

Civil Service Code – Original (1996) version

This copy of the code has been extracted from a House of Commons Research Paper entitled: The Accountability Debate: Codes of guidance and *Questions of Procedure for Ministers*.

You can read the whole document [by following this link](#).

The following text appears at pages 47-50.

The new code came into force from 1 January 1996.

The Armstrong memorandum has therefore been superseded by the Code which has been incorporated into the Civil Service Management Code which was re-issued in April 1996. However, in evidence to the Public Service Committee the Cabinet Office advised that "the Memorandum remains a valuable Statement of Constitutional principles, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster indicated his intention to issue a revision in due course. Such a document would have the status of standing guidance, and take account of, and be consistent with, the Civil Service Code. This revision is still in the course of preparation".

Civil Service Code

1. The constitutional and practical role of the Civil Service is, with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity, to assist the duly constituted Government, of whatever political complexion, in formulating policies of the Government, carrying out decisions of the Government and in administering public services for which the Government is responsible.
2. Civil servants are servants of the Crown. Constitutionally, the Crown acts on the advice of Ministers and, subject to the provisions of this Code, civil servants owe their loyalty to the duly constituted Government.
3. This Code should be seen in the context of the duties and responsibilities of Ministers set out in Questions of Procedure for Ministers which include:
 - accountability to Parliament;
 - the duty to give Parliament and the public as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions of the Government, and not to deceive or knowingly mislead Parliament and the public;
 - the duty not to use public resources for party political purposes, to uphold the political impartiality of the Civil Service, and not to ask civil servants to act in any way which would conflict with the Civil Service Code;
 - the duty to give fair consideration and due weight to informed and impartial advice from civil servants, as well as to other considerations and advice, in reaching decisions; and
 - the duty to comply with the law, including international law and treaty obligations, and to uphold the administration of justice;

together with the duty to familiarise themselves with the contents of this Code.

4. Civil servants should serve the duly constituted Government in accordance with the principles set out in this Code and recognising:

- the accountability of civil servants to the Minister or, as the case may be, the office holder in charge of their department;
- the duty of all public officers to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law; the duty to comply with the law, including international law and treaty obligations, and to uphold the administration of justice; and
- ethical standards governing particular professions.

5. Civil servants should conduct themselves with integrity, impartiality and honesty. They should give honest and impartial advice to Ministers, without fear or favour and make all information relevant to a decision available to Ministers. They should not deceive or knowingly mislead Ministers, Parliament or the public.

6. Civil servants should endeavour to deal with the affairs of the public sympathetically, efficiently, promptly and without bias or maladministration.

7. Civil servants should endeavour to ensure the proper, effective and efficient use of public money.

8. Civil servants should not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their official duties to further their private interests or those of others. They should not receive benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgment or integrity.

9. Civil servants should conduct themselves in such a way as to deserve and retain the confidence of Ministers and to be able to establish the same relationship with those whom they may be required to serve in some future Administration. They should comply with restrictions on their political activities. The conduct of civil servants should be such that Ministers and potential future Ministers can be sure that confidence can be freely given, and that the Civil Service will conscientiously fulfil its duties and obligations to, and impartially assist, advise and carry out the policies of the duly constituted Government.

10. Civil servants should not without authority disclose official information which has been communicated in confidence within Government, or received in confidence from others. Nothing in the Code should be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep confidential, or to disclose, certain information. They should not seek to frustrate or influence the policies, decisions or actions of Government by the unauthorised, improper or premature disclosure outside the Government of any information to which they have had access as civil servants.

11. Where a civil servant believes he or she is being required to act in a way which:

- is illegal, improper, or unethical;
- is in breach of constitutional convention or a professional code;
- may involve possible maladministration; or
- is otherwise inconsistent with this Code;

he or she should report the matter in accordance with procedures laid down in departmental guidance or rules of conduct. A civil servant should also report to the appropriate authorities evidence of criminal or unlawful activity by others and may also report in accordance with departmental procedures if he or she becomes aware of other breaches of this Code or is required to act in a way which, for him or her, raises a fundamental issue of conscience.

12. Where a civil servant has reported a matter covered in paragraph 11 in accordance with procedures laid down in departmental guidance or rules of conduct and believes that the response does not represent a reasonable response to the grounds of his or her concern, he or she may report the matter in writing to the Civil Service Commissioners.

13. Civil servants should not seek to frustrate the policies, decisions or actions of Government by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from ministerial decisions. Where a matter cannot be resolved by the procedures set out in paragraphs 11 and 12 above, on a basis which the civil servant concerned is able to accept, he or she should either carry out his or her instructions, or resign from the Civil Service. Civil servants should continue to observe their duties of confidentiality after they have left Crown employment.