

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct replaces the Code of conduct 2018

Title	Code of conduct
Document type	Policy
Applies to	All offices and programmes
Exceptions and localisations	None
Languages	English
Policy owner	Head of HR
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Approval date	29 March 2023
Date of next review	March 2025

1. Policy statement

In keeping with its vision, mission and values, HelpAge International is committed to maintaining the highest degree of legal, professional and ethical conduct amongst all its employees and representatives (including volunteers, trustees, partner organisations and their staff, as well as anyone representing or engaged in our work).

HelpAge staff may work in a very difficult context which may consequently put them in a position of power and trust over other staff, representatives, beneficiaries or community members. This power and trust must never be abused. As a result, it is important that when working with HelpAge, everyone needs to know how we work and know the right thing to do.

This Code of Conduct¹ draws on international standards, laws, regulations and ethical considerations to give direction on how to do the right thing. It sets a clear standard for the whole organisation working across national and international borders. Where the Code sets a higher standard than local laws, the Code must be followed. This helps everyone understand the HelpAge requirements irrespective of location. Exceptions to this rule apply where following this Code could result in loss of life.²

2. Purpose of the Code

The HelpAge Code of Conduct (CoC) aims to ensure Staff, Volunteers, Board of Trustees and associates treat each other and communities that we work with or come into contact with; with dignity and respect. It further provides guidance on upholding the high standards of legal compliance, integrity, professionalism and ethical behaviour in line with our values, policies, legal and regulatory requirements expected of HelpAge by the UK Charity Commission, Donors, International Standards and the local laws applicable to countries where we implement. The CoC provides clear guidance to our Staff, Volunteers, Board of Trustees and Associates for conducting themselves in a manner which is consistent with their role and commitment to our values, and to provide examples of conduct that will always be unacceptable

3. Scope and application

This policy applies to all Staff, volunteers, board of trustees and Associates engaged in the work of HelpAge.

Partner organisations are required to have their own code of conduct and but may use the HelpAge COC should they wish.

This Code applies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year, during working hours, at work events, outside working hours and during leave, whether in the country of citizenship or outside. The Code is applicable to our personal lives as it is in our daily work.

Whether signed or unsigned, **this Code forms part of every contract or contract of services or agreement or engagement.**

¹ Will be referred to as the 'Code' from now on

² For example: at car checkpoints where bribes are demanded at gunpoint and there is a threat to life.

4. Standards of behaviour

The following standards of behaviour are expected from everyone employed at HelpAge or engaged in work with or for the organisation.

a. Personal and professional conduct

- I will uphold the integrity and reputation of HelpAge by ensuring that my professional and personal conduct is consistent with HelpAge's values and standards.
- I will demonstrate respect for all human rights and challenge discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment as set out in our Equal Opportunities & Dignity at Work policy.
- I will treat older people with dignity and respect and create an environment that prevents their physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect and take positive action to reduce the risk of harm to older people and children in the communities where we work.
- When involved in local political, religious, or community leadership activities, I will ensure that HelpAge's mission and objectives in the country are not compromised.
- I will seek to ensure that my conduct does not bring HelpAge into disrepute and does not impact on or undermine my ability to undertake the role for which I am employed.
- I will not work under the influence of alcohol or use, or be in possession of, illegal substances on HelpAge premises, in work locations, vehicles or accommodation.
- I will carry out my duties fairly and honestly to the best of my ability and take responsibility for my actions.
- I will collaborate with others and facilitate open communication to enable work goals to be achieved, sharing information as required, unless there are confidentiality issues. I will seek to resolve disagreements in a professional manner.
- I will read and follow HelpAge policies and guidance whilst undertaking work for HelpAge and complete all the required induction and refresher training to enable me to understand what is expected and how to follow the policies in context and raise concerns.
- Where I am unclear on the right course of action in respect of this Code and HelpAge policies, I will speak up and consult a manager.

b. Abuse of power, exploitation, bullying, harassment and discrimination, harm and abuse

- I will work actively to eliminate discrimination, harassment, abuse and exploitation including those of a sexual nature that infringe the rights of others.
- I will not engage in abusive or exploitative conduct
- I will not physically assault any other person, including children and vulnerable adults

- I will not emotionally or psychologically abuse any other person, including children and vulnerable adults

c. Respect and dignity

- I will treat all people fairly with respect and dignity and seek to be inclusive in all my interactions, being mindful of any privilege or power I have that may disadvantage or exclude another. This may include my nationality or work location, my role, digital access and fluency, my inability to communicate in the first language of another, and my socio-economic background.
- I will take all reasonable action to avoid prejudice to our reputation by refraining from inappropriate behaviour or action that might offend local sensitivities.
- When working in an international context or travelling internationally on behalf of HelpAge, I will be observant of all local laws, unless the requirements in this Code are more stringent, and be sensitive to local customs. The only exception would be the risk to life.
- I will not take or share photographs of others without their prior permission

d. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

- I will not engage in sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18)³. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- I will not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour with anyone at any time. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance. The use of prostituted sex is prohibited.
- I will not engage in sexual relationships with community members, beneficiaries of assistance or their family members, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics.
- I will not abuse a position of power or authority or gain any advantage by forming sexual relations in the workplace, including with other staff or any representatives of HelpAge engaged in our work.
- I will not engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children or vulnerable adults including child labour or trafficking.

e. Reporting any concerns or incident relating the CoC where I develop concerns or suspicions regarding breaches of the CoC.

- I will report any matter which appears to break the standards in the CoC or associated policies that I witness, or I am made aware of to the appropriate management using the relevant procedures and channels.
- I will support any investigation into alleged, suspected or known breaches of the CoC and associated policies of HelpAge, including as a witness

³ This does not apply where you are married to a person over the age of legal consent or majority in your country of citizenship.

- I will not withhold any relevant or useful information to support an investigation
- I will not undertake any action that is not in line with local policies and procedures without relevant guidance from local focal point/managers/supervisors.

f. Right use of resources: finance, IT,

Finance

- I will abide by all Finance and Operations policies including using assets and resources entrusted to me in a responsible manner, following procurement policies and will account for all money and property.
- I will not accept or give significant gifts or any remuneration from governments, communities with whom we work, donors, suppliers and other persons as a result of my employment with HelpAge.

Information technology (IT)

- I will not use HelpAge IT equipment to view, download, create, distribute or save in any format inappropriate or abusive material including but not limited to pornography or depictions of child abuse.
- I will not use HelpAge IT equipment, software or e-mail and social media platforms to engage in activity that is illegal under local or international law or that encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offence.

g. Conflict of interest

- I will declare any financial, personal or family (or close relationship) interest in matters of official business which may impact the work of HelpAge.
- I will seek permission from HelpAge to engage in other paid or unpaid voluntary work whilst in their employment to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, breach of working time rules, or negative effect on my performance.
- I will seek permission before agreeing to be nominated as a prospective candidate or another official role for any political party.
- I will disclose to my line manager any intimate personal and sexual relationships with any staff member, volunteer, trustee, consultant, contractor or partner staff so that the risk of any unfair advantage or coercion by either party can be assessed and managed and mitigation action taken as required.

h. Health, safety and security

- I will play my part to ensure the safety, health and welfare of all staff members and associated personnel (volunteers, partners, trustees, suppliers and contractors, communities with whom we work)
- I will comply with any local security guidelines and be proactive in informing management of any necessary changes to such guidelines.

- I will report any concerns I see, hear or suspect in relation to breaches of health, safety and security policies and guidelines or bad practice

i. Confidentiality

- I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information relating to colleagues, work-related matters or any sensitive information unless legally required to do so.

j. Social media

- I will not link my personal social media accounts to community members where we work, including beneficiaries of assistance and volunteers, nor contact them outside working hours for non-work matters
- I will not use social media to bully or harass other people, or to damage HelpAge's reputation in any other way by criticising or arguing with colleagues or associates or competitors, making defamatory comments about individuals or groups, or posting inappropriate images or links.

k. Crime and criminal records

1. I will not engage in any criminal activity, including terrorist activities.
- I will disclose to the Head of HR or relevant employer any criminal charges or offences as required by law, or current investigations. [this will need to be supported by internal criminal record checks and policy on employing offenders]

5. Embedding the Code

We are committed to supporting staff and associates to understand the Code and enabling them to raise concerns formally and informally.

HelpAge will

- Share the Code with all parties engaging in work with HelpAge; explain the Code forms part of the contract or agreement, whether the Code is signed or unsigned.
- Managers will play a key role in modelling behaviours and upholding the Code as they lead functions and teams
- Include our competency framework, values, equal opportunities and safeguarding standards in recruitment and procurement advertising and partnership assessments.
- Use the annual performance review process to discuss the competency framework and values, which support this Code.
- Provide induction and refresher training on the Code for employees which looks at frequently asked questions and case studies in context.

- Monitor and access individual's IT and Computer usage if there are suspicions of misuse
- Include the requirement for a Code in the partnership assessment.
- Share the Serious Incident Reporting (formerly whistleblowing) policy, which enables staff to raise serious concerns in confidence without fear of retaliation or detriment.
- Raise awareness of misconduct through HR processes (induction, staff surveys, staff council/trade union meetings, feedback during annual reviews, exit interviews).
- Review the Code every **3** years or as required
- Publish ways to report on our website [as mentioned in the Serious Incident Reporting policy]
- Proactively seek feedback on the Code and its application

8. Making a complaint/raising a concern

What to report

HelpAge staff and everyone representing HelpAge have a duty to report any potential or serious incident, abuse or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect which appears to breach the standards contained in this Code. HelpAge staff reporting serious concerns are protected by the **Serious Incident Reporting (formerly Whistleblowing) policy**. The alleged wrongdoer(s) can be staff, partners or any other associate or representative like volunteers, contractors, interns, etc. intended to harm another person who comes into contact with our work. The alleged wrongdoer(s) can be staff, partners or any other associate or representative.

Examples of concerns that can be reported

Direct harm that impacts beneficiaries - sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, data protection breach, improper use of social media

Harm that impacts staff – bullying, harassment, intimidation, relationships with direct reports, fraud, bribery, health and safety or security breaches, misuse of IT equipment or online platforms, abuse of power, bringing HelpAge into disrepute, criminal activity, misuse of drugs and alcohol, conflict of interest, data protection breach, your treatment by any of HelpAge's representatives/associates, organisational neglect of safeguarding responsibilities.

Please bear in mind that this list is not exhaustive

How and when to report

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to a breach of the Code should report it immediately to the Head of Human Resources. The Head of HR can be contacted via concerns@helpage.org. Concerns can also be escalated directly to the Chief Executive via CEO@helpage.org or alternatively via the HelpAge website.

Please refer to the Incident Reporting Form link available on the website or on SharePoint.

9. Responding to complaints and concerns

All suspected breaches of the Code will be thoroughly investigated and treated with the utmost confidentiality.

HelpAge will properly investigate any concern it receives and take steps to ensure that the process is fair and confidential and take action on any substantiated complaints.

Confidential information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis with those directly involved in the investigation or disciplinary process (for employees) or decision on termination of contract (suppliers, consultants, contractors) or termination of agreements (volunteers, partner organisations).

Staff who make complaints in good faith are protected from victimisation or retaliation. HelpAge will take action against any malicious complaints or retaliation against complainants.

Do not investigate the complaint or concern yourself.

10. Related policies

	Policies	Links to Policies
1	Anti-bribery and fraud policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/AntiFraud_AND%20Bribery_Policy_30.04.21%20v2.docx?d=wc0e05656aec7436e859c06698f5a8f95&csf=1&web=1&e=sgLxF7
2	Data protection policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Data%20protection%20policy%20(September%202021).pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=rU3R29
3	Expenses policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Expenses%20Policy%20Final%20April%202021.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=ux26Ct
4	Grievance and disciplinary policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Disiplinary%20and%20Grievance%20Procedure.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=Pq7F7o
5	Health and safety policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Health,%20Safety%20and%20Stress%20Policy.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=SAwnf5

6	IT services policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/IT%20Global%20Services%20Policy%20Template.doc?d=wdf5bccbf9014013b96d5b26e45e0179&csf=1&web=1&e=g7kB7m
7	Partnership management manual	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Partnership%20Management%20Manual.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=a7ziYP
8	Procurement policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Procurement%20Policy%20version%208-%20April%202022-%20Final.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=46PgaV
9	Safeguarding policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Safeguarding%20policy%20December%202020.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=fVSVbh
10	Serious incidents reporting policy	https://helpage.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/HelpAgePoliciesProcedures/PoliciesProcedures/Serious%20Incidents%20Reporting%20Policy.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=YtrTFo

11. Signed and dated acceptance of the Code

I have received HelpAge’s Code of Conduct, which I have read, or had read to me, and understand. I also agree to support and embrace diversity and inclusion as detailed in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy. I understand that failure to comply with any principles of HelpAge’s Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or termination of any other contract of services or agreement, and where applicable in legal action or criminal prosecution.

Name	
Role and organisation	
Signature	
Date	