Committee on Standards in Public Life 'Ethics for Regulators' Review

CSPL Ethics for Regulators Review: Regulators Survey

The Committee on Standards in Public Life is an independent advisory body, which advises the Prime Minister. The Committee promotes high ethical standards in public life and works to ensure that the Seven Principles of Public Life - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership - underpin all aspects of public life. The Seven Principles of Public Life were introduced in 1995. Further information is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life

The Committee on Standards in Public Life is currently undertaking a review into the ethical standards of bodies exercising regulatory and similar functions. The 'Ethics for Regulators' review, which was announced in the Committee's 2015-16 business plan, will explore how effectively regulatory bodies are embracing and promoting the Seven Principles of Public Life. The Committee would like to gather information from regulators themselves, to inform the issues to be explored as part of the review.

The short survey asks broad questions about ethical standards. If you wish to answer some or all of the questions by reference to specific documents produced by your organisation, please feel free to send these to us (by URL link or electronically to: public@public-standards.gov.uk), identifying relevant sections. The Committee may wish to contact respondees further regarding particular issues raised.

The Committee would be grateful to receive your response not later than Friday 25 September. If you are unable to access the online version of the survey please contact the Committee's Secretariat to receive an alternative version to complete (public@public-standards.gov.uk / 020 7271 6642).

Questions:

1. **Please provide your contact details**

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2. **How (if at all) are the Seven Principles of Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership) embraced, embedded and promoted within your organisation?**

   Partners: During recruitment to partner roles, applicants are required to demonstrate commitment to the Seven Principles of Public Life. Role briefs for all partner roles include adherence to the Seven Principles of Public Life in the essential criteria and in the duties for the role.

   Board members (Council members): During recruitment to Council member roles, applicants are required to demonstrate commitment to the Seven Principles of Public Life. Role briefs for all Council member roles include adherence to the Seven Principles of Public Life in the essential criteria and in the duties for the role**.**

   Employees: The HCPC has five organisational values: Transparency, Collaboration, Responsiveness, Value for money, High quality service. These are closely linked to the Seven Principles of Public Life. Employees (as well as Council members) are introduced to these during induction and are expected to demonstrate them throughout their work.

   In addition the HCPC has developed a behavioural competency framework for employees based on these five values, which underpins the annual performance development review process.

2.1 Does your organisation have a Code of Conduct relating to ethical conduct? If so, what are its key elements?

   Partners and Council members: The Code of conduct for partners and Council members specifically requires them to comply with the seven principles of public life. Its key elements are as follows:

General principles

They are expected to act at all times in the manner of someone associated with a public regulatory body. They should refrain from any illegal, dishonest or unethical conduct at all times, not just when they are providing services to the HCPC.

Partners and Council members must:

- act in good faith, with honesty, integrity and probity;

- promote the HCPC's objective of protecting the public;

- comply with the seven principles of public life (set out below);

- treat others equally, fairly and with respect; and

- take personal responsibility for adhering to this Code of Conduct.

Partners and Council members must not:

- act in a manner which may bring HCPC into disrepute; or

- misuse their position for personal gain or to promote their other interests.

There is an agreed process in place for dealing with any breach of the code.

Employees:

In addition to the Disciplinary policy, there is a separate Code of Conduct for employees which is set out in the Employee Handbook. Key elements of the Code include the following:

- Gross misconduct is behaviour which is 'serious enough to damage the working relationship between the HCPC and the employee, destroying the relationship of mutual trust and confidence, making continuation of the working relationship impossible'.

- Employees are to conduct themselves at all times in the manner expected of anyone working for a reputable organisation, behaving in a professional, civil and dignified manner towards colleagues, partners, registrants, applicants and members of the public.

- Employees have a duty to report any workplace wrongdoing or malpractice of which they become aware, particularly if such behaviour could expose the HCPC to loss, liability or embarrassment or have a detrimental impact on its reputation.

- Employees must not behave in a way which is discriminatory or involves intimidation, physical or verbal threats, harassment, violent or criminal acts.

Employees must treat as confidential any personal information about individual council members, partners, employees, registrants and applicants.

3. **Does your organisation have a policy on the following:**

Transparency (in terms of proactively publishing minutes, decisions, registers of interest etc): All our Council and Committee meetings are held in public and members of the public are welcome to attend. The papers for the meetings, including the minutes of the previous meeting, are published one week in advance of the meeting and made available on our website. Each Council and Committee member has a Register of Interests on their profile page and, in addition, there is standing item on each agenda for members to declare any interests. The Executive Management Team (EMT) and Cross Departmental Team (CDT) meeting minutes and reports are published on the intranet and available to all employees.

Declarations and conflicts of interest: Partners and Council members must declare conflicts of interest during recruitment and on an ongoing basis. Council members are invited at the start of each Council or Committee meeting to make any declarations of interests related to the topics to be discussed. It is a contractual requirement for partners to inform us of any conflict of interest throughout the provision of their services. A visitor (i.e. a partner involved in education approval and monitoring processes) will be requested to confirm that there are no conflicts of interest in advance of being assigned a visit to a programme.

EMT members are asked to declare any conflicts of interest on an annual basis and in addition, there is a standing item on each monthly agenda.

Gifts and hospitality: Yes, there is a policy for employees, partners and Council members.

Recruitment of staff from the regulated sector: No

Movement of former employees to the regulated sector: No

Secondments and interchange into and out of the organisation: There is no formal policy, but decisions about secondments are made on a case by case basis in agreement with the individual and their line manager.

Whistleblowing: Yes there is a policy on whistleblowing for employees.

Handling complaints about the organisation: Yes, there is a formal process for handling complaints received about HCPC. This is outlined on our website here: http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/customerservice/. We respond to all feedback received about the services we provide, and we use it to regularly review and update our internal processes and as tools in training employees and partners.

3.1 To what extent do any of these policies apply differently (or not at all) to any Board, Non-Executive or similar office-holders?

Where possible, we have tried to align the policies applying to employees, Partners and Council members to ensure consistency. However, where different policies apply, we have indicated this above.

3.2 Please summarise or refer to any innovative or specific aspect of any of these policies, which particularly reflect your organisation's role as a body with regulatory or similar functions

We recognise the important role that HCPC plays in ensuring safe, ethical and appropriate conduct by registrants and therefore we aim to align internal values and codes of conduct with the standards we set.

4. How are ethical issues dealt with as part of induction or training within your organisation?

Partners and Council members: Partners and Council members are reminded about the Code of conduct, including the Seven principles of public life, during induction training. Specific training on equality and diversity is provided.

Employees: As stated above, the induction process for new employees includes a general introduction to the HCPC's values and values-based competency framework. These are reinforced through the annual performance and development review. Specific training on equality and diversity is provided.

5. How do your organisation's appraisal, promotion and reward procedures take account of values and ethical behaviour?

Partners: The partner peer appraisal system requires assessment under a range of criteria, including demonstration of appropriate values, integrity and commitment to providing high standards of professional service.

Employees: The employee appraisal system is underpinned by the HCPC's values-based competency framework. In addition, there is an annual 'Employee of the Year' award with criteria which are based on the five values.

Council members: Council members undertake an annual self-assessment and when preparing that, we ask that they refer to their responsibilities under the Council Code of Conduct, published on the website as part of the code of corporate governance, and the seven principles of public life.

6. How are ethical risks included in your organisation's risk register or other risk management procedures?

Ethical risks are explicitly detailed within the corporate risk register. Examples include risks relating to Council members' conflicts of interest; expense claim abuse; and failure to adhere to the requirements of the Bribery Act. These are accompanied by appropriate mitigations which are reviewed every six months by the risk owners and the Audit Committee.

7. Who provides ethical leadership and how is the ethical tone of the organisation maintained?

Ethical leadership is provided by the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Council. We have an open and transparent culture which promotes continuous improvement and the importance of raising concerns or issues within the organisation to a manager or person with responsibility.

8. What is the procedure for dealing with ethical dilemmas that arise within the organisation?

In general, we would look to Council for direction in relation to any contentious issues, as well as using the public consultation process as a back stop to check whether there are any ethical issues we haven't considered.

9. How does your organisation satisfy itself on a regular basis about the adequacy of the organisation's arrangements for safeguarding high ethical standards?

All policies for employees, partners and Council members are kept under regular review to ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriate. This includes the Codes of conduct and the appraisal processes. In addition, the Risk Register, which includes ethical risks, are reviewed regularly as part of the work of the Audit Committee and Council.

10. Do you have any further comments you wish to share regarding ethical standards of regulatory bodies, either in relation to your own organisation or more broadly?

To echo some words used earlier, we recognise the important role that HCPC plays in ensuring safe, ethical and appropriate conduct by registrants and therefore we aim to align internal values and codes of conduct with the standards we set.