

2021

Code of conduct



L&Q

Our code for board members,
staff and involved residents

An introduction by L&Q's Chief Executive



The National Housing Federation (NHF) requires that members adopt and ensure compliance with a code of conduct for board members, staff and involved residents to uphold the highest standards of probity and conduct.

L&Q welcomes the opportunity to reaffirm its adoption of the NHF model code of conduct, and to mark Trafford Housing Trust's entry into the L&Q Group, has taken the opportunity to refresh and restate its commitment to L&Q's five values that underpin who we are and what we do, wherever we are.

This L&Q code of conduct represents a summary of the principles and standards of conduct we expect of all employees, board members and our involved residents. By complying with the code, and demonstrating L&Q's values in our everyday work, we will ensure that we work to the highest standards, work co-operatively as a team, and we will lay the foundations that will enable L&Q to achieve its core objective – to enable better lives through creating better places to live.

Fiona Fletcher-Smith
Group Chief Executive

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Introduction

Our values

Our five core values underpin all that we do:



Code of conduct

While your conduct is expected to reflect L&Q's values, this code goes further by setting out agreed, effective, specific conduct required of all individuals directly involved in delivering L&Q's business activities. It will ensure that we engage with each other in a professional manner, with dignity and respect, showing integrity and avoiding any suggestion of influence by biased or improper motives.

Except where otherwise indicated, the code applies equally to board members, staff and involved residents within the L&Q Group (referred collectively as L&Q) – this includes members of Group Board and the board of L&Q Living Limited, Board committee members and Resident Services Group. With the exception of Trafford Housing Trust Limited (THT) and L&Q Estates, references to L&Q apply to all subsidiaries of the L&Q Group.

THT and L&Q Estates may adopt their own codes of conduct which may vary from this Code because their nature or business characteristics mean that they need to reference organisation specific policies, include stipulations that do not exist in this Code or exclude some of the terms in this Code.

These subsidiary codes of conduct will not contradict the provisions of or weaken the effectiveness of this Code.

A copy of the code will be provided to all staff, board and committee members and involved residents. You must familiarise yourself with the contents and act in accordance with its principles and provisions at all times. Breaches of the code are always taken seriously. Failure to comply with the code may be an employment or governance disciplinary matter.

The code cannot cover every situation you may face in your everyday role at L&Q. You may find yourself faced with difficult situations or faced with an unexpected dilemma. If board members or involved residents have any doubts or questions regarding the application of the code, or in relation to a specific issue, they should seek advice and guidance from the Company Secretary. Members of staff should seek advice and guidance, where appropriate, from:

- Their line manager
- The Human Resources Department, or
- The Company Secretary.

The code is consistent with the seven Principles of Public Life (see appendix 1). Although housing associations such as L&Q are not public bodies, the provision of social housing is a public function and L&Q recognises the need to uphold the same principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Associated policies and procedures

The code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the L&Q Group's policies and procedures which are relevant to your role, and in force in your organisation including:

- The staff handbook
- The health and safety policy
- Standing orders
- Financial regulations
- HR policies
- Staff equality and diversity policy
- Use of IT policies
- The whistle-blowing policy
- The anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy
- L&Q code of conduct for maintenance contractors
- Safeguarding Adults At Risk policy
- Safeguarding Children policy, and
- Conflicts of Interest policy.

Breach of code

If you believe there has been a breach of the code you should report the breach to the appropriate party above. Alternatively, you can report a breach under the L&Q whistle-blowing policy to any of the contacts listed in the Whistleblowing Policy.

Where you are in doubt about a possible breach of the code, you are encouraged to report your concerns or to seek advice at the level that you feel is important. Anyone who has concerns about misconduct, and reports this in good faith, will have nothing to fear and will be supported by L&Q.



The main principles of the code

General responsibilities: You must fulfil your duties and obligations responsibly, acting at all times in good faith and in the best interests of L&Q, its residents and other service users.

Conflicts of interests: You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that no undeclared conflict arises, or could reasonably be perceived to arise, between your duties and your personal interests, financial or otherwise.

Bribery, gifts and hospitality: You must not offer, seek or accept bribes or inducements to act improperly or corruptly. You must not seek or accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits from individuals or organisations that might reasonably be seen to compromise your judgement or integrity, or place you under an obligation to those individuals or organisations.

Funds and resources: You must not misuse L&Q's funds or resources.

Confidentiality: You must handle information in accordance with the law and L&Q's policies and procedures.

Respect for others: You must treat others with respect at all times.

Relationship between board members, staff and involved residents: Board members, staff and involved residents must maintain a constructive, professional relationship based on a sound understanding of their respective roles.

Relationship with residents and other service users: You must maintain high standards of professionalism, fairness and courtesy in all your dealings with residents and other service users.

Health, safety and security: Your conduct must not endanger the health, safety or security of yourself or others.

Conduct at meetings: Your conduct at board and other meetings must meet a high standard of integrity, commitment and courtesy.

Representing L&Q: In representing L&Q at external events and in dealings with outside bodies, you must uphold and promote the association's values, objectives and policies.

Learning and development: In partnership with L&Q, you must take responsibility for your own learning and development, regularly updating and refreshing your skills and knowledge.

Reporting concerns: You must report any reasonable and honest suspicions you may have about possible wrongdoing.



A General responsibilities

Main principle

You must fulfil your duties and obligations responsibly, acting at all times in good faith and in the best interests of L&Q, its residents and other service users.

Provisions

- A1.** You must comply with the law, your terms of appointment and L&Q's policies and procedures relating to your role.
- A2.** You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing L&Q into disrepute. This includes membership of, or participation in, activities organised by groups or organisations whose values are inconsistent with L&Q's (for instance, racist organisations) which could create reasonable doubt in your ability to comply with L&Q's values and this code.
- A3.** You must not bring L&Q's name into disrepute or affect its integrity by your actions or words, either within the organisation or outside. This includes the use of, or entries on, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others).

This includes making derogatory comments about L&Q, its residents or other service users, partners or services, either in person or in writing or via any web-based media such as a personal blog or other site. This also applies if you do not name L&Q but where its identity can reasonably be inferred, or where you use a pseudonym but your identity can reasonably be inferred.

If you have a genuine concern about possible wrongdoing, you must report it to the appropriate senior person within the organisation (see section M).

- A4.** You must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals, groups or interests.

- A5.** You must respect the appropriate channels for handling tenancy and service provision issues. You must not act outside L&Q's established procedures in any matter concerning any resident or other service user.

- A6.** You must not misuse your position, for example, by using information acquired in the course of your duties for your private interests or those of others.

- A7.** You must respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that once the board has made a decision you must support that decision.

You must comply with L&Q's conflict of interest policy and its associated guidelines on appointments to external bodies in connection with the following:

Political campaigning

- A8.** You must not engage in any political or campaigning activity that might compromise the position of L&Q. Board members, Board committee members or involved residents intending to stand for political office must discuss the matter with the chair, and members of staff with their line manager.

Board and Committee members

- A9.** If you take up new employment or appointments during your term of office on the board or on a Board committee, you must make any necessary declaration of interest. Any such work or position must not interfere with your role as a board or committee member.

Staff members

- A10.** You must consult your manager before taking on any outside work or any position, paid or unpaid. Any such work or position must not interfere with your existing job or conflict with the interests of your job or L&Q.

B Conflicts of interest

Main principle

You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that no undeclared conflict arises, or could reasonably be perceived to arise, between your duties and your personal interests, financial or otherwise.

Provisions

- B1.** You must comply with L&Q's policies and procedures for declaring, recording and handling conflicts of interest. Amongst other things, these require you to declare any private interests which may, or may be perceived to, conflict with the duties of your role.
- B2.** You must ensure that your entry in L&Q's register of interests is complete, accurate and up-to-date.
- B3.** You must comply with L&Q's policies and procedures relating to the application for employment or housing from members of staff, board members, involved residents or others to whom they are related or closely connected.
- B4.** You must not be involved in the appointment of staff where you are related, or are closely connected, to an applicant. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, pay or benefits for any member of staff to whom you are related or closely connected.
- B5.** You must not be involved in the appointment of a contractor or supplier where you are related, or closely connected, to an organisation or individual applying or tendering for a contract. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in establishing the terms of a contract, or its ongoing monitoring and management, where you are related, or closely connected, to the contractor or supplier.
- B6.** Except where specifically permitted, you must normally avoid using L&Q's contractors and suppliers for private purposes. Where this is unavoidable, you must not receive a more favourable service than would be received by other customers as a result of your connection with L&Q. Prior approval must be sought before using the supplier or contractor and a written declaration made confirming that no financial or other advantage has been secured as a result of the relationship with L&Q.
- B7.** You must not use, or attempt to use, your position to promote your personal interests or those of any connected person, business or other organisation.



C Bribery, gifts and hospitality

Main principle

You must not offer, seek or accept bribes or inducements to act improperly or corruptly. You must not seek or accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits from individuals or organisations that might reasonably be seen to compromise your judgement or integrity or place you under an obligation to those individuals or organisations.

Provisions

- C1.** You must comply with the law and L&Q's policies and procedures in relation to:
 - 1) Fraud, bribery and corruption, and
 - 2) The giving, receipt, approval and recording of gifts and hospitality.
- C2.** You must not canvass or seek gifts or hospitality or other benefits.
- C3.** If you are offered gifts or hospitality, they should either be declined, or prior approval sought for their acceptance. The only exceptions are gifts of token value or modest hospitality given in connection with normal work meetings. L&Q's policies give further guidance.

D Funds and resources

Main principle

You must not misuse L&Q's funds or resources.

Provisions

- D1.** You must comply with L&Q's policies and procedures regarding the use of its funds and resources. 'Resources' includes staff, information, telephone, computer and other IT facilities, equipment, stationery and transport.
- D2.** You must ensure that the organisational funds and resources entrusted to you are used efficiently, economically and effectively.
- D3.** You must comply with L&Q's policies and procedures regarding procurement ensuring value for money and fairness in decision-making.
- D4.** You must take reasonable measures to protect L&Q's funds, resources, property and assets from theft, damage and misuse.
- D5.** You must comply with L&Q's policies and procedures relating to the acceptable or unacceptable use of email, intranet and internet services. Amongst other things, these policies and procedures prohibit access to pornographic or racist material, and the use of unauthorised or unlicensed software.
- D6.** You must claim reimbursement only for expenditure that was properly and reasonably incurred in carrying out L&Q's business. You must ensure that any expenses claim you make is accurate and complies with L&Q's policies and procedures.
- D7.** You must comply with the provisions of s.122 of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008 (see appendix 2) which restricts the making of gifts and payment of dividends and bonuses to members of L&Q's Group Board.

E Confidentiality

Main principle

You must handle information in accordance with the law and L&Q's policies and procedures.

Provisions

- E1. You must comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 which governs the protection of personal data. All personal data held about residents and other service users, employees and others, whether on paper or electronically is subject to the provisions of the Act. L&Q's and L&Q Living's policies and procedures give further guidance.
- E2. You must not disclose without authority any confidential business information. Confidential business information includes financial information and information relating to our customers, business plans, policies, staff and/or internal discussions. This duty continues to apply after you have left L&Q or relinquished your position.
- E3. You must not, without permission, pass or distribute to the press or media or any other external recipient(s) information or materials relating to L&Q.
- E4. In your capacity as a board or staff member or involved resident, you must not, without prior authority:
 - 1) Appear to represent the views or position of L&Q
 - 2) Write letters to the press or other recipients(s)
 - 3) Write media articles, blog posts or tweets etc, about L&Q and its activities, or
 - 4) Make comments or statements to the media – if approached you must pass the enquiry to the appropriate person.
- E5. You must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which they are entitled by law.

F Respect for others

Main principle

You must treat others with respect at all times.

Provisions

- F1. You must comply with the law and with L&Q's policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity. Equality laws prohibit discrimination on grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and impose positive duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality. L&Q's policies give further guidance.
- F2. You must not harass, bully or attempt to intimidate any person or encourage others to do so. L&Q's policies give further guidance.
- F3. You must not display materials in the workplace which other people might reasonably find offensive or use language which board or work colleagues or customers might reasonably find offensive.

G Relationship between board members, staff and involved residents

Main principle

Board members, staff and involved residents must maintain a constructive, professional relationship based on a sound understanding of their respective roles.

Provisions

Board members

- G1.** You have a duty of loyalty and support towards L&Q and this must be reflected in a constructive, professional relationship with its staff.
- G2.** You must not go beyond your role as a board member and become inappropriately involved in operational matters.
- G3.** In your dealings with staff, formally and informally, you must set an example by demonstrating the highest standards of integrity and ethics and your alignment with the values, policies and objectives of L&Q.

Board members and involved residents

- G4.** Where it is necessary to raise issues of poor staff performance at a formal meeting, these must be raised in a constructive way, aimed at getting things right in future, and not at criticising individuals. Any concerns about the performance of individuals must be discussed in confidence with the chair of the board, committee or panel or with the Chief Executive.
- G5.** You must not appear to undermine the authority of a senior officer in his or her dealings with a more junior member of staff.
- G6.** You must avoid inappropriate personal familiarity with members of staff.

- G7.** You must not ask or encourage a member of staff to act in any way which would conflict with compliance with this code or L&Q's policies and procedures.

Involved residents

- G8.** You must not seek to instruct or direct a member of staff or contractor. The relevant manager or member of staff must convey all instructions.

Staff members

- G9.** If your work brings you into contact with the board, a committee or a residents'/service users' committee or panel, you must:
 - 1) Take direction from the board, or in accordance with any delegated authority of a committee or panel
 - 2) Respond constructively to questioning or challenge, and
 - 3) Respond willingly to requests for information.
- G10.** You must avoid inappropriate personal familiarity with board members and involved residents.
- G11.** You must not use informal channels to lobby or influence board members or involved residents on matters of the L&Q Group's business. L&Q's conflicts of interest policy and associated guidelines must be complied with.
- G12.** You must not knowingly mislead any of the L&Q Group's boards or any of L&Q's Group's committees or panels. In presenting information you must set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully.

H

Relationship with residents and other service users

Main principle

You must maintain high standards of professionalism, fairness and courtesy in all your dealings with residents and other service users and comply with your employer's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Provisions

- H1.** You must treat all residents and other service users with courtesy and respect.
- H2.** You must not allow any personal relationship with a resident or other service user to conflict with your role and responsibilities.
- H3.** You must not give gifts or loans of money to, or receive loans or gifts of money from, residents or other service users.
- H4.** You must take great care in handling residents' and other service users' money, ensuring that a receipt is completed for every transaction.
- H5.** You must not invite or influence a resident or other service user to make a will or trust under which you are named as executor, trustee or beneficiary.
- H6.** When handling information relating to residents and other service users, you must comply with the law and L&Q's policies and procedures relating to the protection of personal data.
- H7.** You must comply with your employer's policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of adults at risk and children.

I

Health, safety and security

Main principle

Your conduct must not endanger the health, safety or security of yourself or others.

Provisions

- I1.** You must comply with your employer's health and safety policies and procedures and bring to the attention of the appropriate person any risks to yourself or others. In particular:
 - 1) Where you are provided with protective clothing this must be worn and
 - 2) For your own safety, you must comply with your employer's policy and procedures relating to lone working.
- I2.** You must comply with the law and L&Q's policies on smoking and on the use of alcohol, illegal drugs and other substances.
- I3.** You must comply with your employer's policies relating to the security of premises.
- I4.** If responsible for maintaining relationships with maintenance suppliers and contractors you must ensure they are made aware of and work in compliance with the L&Q code of conduct for Maintenance Contractors.

J Conduct at meetings

Main principle

Your conduct at meetings must show respect for all, and comply with L&Q's standards.

Provisions

- J1.** You must respect the position of the meeting chair, including sending apologies to the chair, or an appropriate officer, if you cannot attend or will be arriving late.
- J2.** You must be courteous to all other attendees by listening to all points of view and avoiding interruptions when another person is talking.
- J3.** You must not use threatening or aggressive behaviour or language, or act in a disruptive way.
- J4.** You must not attend meetings while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.
- J5.** Once a board, committee or panel meeting has properly reached a decision, you must share responsibility for that decision, even where you had not supported it.

K Representing L&Q

Main principle

In representing L&Q at external events and in dealings with outside bodies, you are an ambassador for L&Q and must uphold and promote its values, objectives and policies.

Provisions

- K1.** You must not become involved in, or be seen to endorse, any activity that may bring L&Q into disrepute. This includes but is not limited to illegal, immoral, racist or other discriminatory activity.
- K2.** In engaging in activities which promote the work of L&Q to the outside world, you must demonstrate commitment to L&Q and support for its values, policies and goals.
- K3.** In representing L&Q at formal or informal events, you must be appropriately dressed for the occasion.

L Learning and development

Main principle

In partnership with L&Q, you must take responsibility for your own learning and development, regularly updating and refreshing your skills and knowledge.

Provisions

- L1.** You must play an active part in L&Q's supervision and performance appraisal processes and welcome constructive feedback.
- L2.** At the appropriate induction, appraisal or supervision meeting, you must make clear your personal training and development needs, so that they can be taken into account in L&Q's forward budgeting and planning.
- L3.** Unless there are exceptional reasons, you must attend all learning and development events that have been arranged, either for you alone or as part of a group.

Board members

- L4.** You must take responsibility for keeping your knowledge up to date in those areas in which you are a specialist.

M Reporting concerns

Main principle

You must report to the appropriate senior person within L&Q any reasonable and honest suspicions you may have about possible wrong doing.

Provisions

- M1.** If you are aware of potentially dishonest or fraudulent activity, or material breaches of this code – by board members, staff or others – you must report it to the appropriate senior person within L&Q. L&Q's policies and procedures relating to fraud and confidential reporting (whistle-blowing) give further guidance.
- M2.** If you believe that you are being required to act in a way which conflicts with this code, you must report it to the appropriate senior person within L&Q.
- M3.** You must not victimise nor encourage or cause others to victimise any person who has used, intends to use, or is suspected of having used L&Q's confidential reporting procedures to report the misconduct, or alleged misconduct, of others.



Appendices

Appendix 1

Principles of Public Life

Staff, board members and involved residents will inevitably face situations not directly addressed by the code. In such situations they should be guided by the seven principles of public life established by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Although housing associations are not public bodies, there is a general acceptance that those holding positions of leadership in associations which are recipients of public funds should uphold the same values of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. These are defined below.

Selflessness: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or friends.

Integrity: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individual or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: Holders of public office should support and promote these principles by leadership and example.



Appendices

Appendix 2

Section 122 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

122 Payments to members etc.

1. This section restricts the making of gifts, and the payment of dividends and bonuses, by a non-profit registered provider to:
 - a) A member or former member of the registered provider
 - b) A member of the family of a member or former member, and
 - c) company which has as a director a person with paragraph (a) or (b).
2. A gift may be made, and a dividend or bonus may be paid, only if it falls within one of the following permitted classes.
3. **Class 1 is payments which:**
 - a) Are in accordance with the constitution of the registered provider, and
 - b) Are due as interest on capital lent to the provider or subscribed in its shares.
4. **Class 2 is payments which:**
 - a) are paid by a fully mutual housing association (within the meaning of section 1(2) of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (c.69), and
 - b) are due under:
 - I) tenancy agreements with the association or
 - II) agreements under which the former members became members of the association.

5. **Class 3 is payments which:**

- a) are in accordance with the constitution of the registered provider making the payment (“the payer”), and
- b) are made to a registered provider which is a subsidiary or associate of the payer.

5(A) **Class 4 is payments which:**

- a) are in accordance with the constitution of the registered provider making the payment (the “payer”), and
- b) are paid for the benefit of tenants of the provider, and
- c) are in any particular case paid to assist the tenant to obtain other accommodation by acquiring a freehold, or long-leasehold, interest in a dwelling.

5(B) **For the purposes of subsection (5A) –**

”long-leasehold interest”, in a relation to a dwelling, means the lessee’s interest under a lease of the dwelling granted, for a premium, for a term exceeding 21 years

“acquiring”, in relation to a long-leasehold interest in a dwelling, includes acquiring by grant and acquiring by assignment.

6. **If a registered company or registered society contravenes this section:**

- a) it may recover the wrongful gift or payment as a debt from the recipient, and
- b) the regulator may require it to take action to recover the gift or payment.



For more information

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