Local Government Association

NFCC National Fire Chiefs Council

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services

England

Foreword

You and the Code

This Core Code of Ethics will help you and every other member of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to act in the right way in your service to the public.

We all make difficult decisions every day. This may be while helping a distressed member of the public or managing a complex financial scenario. The Core Code of Ethics is a clear set of principles for you to base your behaviours on.

We believe the Core Code will help us serve our communities and make FRSs even better places to work. It will help everyone to display and promote good behaviours and to challenge conduct that is inconsistent with the Core Code.

Everyone in every FRS is expected to follow the Core Code. This includes those working with, or on behalf of, the FRS.

The principles

The Core Code sets out five ethical principles, which provide a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.

The ethical principles have been produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Seven Principles of Public Life[1] are the foundation of these principles.

We, and the organisations we represent, are all fully supportive of the five ethical principles as set out in this Core Code.

1. www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

Your FRS and the Code

The principles should be embedded within everything that FRSs and their employees do. FRSs will ensure that the principles of this Core Code are represented within policies and processes and are at the heart of day-to-day activity.

The Core Code is written as a 'Core' Code to recognise differing governance arrangements and is flexible enough for every service to adopt. Fire and Rescue Authorities and Services can add to the Code to reflect their local values, behaviours, and governance arrangements, including where they:

- are part of a county council and obliged to comply with the council's code
- have existing well-developed ethical codes that can be reviewed against the Core Code.

Accompanying guidance will support your FRS to implement the Core Code locally.

We encourage you all to read, understand, and commit to the ethical principles set out in the Core Code.

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LGA Lead
Core Code of Ethics

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1. Purpose of our Core Code

Public trust and confidence in our FRS rely on us all demonstrating ethical behaviours.

The Core Code sets out these ethical principles and helps us continuously improve our organisational culture and workforce diversity and assists us in supporting our community in the best way. It is effective only when we all consistently demonstrate the ethical behaviours. Everyone in every FRS is expected to follow the Core Code. This includes those working with, or on behalf of, the FRS.

The principles should be embedded within everything that FRSs and their employees do. FRSs will ensure that the principles of this Core Code are represented within policies and processes to ensure they are embedded and at the heart of day-to-day activity.

2. Our Five Fire and Rescue Service ethical principles

Each of our ethical principles is described by a statement and examples to set out what we must each do to ensure we are acting in line with our Core Code.

Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.

Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

3. Our ethical principles in practice

Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

To demonstrate this, I:

- act with empathy, compassion, and respect, caring equally for everyone I deal with
- consider the diverse needs of my communities and tailor my work to best meet their specific needs
- understand and evaluate the impact I have on the public's safety and wellbeing
- continuously improve my performance to better serve the public and my communities
- am an ambassador for my Fire and Rescue Service and a role model in my communities
- identify and remove barriers to people joining or accessing our service.

Some examples of putting our communities first:

- I find out about my local community and risks, to ensure I can offer the best service.
- I seek the views of others about service quality and effectiveness to identify ideas for improvement.
- I work collaboratively with colleagues and partners to improve the service to the public.
- I look to solve problems in different ways, to improve the service I provide.

Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.

To demonstrate this, I:

- am honest, open, and fair when dealing with everyone
- can evidence my decisions and am able to explain my behaviour
- build trusting relationships and demonstrate an understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities
- welcome challenge and adapt the way I work and my behaviour a result of what I learn
- challenge behaviour that does not comply with our Core Code or my service's values
- never behave in a way that may cause others to act outside our ethical principles
- remain impartial and objective
- never act in an improper way, or in a manner that could create a perception of improper behaviour for personal gain. I declare relevant interests and relationships and maintain personal and professional boundaries.

Some examples of acting with integrity:

- I acknowledge and learn from my mistakes and celebrate my successes with the team.
- I recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- I always strive to deliver against my commitments.
- I persist in the face of obstacles and demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility for delivery.

Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

To demonstrate this, I:

- use unbiased judgement and behaviour and act respectfully
- act with decency and impartiality, recognising that my unconscious bias can prevent me considering all perspectives and needs when I am making decisions
- do the right thing when delivering services, using the ethical principles set out in this Core Code and my service's values
- support the development and opportunity of myself and my colleagues
- create an environment of openness and trust
- treat people with respect and without discrimination, harassment, or bullying; I actively reject these inappropriate behaviours
- challenge all inappropriate behaviour when I am at work.

Some examples of having dignity and respect:

- My manner is always composed and respectful.
- I create an environment where people can be themselves at work and the best they can be.
- I communicate responsibly and with sensitivity and respect for others.
- I strive not to create conflict. When conflict happens, I handle it in a professional manner.
- I build trust with others, creating constructive working relationships to achieve goals.

Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for our behaviour, decisions, and actions, and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

To demonstrate this, I:

- take responsibility for continuously improving my own performance and the performance of my service
- am accountable to the public, my employer and my colleagues for my decisions and actions
- take responsibility for my actions and their consequences
- address inappropriate behaviour in ways appropriate to my role
- recognise leaders exist at all levels in my organisation and communities
- always demonstrate the principles of a positive culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion
- am committed to implementing and working by this Core Code
- address inappropriate behaviour in ways appropriate to my role.

Some examples of leadership:

- I am an ambassador for the Service, taking pride and responsibility for the work we do and encouraging others to do the same.
- I value inclusion and set a positive example of appropriate behaviour for everyone, consistent with our Core Code.
- I look after the people around me and look for signs that someone may need support, ensuring its' availability.
- I create conditions where team members feel confident to suggest and implement creative ideas.
- I make decisions based on evidence and consider all risks.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

To demonstrate this, I:

- acknowledge and care about people's diverse needs so they can access the services they need from me and my service
- provide an environment where everyone has an equal voice
- acknowledge my own unconscious bias and consider everyone's perspective
- behave in a way that celebrates diversity in all its forms, everywhere
- tackle discriminatory behaviour, policy, and procedure
- do all I can to encourage people from underrepresented groups to join our Service and feel welcome
- help everyone to be their best and to always learn from one another.

Some examples of equality, diversity, and inclusion:

- I deliberately create an environment where people can be the best they can.
- I value my colleagues and my team and know how to make best use of our diverse skills and strengths.
- I value and appreciate differences in people and treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- I recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- I avoid making and expressing preconceptions and stereotyping when interacting with others.

4. Commitment to our Core Code

We operate in rapidly changing environments, often with new ethical challenges. Our decisions are sometimes made in difficult, changing, and unclear situations.

The principles in this Core Code guide our individual behaviours and form the basis of ethical decision making as we go about our work. We will also need to consider:

- the needs of communities, partners, our service, and our employees
- our service's values and its guidance, policy, and procedure.

It is vital that we are fully committed to the principles in the Core Code as set out in the commitments.

Commitment from Fire and Rescue Authority and Service

Our behaviour is central to effectively serving our community. We will ensure the resources, policies and procedures are in place, so our organisation acts in accordance with the Core Code.

Through adhering to the Core Code, we will strive to create a positive, responsible, innovative, open, and challenging working environment in which ability and delivery is valued, encouraged, developed, recognised, and rewarded.

We are committed to continually improving the behaviours within the sector at all levels and ensuring that employees treat each other with humanity, dignity, and respect.

We will always act appropriately to address behaviour which falls below the standards set in the Core Code.

My commitment

As a member of the FRS, I will respect and follow the five principles in the Core Code in my service to the public.

I will promote the principles to my colleagues and challenge inappropriate behaviour that does not meet the five principles.

5. Our Five Ethical Principles on a page