
RNIB Logo

On two lines reads: "RNIB See differently"  with a pnk line between RNIB and the following lineRNIB See differently Logo

# Professional Code of Behaviour (staff and volunteers) Policy

## About this policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy statement is to set out RNIB’s commitment to delivering excellence in customer care and service by being an inclusive organisation that values and upholds high professional and personal standards of behaviour. Working at or on behalf of RNIB puts you in a position of trust and responsibility to uphold our values and reputation when dealing with colleagues, customers, and our local communities.

### Risks and Implications

Failure to adhere to the Professional Code of Behaviour may result in the professional integrity of employees and the organisation being challenged. Questions may also be raised as to whether RNIB and its employees and volunteers are doing their best to meet goals and display professional behaviours and values.

### Scope

#### Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all RNIB staff and volunteers.

#### What does this policy apply to?

This document, designed to inform and advise, outlines the behavioural expectations that RNIB has for all who work and volunteer to support the organisation in its objectives. While this code of good practice may appear formal, it underlies the legislative and regulatory framework that RNIB must comply with, and consequently, the responsibilities of all who work/volunteer at and on behalf of RNIB.

It provides a structure that aims to protect and respect the rights of customers, volunteers and those who work for the organisation. This also includes:

* Complying with the applicable laws and regulations
* Conducting ourselves in a professional manner with the highest standards of honesty and integrity
* Following RNIB policies and procedures
* Living RNIB behaviours
* Giving appreciation and respect for different people, experiences, and ideas
* Working with our partners and agencies to ensure our high ethical standards are maintained
* Seeking guidance, if in doubt, and always doing the right thing

### Exceptions to this policy

All employees and volunteers are expected to follow the Professional Code of Behaviour and to promote the values and behaviours of RNIB. Trustees are expected to follow the [Trustee Code of Conduct](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Governance/Trustee%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Nov%2019.docx?d=wb72fa4177be1430b890f3ca6829bf592&csf=1&e=qR8V4f).

### Roles and responsibilities

### Volunteers

It is the responsibility of volunteers to:

* Be aware of RNIB’s behaviours, values and mission and look for ways to promote them in their activities
  + - Advise their volunteer manager of any difficulties or concerns they may have in adhering to the Professional Code of Behaviour

### Employees

It is the responsibility of the employee to:

* Be aware of RNIB’s behaviours, values and mission and look for ways to promote them in their daily work
* Advise their manager of any difficulties and concerns they may have in adhering to the Professional Code of Behaviour

### Manager

It is the responsibility of the manager to:

* Ensure that their team are aware of the Professional Code of Behaviour and its implications for themselves and the organisation
* Ensure that the needs of the service and customers are met in line with the Professional Code
* Seek support from HR in advising staff about the Professional Code, and also in dealing with any difficulties and concerns from their team

### Human Resources

It is the responsibility of Human Resources to:

* Communicate the Professional Code of Behaviour to the organisation and ensure that they understand the implications of not following the Code of Behaviour
* Ensure policies are compliant with the Professional Code
* Support managers in implementing the Professional Code of Behaviour and assisting with training where necessary
* Ensure compliance with relevant legislation

## RNIB Values and Behaviours

## 2.1 Who are we and who do we want to be?

Our culture is more than a set of values that we have on display; it’s who we are, the collective personality of our organisation. As employees and volunteers, everything we do and say counts.

Our values and behaviours help us to shape our collective personality. Together we create our culture and have an opportunity to transform ourselves, our organisation and our world.

## 2.2 Customers first. Always.

We’re all here for one reason; to equip blind and partially sighted people to live the life they want to lead. Striving to maintain a relentless customer focus means;

* never forgetting to make sure the customer is always the most important person in the room (or on the line)
* always listening and learning and never assuming we know the answers before asking the right questions
* placing the highest value on the personal experiences and insight that blind and partially sighted people bring to our work and activities
* being open and honest so we can all work together to make the best decisions.

This will help us to deliver excellence each and every time, placing customer needs front and centre of everything we do.

## 2.3 Imagine if everyone at RNIB was someone you respect and learn from….

We can get there. If we stand by our values and role model our behaviours, we’ll learn together and grow as an organisation.

Our values need to be more than a set of nice statements we pay lip service to; they say who we are and what we stand for. They help us deliver the service promises we make to our customers. They underpin our behaviour and provide a touchstone by which to review our actions.

## Our values

#### 3.1. The key values and principles upon which this Professional Code is based include RNIB’s five core values:

1. Led by blind and partially sighted people; Blind and partially sighted people are at our heart and influence everything we do.
2. Collaborative; We work together to make the biggest difference.
3. Creative; We understand challenges and find ways to overcome them and move forward.
4. Inclusive; We include and value people with diverse experience, abilities and backgrounds.
5. Open; We are honest, candid and transparent, challenging ourselves and others.

## Our Behaviours

Behaviours are the practical application of our values, translating them into day-to-day actions. They describe the detail of what we expect our people to do to deliver our strategy.

We’ve listened to feedback from customers, volunteers and staff to find out what matters most, to identify the behaviours that make the biggest difference to the customer experience.

We’ll use the behaviours in recruitment to make sure we attract and appoint the right people. For staff we’ll discuss and recognise where they are being demonstrated in 1-1s, as part of the performance management system. We’ll build objectives around the behaviours in personal development plans, to ensure we’re always on track in not only ‘what’ we’re doing, but ‘how’ we’re doing it.

**Authentic communicator** Flexible, able to modify and reframe approach based on feedback. Authentic, builds trusting relationships.

Demonstrates empathy for others. Open and confident communicator, effectively engages, listens and influences. Innovates and experiments,

learns from what hasn’t worked.

**Change catalyst** Curious enquirer, has foresight and asks why. Relentless customer focus strives to understand and meet changing needs. Responsible risk taker. Adapts constantly at speed, recovers from setbacks and keeps going in the face of adversity. Demonstrates courage, integrity and confidence to challenge others and champion change.

**Generous collaborator** Establishes and grows collaborative partnerships and relationships. Generously shares information, knowledge and time. Builds networks, works with others to find solutions and get things done. Seeks and integrates a diverse range of perspectives, people and ideas. Supports others to stretch, challenge and develop, proactively gives and seeks feedback.

**Passionate ambassador** Visionary raises awareness and gets involved.

Looks within and beyond sector to widen impact. Self-aware, understands how emotions impact on performance and relationships. Shows humility, compassion and respect. Persistent and perceptive in identifying opportunities, both internally and externally.

**Accountable owner** Commits to agreed outcomes and delivers them. Makes logical and rational decisions in a timely manner. Has backbone, strength to own actions and follow them through. Continuously learns, reflective and honest about own contribution. Promotes professional standards, follows and maintains processes to keep us safe and legal.

## Professional/Personal Conduct

Professionalism may be best explained as the ability to follow best practice, policies and procedures. Staff and volunteers are expected to maintain these professional standards of behaviour with each other, partners, customers, outside agencies and to conduct themselves in a way that reflects positively on the charity.

RNIB’s behaviours are the core of our Professional Code. Staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate these, at a level appropriate to their role

Bulling will not be tolerated at RNIB and this is covered in more detail in the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Smart/casual dress - appropriate to your role in the organisation - demonstrates professionalism, care and cleanliness.

Courtesy to others when in an office, shared space or meeting can be demonstrated by turning personal mobile phones and other personal devices to silent or buzzer. When it is necessary to take a confidential or sensitive call, it is advisable to step out of the shared space.

Being aware of unacceptable behaviours and conduct, helps to deliver high professional standards. Behaviour is unacceptable where any of the following apply:

* Acts/language of racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism etc
* It is unwanted, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient (harassment)
* It involves unfair or unjust treatment to the extent that the recipient’s job security and/or future employment position are undermined
* Such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating work/volunteering environment for the recipient
* It creates disturbance to and division of other individuals

In the case of uncertainty, it is always best practice to ask the individual before communicating or behaving in a manner that may be perceived as offensive. It is the unwanted nature of the conduct which distinguishes harassment from other behaviour.

Staff and volunteers should take steps to protect themselves against any allegations of inappropriate relationships (see [safeguarding policies](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&e=VHFWJU&cid=1405009b%2Dbed3%2D4e94%2Da3de%2Ddbccbf6f0202&FolderCTID=0x0120006D48925B9C9ED643AB3ADA2DB5940198&id=%2Fsites%2FRNIBPolicies%2FShared%20Documents%2FSafeguarding&viewid=ab64bdd4%2Dbeab%2D4245%2D89f7%2Dcb3c247fa144)).

Staff or volunteers should never offer legal or financial advice to customers, agencies or partners, unless this specifically forms part of their role. Information and resources (including financial) entrusted to RNIB representatives must be managed in-line with appropriate policy and procedural requirements.

In order that RNIB business is conducted and perceived to be conducted in a professional and proper manner it is necessary to recognise personal relationships which overlap with professional ones. Appropriate business relationships between staff, volunteers and customers support the reputation of RNIB and avoid individuals being in a potential conflict of interest situation.

Staff and volunteers have a duty of care to our customers and as such should avoid:

* Entering into any personal relationship, which overlaps with professional ones, with anyone they know, or find out, is a service user or other person to whom we provide services
* Enacting inappropriate physical contact and/or overt displays of affection
* Conducting relationships, inviting or soliciting comment on social media, other than encouraging comment to further RNIB’s interests’ networks
* Providing customers with personal telephone numbers

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to declare, at the earliest opportunity, to their line/volunteer manager or equivalent any personal relationships which may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. For example, someone managing their partner in a care home or same finance team may be perceived as a conflict of interest. If staff are uncertain about whether they should take action regarding a significant personal relationship, they are invited to seek guidance, in confidence, from HR. The steps below will then be followed:

* The line manager or equivalent and HR Business Partner will work with the individuals concerned to identify any potential risks to themselves or conflicts of interests within the team, by means of a risk assessment. Wherever possible an agreement will be reached with the individuals on how to respond to any potential risks; the risks, controls and mitigating actions will be recorded and reviewed annually.
* Information disclosed should remain confidential to the parties involved, the line manager/equivalent and HR Business Partner, and wherever possible should not be disclosed to other parties without the express permission of those involved. If it is considered unavoidable to inform other members of staff about the relationship in order to explain a change in management arrangements, this will be discussed with the individuals concerned before it is disclosed.
* Where a personal relationship exists or develops between members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work, they must not be involved in recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion or other management activity or process involving the other party. Alternative management arrangements will be put in place.

Should staff or volunteers have concerns about any relationship formed during the course of their time with RNIB this should be immediately discussed with their Line Manager/Volunteer Manager.

Any form of sexual exploitation, physical abuse between staff, volunteers and customers will not be tolerated and are grounds for dismissal.

## Conflict of Interest

Individuals have a personal responsibility for their conduct and are expected to anticipate and declare any potential conflicts of interest before it arises. Individuals must declare all business interests (using the Declaration of Interest Forms) that could potentially result in personal gain as a consequence of their role.

## The use of Contractors, Consultants or other Suppliers for private business

Staff and volunteers should not make use of their connection with RNIB to engage any Consultant, Professional Advisor, Contractor or other Supplier for private work. This could bring the person and/or the organisation into disrepute and could be a conflict of interest in future dealings with our existing suppliers, providers, contractors or consultants. If it is unavoidable to use an organisation that is contracted to RNIB, prior authorisation should be sought by applying for permission in writing from your Line/volunteer Manager, who will discuss this request with the lead senior manager and advise you of the outcome.

## Acceptance of Gifts or Hospitality

Gifts or hospitality should not be canvassed nor accepted which might, or might reasonably appear to, compromise personal judgement or integrity, or create an improper obligation. Please refer to RNIB’s [Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality Policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Corporate%20Responsibility/Acceptance%20of%20Gifts%20and%20Hospitality%20Policy/Gifts%20and%20Hospitality%20Policy%20FINAL.docx?d=w4fba36dc96444775a1d45f137d3fdbca&csf=1&e=s1oMqd).

## 9. Fraud, Theft and Anti-Bribery

RNIB is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards in its relations with the public and amongst its staff and volunteers. Fraud, theft, bribery and dishonesty are regarded as most serious matters. Please refer to RNIB’s [Fraud, Theft and Bribery Policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B80689AD7-B7C1-47AD-A5D6-88CC07E34D74%7D&file=Fraud%2C%20Theft%20%26%20Bribery%20Policy.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true).

## 10. Using the Internet

The internet is a valuable business tool for research and comparing services, acquiring information and communication with other organisations. In using the internet or other electronic devices, individuals must adhere to RNIB’s [Acceptable Use Policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/RNIBPolicies/EYLsa6FIvyFGqSBd2fpgSLIB_d9z5AxyUCJpOZ162Rk8Mg?e=yMlHLM) particularly around issues of:

* Storing information
* Distribution or access to discriminative material
* Personal use of internet and other devices
* Confidentiality issues
* Liability issues
* Accessing pornographic material which is prohibited and may be reason for dismissal
* Copyright and licensing restrictions
* Use of customer personal data

## 11. Alcohol and Drugs

Individuals should familiarise themselves with the Alcohol, Substance abuse, and Smoking Policy. Consumption of alcohol whilst working/volunteering or in RNIB premises is not permitted except, subject to certain conditions, it may be permitted at work-related social events. RNIB has zero tolerance regarding the possession, use or supply of illegal drugs at any time during employment/volunteering with the organisation. Individuals representing RNIB at social events should act responsibly and in accordance with both policy and any additional guidance set out by the event organisers.

## 12. Contact with others at External Meetings; interacting with External Bodies, Press and Media

Individuals should not speak inappropriately, negatively or leak information to external bodies and/or the media about any aspects of the work of RNIB. There are internal mechanisms to allow discussions and communications and all staff are required to abide by the confidentiality clause in their employment contract to safeguard the interests of our customers and service users.

Statements to the press or media on RNIB’s behalf must not be made without prior clearance from the Head of External Comms (or the Board Chair, in the case of Trustees). There is an External Comms team with responsibility for press and media coverage. Any statements given must be restricted to the subject matter for which prior clearance has been given.

#### In addition, if any individual makes a statement to the press or media on a personal matter, they must not disclose RNIB as their employer/supporter/volunteering organisation, to ensure personal views and opinions are not attributable to RNIB.

## 13. Associated Policies, Procedures, Standards and Guidelines

All RNIB colleagues work hard with the common aim of ensuring our customers are at the heart of everything we do. This code is designed to create good practice and should be read in conjunction with a number of other policies, such as:

* RNIB Values and Behaviours [Select here to access the document](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/YourRNIB/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0625B573-0D4B-4023-BA4B-06322A07FE56%7D&file=7.%20RNIB%20Values%20and%20Behaviours%202018.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1)
* Equal Opportunities [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B15F8DE22-81A5-4E06-842E-DEDAA9E31BA9%7D&file=Equal%20Opportunities%20Policy%20Apr19.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)
* Bullying & Harassment [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B18687161-78BD-4D27-8B51-FBF15840250C%7D&file=Bullying%20and%20Harassment%20Policy%20July%202019.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)
* Confidentiality [Select here to access the document](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7b421FD102-3B97-4C40-B511-19D0209F103A%7d&file=Confidentiality%20Code%20of%20Conduct.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1)
* Grievance [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/HR/Managing%20issues%20at%20work/Grievance/Grievance_Policy.docx?d=w3bf293c082f0455992819aebb8683d25&csf=1&web=1&e=HMkpfC)
* Disciplinary [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/HR/Managing%20issues%20at%20work/Disciplinary/Disciplinary_Policy.docx?d=w252f8bd6907a47569006a436666b676c&csf=1&web=1&e=6nJMYl)
* Social Media [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Communications/Social%20Media%20Policy/Social%20Media%20Policy.docx?d=w0f31524f7c8a4f109c034a29988f2842&csf=1&e=o14Hh5)
* Health and Safety [Select here to access the Health and Safety policy area](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&e=GqYIZ5&cid=f93c4454%2D5144%2D40b4%2D9e1b%2D7adc4cbe208e&RootFolder=%2Fsites%2FRNIBPolicies%2FShared%20Documents%2FHealth%2C%20Safety%2C%20Fire%20and%20Environment&FolderCTID=0x0120006D48925B9C9ED643AB3ADA2DB5940198)
* Safeguarding [Select here to access the Safeguarding policy area](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&e=GqYIZ5&cid=f93c4454%2D5144%2D40b4%2D9e1b%2D7adc4cbe208e&FolderCTID=0x0120006D48925B9C9ED643AB3ADA2DB5940198&viewid=ab64bdd4%2Dbeab%2D4245%2D89f7%2Dcb3c247fa144&id=%2Fsites%2FRNIBPolicies%2FShared%20Documents%2FSafeguarding)
* Acceptable Use [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/RNIBPolicies/EYLsa6FIvyFGqSBd2fpgSLIB_d9z5AxyUCJpOZ162Rk8Mg?e=yMlHLM)
* Whistleblowing [Select here to access the policy](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RNIBPolicies/Shared%20Documents/Corporate%20Responsibility/Whistle%20Blowing/Whistle%20Blowing%20for%20Staff/Whistle_Blowing_Policy.docx?d=w3fd32478d1344457a5dca6baa9e6f50f&csf=1&e=4aLXyO)
* Alcohol Substance Misuse and Smoking Policy (need to add link to Sharepoint)

The reputation of RNIB is paramount to delivery and sustainability of our Charity and its beneficiaries; hence, breaches of this code will be taken seriously with appropriate action. Any serious breaches of the Professional Code of Conduct will be handled under either the Disciplinary Policy or the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure.

## 14. Review

This policy is due for review every three years or following any significant organisational or legislative changes.

Next review date: 01 March 2024

Policy review / update process: Policies will be reviewed by the HR Business Partnering team. After appropriate consultation, the final draft of the policy will be approved by the Director of People and Organisational Transformation, with a report provided to the People Committee on any substantive updates.

## 15. Document Owner and Approval

Document owner: Human Resources

Final policy sign-off by: Director of People and Organisational Transformation

## 16. Version control

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| Version | Date | Author & Job Title | Status & Level of Approval | Changes |
| 1.0 | March 2018 | Unknown | A Walker-Fraser  Executive |  |
| 1.1 | October 2019 | Hannah McColgan HR Project Manager | Helen Griffin, Head of HR | * Template updated * Removed reference to the policy applying to Trustees * Revised wording on Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality * Section added on Fraud, Theft and Bribery * Removed reference to The Seven Principles of Public Life |
| 1.2 | March 2021 | Helen Griffin, Head of HR | Ros Parker, Director of People and Organisational Transformation | * Minor amendments to improve clarity * Strengthened section for volunteers * Greater emphasis on AD&I |

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