

Core Code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services (England)

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1. Introduction

This Core Code of Ethics (Core Code) is designed to guide all Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) employees* in their day-to-day conduct, providing professional standards of practice and behaviour to carry out business honestly and with integrity and to underpin organisational culture. It provides the expectations for how employees should behave in any given situation, to assist with decision-making.

Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and FRSs will strive to conduct all our activities efficiently, to the highest ethical standards and in compliance with legal obligations.

Ethics are a cornerstone of professionalism. Ethical behaviour is crucial to maintain public trust and confidence, and to continue to build a reputation which people value and are aware of. This Core Code will also support the fire and rescue service in improving the culture and the diversity within it, and will also ensure that an ethical approach is embedded into all areas of service.

The Core Code reflects best practice principles and has been designed to underpin the way we serve our communities, carry out our role, and work together. It is intended to become the common foundation across all services in England. However, to recognise the differing positions within FRSs currently as well as differing governance arrangements, it has been written as a Core Code. This means that whilst all the principles within the Core Code should be adopted and embedded within each FRS, it also has the flexibility to add to (but not detract from) those principles at local level. This will help local FRA/FRS to reflect their local values, behaviours, and governance arrangement. Examples include where:

- an FRS is part of a county council and is likely to still have obligations placed upon it to evidence it also complies with the council's code
- an FRS has a well-developed local ethical framework and/or related policies, which should be reviewed against the Core Code.

This approach should therefore underpin an FRSs' own values, vision, mission, and strategic business plans, which should be inclusive and be reflective of change in community risk.
(*employees refers to employees, volunteers, and any other service representatives)



This Core Code also has a preventive role. It requires everyone to promote and display the standards expected of a modern FRS. It requires unprofessional conduct and behaviour to be challenged and addressed appropriately.

2. Structure of the Code

The Seven Principles of Public Life form the foundation for the FRS Core Code of Ethics.

The FRS Core Code of Ethics, which has been produced by the NFCC and the LGA, identifies five primary ethical principles that are specifically applicable to the FRS and have been developed with the Nolan principles as the guiding framework.

Each of these primary principles is described by a statement that, taken together, signify what good practice by all employees of the FRSs will look like.

They lay out the precise forms of ethical conduct and behaviour that every FRS will adhere to in all its activities and in ensuring its employees, feel valued and respected.

The five Fire and Rescue Service Ethical principles

Community at our Heart: We will put the interest of the public, the community, and service users first.

Integrity: We will act with integrity including being open, honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in our actions, words, decisions, methods, and outcomes.

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

Leadership: We will be positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

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

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) We will continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve.

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

NOLAN PRINCIPLES

Selflessness: We act in the interest of the public, with a focus of how the service provides value and benefit to the community

Integrity: We always do the right thing

Objectivity: We provide an evidence-based service to the public

Accountability: We are responsible for our decisions and behaviour

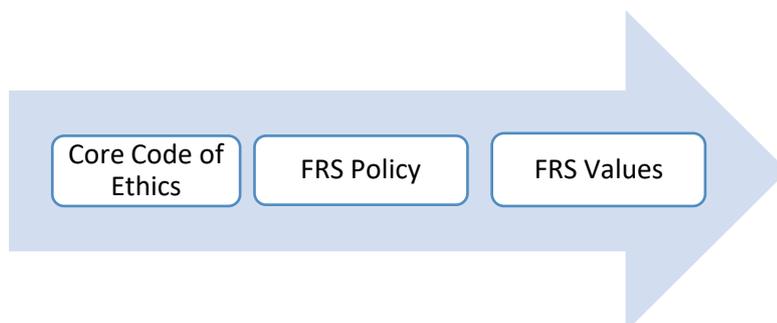
Openness: We are open and transparent in everything that we do

Honesty: We are truthful and trustworthy

Leadership: We act as a role model, exhibiting these principles and challenging poor behaviour whenever it occurs



This Core Code is designed to support cultural development within FRSs and to provide a set of principles from which the expected behaviours can be measured. The Core Code is not meant to cover all procedural or policy-based decisions, rather 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.



FRSs operate in a rapidly changing environment where new ethical challenges arise on a regular basis. Therefore, we often have to make decisions in difficult, changing, and unclear situations. The principles within this Core Code should form the basis of ethical decision making, supplemented by the needs of the FRS, employees, the community, and service users.

FRA / FRS Commitment

Our behaviour is central to how we deliver services to our community. We will ensure the resources are in place to enable the delivery of services in line with its ethical values and vision. We will also strive to be an employer of choice through the creation of 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. Inappropriate behaviour has no place in a progressive FRS, and needs to be identified and addressed in an appropriate way on each occasion.

My Commitment

I will respect and encourage the ethical values and vision set out within this Core Code. As a representative of the FRS, it is my personal responsibility to act and promote the principles within this Core Code, supplemented by my own FRS's values.

Community at our Heart

We will put the interest of the public, the community, and service users at the heart of all that we do.

To achieve this, we must:

- Act with the interest of the public at the heart of everything we do
- Be selfless in our service to the community and act with empathy, compassion, and respect. We will always involve, consult, and listen to people to ensure that we continue to have a wider understanding of the impact that service activity has on improved community outcomes
- Be concerned more with the needs of others than our own
- Foster and enable continuous improvement and be committed to developing an FRS which delivers improved community outcomes through efficient and effective service delivery
- Continually demonstrate our commitment to improving public safety, with public benefit and value at the centre of everything we do
- Be ambassadors and role models for our FRS, maintaining an honest, open, and transparent approach
- Be a positive presence in our communities, having high personal integrity and enhancing our reputation within our communities.

Integrity

We will act with integrity including being open, honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in our actions, words, decisions, methods, and outcomes.

To achieve this, we must:

- Value honesty, probity, accuracy, clarity, and fairness in our interactions with everybody whether within the FRS or externally, and seek to promote integrity in all aspects of our professional endeavours
- Act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner using all evidence and the data available
- Continue to foster trust and build collaborative working relationships, demonstrating a clear and accepted understanding of our roles and responsibilities
- Welcome and encourage challenge, and be willing to adapt our thinking and respond appropriately
- Recognise and challenge behaviour where it falls short of these ethical principles
- Avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence our work. We will remain impartial and objective
- Never act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for personal gain. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships and maintain personal and professional boundaries
- Remain consistent in our ethical and moral behaviour, ensuring that it is reflective of the FRS cultural values that make it a positive place to work.

Dignity and Respect

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

To achieve this, we must:

- Always demonstrate unbiased judgement and behaviour and act in a respectful manner. We will act with decency and impartiality. Recognising and understanding unconscious biases will allow FRSs to consider all perspectives when making decisions
- Strive to do the right thing using strong moral and ethical principles in delivering effective public services and in working together
- Remain committed to supporting the development of all staff and ensuring a transparent, objective, and consistent approach to recruitment, progression, and the management of performance
- Act in a way that creates an environment of openness and trust
- Treat people with respect at all times and without discrimination, harassment, or bullying. There is no place in our FRS for such behaviours and we will challenge and address any form of inappropriate behaviour.

Leadership

We will be positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership at all levels.

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

To achieve this, we must:

- Be committed as senior leaders to the implementation of this Core Code and drive the strategies that underpin this.
- Take responsibility for continuous improvement in our performance
- Remain accountable to the public, our employers, and each other and, as such, accountable for our decisions and actions
- Be willing to take responsibility for our own actions and for the consequences associated with our actions
- Recognise leaders emerge at all levels within an organisation and it is incumbent upon all leaders to role model positive behaviours within both the workplace and the community.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

We will continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the Fire and Rescue Service and the wider communities in which we serve.

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

To achieve this, we must:

- Listen to, understand, and recognise the diverse needs of people to ensure that information, services, and products are accessible and inclusive
- Ensure that our buildings, facilities, and procurement processes reflect our strong commitment to EDI
- Recognise that unconscious bias exists and ensure that we take the perspective of all groups into account when making decisions or developing policies
- Demonstrate behaviours which recognise and celebrate the values of diversity of thought, identity, culture, background, and experience, both within the workforce and our communities
- Challenge and address any discriminatory behaviours, policies, and procedures
- Continue to address under-representation in our workforce at all levels and may use lawful positive action measures to do this
- Attract, recruit, and develop a talented and diverse workforce and will help all employees to develop their professional potential, ensuring that we continue to learn from each other.



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council



Infographic – the 5 Fire and Rescue Service Primary Ethical Principles (to be inserted once the Core Code is finalised).