply when you do something in your capacity as a member of the charity in a discriminatory manner.

You must be careful not to act in a way which may amount to any of the prohibited forms of discrimination, or to do anything which hinders your authority's fulfilment of its positive duties under equality laws. Such conduct may cause FNF to break the law, and you may find yourself subject to a complaint that you have breached this paragraph of the Code of Conduct.

Bullying and intimidation

You must not bully any person including members and non members.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour. Such behaviour may happen once or be part of a pattern of behaviour directed at a weaker person or person over whom you have some actual or perceived influence. An example of this might be the copying of personal criticism on distribution lists that include someone's peers, other staff, managers, trustees, branch officers or members.

Bullying behaviour attempts to undermine an individual or a group of individuals, is detrimental to their confidence and capability, and may adversely affect their health.

This can be contrasted with the legitimate challenges which a member can make in challenging policy or scrutinising performance. You are entitled to challenge fellow members as to why they hold their views, but this does need to be done in a constructive manner.

It is important that you raise issues about poor performance in the correct way and in accordance with FNF's policies on grievances, complaints and other matters, which are available on the FNF website. However, if your criticism is a personal attack or of an offensive nature, you are likely to cross the line of what is acceptable behaviour.

You must not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be a complainant, a witness, or involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings relating to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

However much you may be concerned about allegations that you or a fellow member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, it is always wrong to bully, intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person involved in an investigation or hearing. Even though you may not have breached the Code of Conduct, you will have your say during any independent investigation or hearing, and you should let these processes follow their natural course.

If you intimidate a witness in an investigation about your conduct, for example, you may find yourself subject to another complaint that you breached this paragraph of the Code of Conduct.

Compromising the impartiality of officers of the Charity

You must not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, FNF (whether paid or otherwise).

You should not approach or pressure anyone who works for, or on behalf of, FNF to carry out their duties in a biased or partisan way. They must be neutral and should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality.

Although you can robustly question trustees and management in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity and judgement.

Disclosing confidential information

You must not disclose confidential information, or information which you believe to be of a confidential nature, except in any of the following circumstances:

- You have the consent of the person authorised to give it.
- You are required by law to do so.
- The disclosure is made to a third party for the purposes of obtaining professional advice (for example, a solicitor or other professional adviser) provided that person agrees not to disclose the information to any other person. In such an instance you should not disclose the identity of the individual involved.
- The disclosure is in the public interest. This is only justified in limited circumstances, when all of the following four requirements are met:
 - a) the disclosure must be reasonable
 - b) the disclosure must be in the public interest
 - c) the disclosure must be made in good faith
 - d) the disclosure must be made in compliance with any reasonable requirements of FNF

In relation to the disclosure of confidential information in the public interest, the four requirements to be met are outlined in more detail below.

1. The first requirement, that the disclosure must be reasonable, requires you to consider matters such as:
 - Whether you believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, is substantially true. If you do not believe this, the disclosure is unlikely to be reasonable.
 - The identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made. It may be reasonable to disclose information to the police or to an appropriate regulator. It is less likely to be reasonable for you to disclose the information to the world at large through the media.
 - The extent of the information disclosed. The inclusion of unnecessary detail, and in particular, private matters such as addresses or telephone numbers, is likely to render the disclosure unreasonable.
 - The seriousness of the matter. The more serious the matter disclosed, the more likely it is that the disclosure will be reasonable.

- The timing of the disclosure. If the matter to which the disclosure relates has already occurred, and is unlikely to occur again, the disclosure may be less likely to be reasonable than if the matter is continuing, or is likely to reoccur.
 - Whether the disclosure involves your authority failing in a duty of confidence owed to another person.
2. The second requirement, that the disclosure must be in the public interest, needs to involve one or more of the following matters or something of comparable seriousness, that has either happened in the past, is currently happening, or is likely to happen in the future:
 - (a) A criminal offence is committed.
 - (b) A member fails to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject.
 - (c) A miscarriage of justice occurs.
 - (d) The health or safety of any individual is in danger.
 - (e) The environment is likely to be damaged.
 - (f) That information tending to show any matter falling within (a) to (e) is deliberately concealed.
 3. The third requirement, that the disclosure is made in good faith, will not be met if you act with an ulterior motive, for example, to achieve an advantage or to settle a score with another member.
 4. The fourth requirement, that you comply with the reasonable requirements of FNF, means that before making the disclosure you must comply with your authority's policies or protocols on matters such as whistle-blowing and confidential information. You must first raise your concerns through the appropriate channels set out in such policies or protocols.

In summary, to decide whether the disclosure is reasonable and in the public interest, you may need to conduct a balancing exercise weighing up the public interest in maintaining confidentiality against any countervailing public interest favouring disclosure. This will require a careful focus on how confidential the information is, on any potentially harmful consequences of its disclosure, and on any factors which may justify its disclosure despite these potential consequences.

In some situations, it is extremely unlikely that a disclosure can be justified in the public interest. These will include where the disclosure amounts to a criminal offence, or where the information disclosed is protected by legal professional privilege.

Intellectual property

Disclosing confidential information to third parties is subject to management approval and a non-disclosure agreement. Ideas or confidential information from third parties should not be received or used unless the appropriate safeguards are in place.

Preventing access to information

You must not prevent anyone getting information that they are entitled to by law.

You must not prevent any person from accessing information which they are entitled to by law. This includes information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or those copies of minutes, agendas, reports and other documents which they have a right to access.

Disrepute

You must not bring your group, branch, office, or any part of FNF into disrepute, or at any time through criminal activity that leads to a criminal conviction.

You should be aware that your actions in both your public and private life might have an adverse impact on the charity. Dishonest and deceitful behaviour in your role as a member may bring FNF into disrepute, as may conduct in your private life which results in a criminal conviction, such as dishonest, threatening or violent behaviour.

Using your position improperly

You must not use, or attempt to use, your position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of yourself or anyone else.

You should not use, or attempt to use, your position either for your or anybody else's personal gain or loss. For example, your behaviour would be improper if you sought to further your own private interests through your position as a member.

Trustees, staff and officers should make a 'Declaration of Interests' on any personal gains they may make related to their involvement with FNF. A log of such interests will be held by the Company Secretary.

Individuals should always act within agreed authority limits and should seek clarification if they are unclear as to their roles and responsibilities.

In addition to paragraph 6(a), paragraph 12 is also relevant to the proper use of your position. Paragraph 12 supports your role as an advocate of FNF, representing and speaking for the concerns of the charity, even where you have a prejudicial interest. This right applies to you at meetings where you have a statutory right to speak or you are provided with the same opportunity to speak as ordinary members of the public would be allowed.

The charity's resources

You must only use or authorise the use of the resources of the charity in accordance with its requirements.

Where FNF provides you with resources (for example telephone, computer and other IT facilities, use transport or support from employees), you must only use these resources or employees for carrying out FNF activities and any other activity which is appropriate.

You must be familiar with the rules applying to the use of these resources made by FNF. Failure to comply with FNF's rules is likely to amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

You must make sure you use the charity's resources for proper purposes only.