

CONDUCT

Code of conduct

As a member of Plus Dane Housing staff, you are expected to conduct yourself in a proper and professional manner. This Code of Conduct outlines some of the aspects that you are required to take particular note of.

Professional behaviour

A wide range of Plus Dane Housing staff have extensive and often day-to-day relationships with tenants, client groups and committee members. The highest standards of proper professional behaviour are required at all times. You must avoid any actions which could constitute personal lobbying or canvassing, and relationships should always be kept within proper professional limits.

The development of any very close personal relationships with colleagues or Board / Committee Members can cause problems of personal interest and bias, staff management difficulties, as well as resentment and embarrassment to others. It is important that you always deal with such situations with judgement and maturity. You should inform your manager or the Plus Dane Head of People of any such relationship you are involved in to ensure any difficulties are avoided. Any such discussion will be treated sensitively and in total confidence.

Harassment

The organisation acknowledges that staff have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect and that harassment at work is contrary to Plus Dane Housing's Equal Opportunities – Statement of Policy

Harassment may be deemed unlawful and may also in some circumstances be considered a criminal offence.

Perpetrators may be liable for disciplinary action under Plus Dane Housing's disciplinary procedure.

Telephones / Mobile Phones

We recognise that life does not necessarily switch off when we come to work! Plus Dane Housing staff are permitted to use office phones and mobile phones for reasonable personal use. We would ask that staff **use but do not abuse** this facility. We reserve the right to deal with cases of abuse through the disciplinary procedure. We would ask that calls be kept to the minimum. Itemised telephone bills are received for all offices. These will be monitored and staff will be asked to reimburse any costs for heavy use.

In any event, no long distance or high tariff calls of a personal nature may be made without the prior approval of your Manager.

Mobile phones whilst driving

We expect all staff to abide by the legislation and this means having your phone switched off whilst driving, no matter how short the journey. Should you have an accident whilst using hands free there is a possibility that you could be found guilty of driving without due care. Therefore, to avoid any doubt the same applies to hands free – that you are not expected to use them.

We will not be responsible for any fines resulting from your actions and if you have an accident and / or in contravention of motoring regulations you may be liable for disciplinary action.

Signing in and out

For security and safety you are required to comply with your local office's system for signing in and out. If you have personal or other problems, which are likely to cause difficulties with attendance at work, you must discuss these with your Manager as soon as possible so that solutions may be explored.

Abuse or falsification of the signing in and out system will lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

For your own safety you should carry a Personal Alarm or mobile telephone when visiting tenants, attending evening meetings etc., or where the work may require you to be aware of your own personal safety. Personal Alarms or mobile telephones are available for use.

Use of premises and equipment

Plus Dane Housing premises, equipment and stationery must not be used for the business or purposes of any other organisation or individual without the express permission of your Manager.

Security

You must ensure you are aware of and obey the security regulations in force within your office for the safety of all concerned. If you are a key holder you are responsible for ensuring that the security alarm is set.

If you are the last key-holder to leave the premises you must ensure this is done. Keys to Plus Dane Housing premises must not be lent to anyone who is not an authorised key-holder. Unauthorised access must not be allowed to Plus Dane Housing's premises. Security should be observed by all staff in accordance with Health and Safety requirements

Car Park Security

Where car parking is provided at Plus Dane Housing Offices, staff must be aware that vehicles are parked at their own risk. Plus Dane Housing cannot accept responsibility for the theft of, or damage to, any vehicles parked on Association premises.

Employees' property

You are responsible for the care and safety of your own belongings. You are advised not to leave cash or valuables unattended in the office or in parked vehicles at any time. Handbags, wallets, etc., must be locked in cabinets or desk drawers. Plus Dane Housing accepts no responsibility whatsoever for damage or loss to employees' personal property, including cars.

Off duty occupations

Off-duty hours are a personal concern but responsibilities to Plus Dane Housing must not be secondary to private interests. Members of staff should not allow themselves to be in a position where their employment responsibilities and private interests conflict.

Staff undertake other employment, but would be expected to obtain the prior approval of their Director. Such employment must not, in the view of their Director, conflict with or be

detrimental to Plus Dane Housing's interests, or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of Plus Dane Housing's business.

Computer security

The Plus Dane Email system is primarily for business use and must not be used excessively for personal Email:

- You must not store non-work attachments on the Plus Dane computers.
- Do not open any attachment if you are unsure of the sender. (This is an easy route into our system for damaging 'viruses').
- You must assume that all your Email (including personal messages) may be accessed or monitored by someone else and therefore inappropriate language, messages, etc., are unacceptable.
- You must be aware that when using the service you are acting in your official capacity and the usual standard of business correspondence applies.
- You are strongly advised to delete personal emails after reading/sending. You are not permitted to use your company e-mail address on social networking sites, internet chat rooms, discussion forums etc.
- Enquiries and on-line transactions made via the internet very often require you to specify an email address. If such usage is of a personal nature you are not permitted to use your Plus Dane email address.

Plus Dane reserves the right to access your Emails. This may be required for a number of business reasons and prior permission will normally be sought from the user or a member of Senior Management.

Plus Dane reserves the right to randomly monitor Email or spot check the contents of Email. We reserve the right to carry out Email surveillance if we have reasonable belief that a criminal offence is being committed.

Whilst Plus Dane cannot fully control the content of incoming emails we will take whatever action we can against the perpetrators of any offensive email and you must inform your Manager if you receive mail that is of an offensive or upsetting nature.

You must access only those sites that are relevant and appropriate to your duties. Staff are allowed reasonable access for legitimate personal use though action will be taken against any abuse of this privilege. You should be aware that access to the Internet in terms of sites visited and amount of time spent on these sites is also liable to be monitored. A report of such usage can be produced at the request of your Director.

You must not download copyrighted or pirated materials.

The accessing, downloading, storage and sharing of pornographic, obscene or other material which is likely to cause offence to any person or likely to have a negative impact upon the Plus Dane Housing, its customers or employees will be considered as gross misconduct and will disciplinary action may be taken which may result in dismissal.

The downloading of any non-business related files is not permitted.

You may be liable for disciplinary action, which may include dismissal, if you:

- Use the password of another employee to gain access.

- Give your password to another employee to enable them to gain access.
- Wilfully tamper with any of the organisation's computer equipment you are not authorised to use.
- Make unauthorised entries or amendments to computer records.
- Use non organisation computer disks and programs on Plus Dane Housing's equipment.
- Infect computers with a virus.
- Install software which has not been approved by the IT Directorate
- Deliberately or through negligence install software for which Plus Dane Housing does not have an appropriate licence

For full information please refer to the Information Security Policy, which can be accessed by via the IT Intranet Page.

Mail, E Mail and the Internet / Social Media

All mail addressed to organisational premises, including that addressed to individuals, is treated as being the property of Plus Dane Housing and opened. Employees must not use Plus Dane Housing premises for the receipt of personal or private mail.

The e-mail system is for the better performance of our business and as such is the property of Plus Dane Housing. Employees cannot expect that any email messages composed, received or sent on the company network internally or externally are for private viewing only. Monitoring and email blocking software may be used by Plus Dane Housing and email content may be read at any time.

Employees accept the risk that inbound emails may contain explicit or offensive material that is beyond the control of Plus Dane Housing; however, Plus Dane Housing will take whatever reasonable action it can to stop such practices.

Access to the internet is primarily for business purposes only and Plus Dane Housing reserve the right to monitor access.

Access to email and internet for personal use may be granted with the prior permission of your Manager but again the standards of normal decency and professionalism must apply. Abuse of the system, which may damage the reputation of Plus Dane Housing or interfere with work performance, may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

The contents of any e-mail circulated to all staff must be discussed with your manager or Director beforehand in order to safeguard sensitive, confidential or unsuitable information being sent round the organisation

Social Media

'Social media' is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allows users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. Social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement. This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter), content sharing websites (such as

YouTube) and many other similar online channels and web based forums. This is by no means an exhaustive list and the absence of explicit reference to a specific site does not render this section invalid.

If your employment at Plus Dane Housing is referred to in any form of social media then you must comply with the conditions outlined below:-

- You must not disclose confidential information relating to your employment at Plus Dane.
- You must not publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages.
- When interacting on such sites there should be clear disclaimers that the views expressed are yours alone and do not represent the view of Plus Dane Housing.
- You should not use these sites to make adverse comments relating to Plus Dane employees, partners or customers. You must respect the privacy and feelings of others at all times. Any comments that might be read to be online bullying / harassment will be dealt with under the Plus Dane disciplinary procedure.
- You must not reference or cite Plus Dane employees, partners or customers without their consent.
- You must not use the company logo without written consent from the Company Secretary

Any misuse of Social Networking sites or where the Plus Dane Housing is brought into disrepute may constitute misconduct and could result in disciplinary action.

Disclosure of interest

From time to time you may become involved in a situation where your own interests are in conflict with those of Plus Dane Housing. Plus Dane Housing has no wish to interfere with your personal interests or activities. However, the personal integrity of all employees of Plus Dane Housing is of the utmost importance. If, during the course of your work, you are required to deal with any matter in which you have a private interest (however slight or remote) you must disclose the situation in writing to the Company Secretary. Such interests include:

- providing professional advice to friends who may be employed by an organisation with whom Plus Dane Housing has a relationship
- being related by birth, marriage or partner to a person who is employed by, or is a contractor to, an organisation with whom Plus Dane Housing has a relationship
- involvement with any voluntary organisation with whom Plus Dane Housing has a relationship.
- personal or close relationships/involvement with any organisation with whom Plus Dane Housing has a relationship. This includes "competitors".
- being related by birth or marriage to a person who is a tenant of Plus Dane Housing or applies to become a tenant of Plus Dane Housing

If you are in a position to make or influence a decision concerning Plus Dane and a third party, you may not accept anything of value from that party. We do not define 'value' but may include an item of only nominal value if its purpose is to influence your judgement.

The granting of tenancies to employees or their relatives is regulated by the Housing Corporation under Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 and is subject to strict conditions. If you have a relative wishing to apply for housing with Plus Dane Housing, they are required to make a declaration of that relationship on the application form.

However relatives can also become tenants as a result of stock transfers or via the HOME scheme or you may be a tenant of a client organisation and know other tenants as neighbours or friends. In these circumstances you must make a formal written declaration.

Rent accounts where a declaration has been made will be periodically monitored. If there are any unauthorised movements on the account for which it can reasonably be believed that you are responsible for, this will be treated as gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal.

If you have any doubt about whether you are in a situation where interests may be in conflict you must advise the Company Secretary.

Failure to disclose an interest could result in disciplinary action.

Acceptance of gratuities and hospitality

You should be aware of Section 1 of the 1996 Housing Act which prohibits all payments in cash or kind except salaries and expenses to employees or their close relatives. This prohibition lasts for twelve months after the cessation of employment and covers the granting of tenancies, purchase of Improvement For Sale or shared ownership houses to employees and their close relatives.

You must be conscious of more indirect inducements, and must not accept invitations of hospitality or entertainment without considering how this may compromise the integrity of Plus Dane Housing. In any circumstances where this proves unavoidable, or where a refusal might cause genuine offence, you should discuss the matter immediately with your manager and put the facts in writing.

In summary, you should think carefully before accepting gifts, cash favour, entertainment, hospitality from any person, firm, or organisation involved with Plus Dane Housing and must notify the appropriate Director or the Company Secretary before proceeding.

Where gifts are declined, this must be done courteously, whilst drawing the existence of this policy to the attention of the person making the offer. Where a refusal to accept a small token gift may cause offence, such gifts may be accepted but must be reported to the Company Secretary as soon as possible. Such gifts may be required to be surrendered to Plus Dane Housing and will be used for charitable purposes.

There are two specific circumstances described below in which this rule may be varied, provided this does not lead to abuse, and the safeguards provided are strictly adhered to.

Firstly, as a matter of tradition, a variety of firms with whom we work offer token gifts of food or alcohol to staff during the Christmas period. Such gifts may be accepted provided only they are declared and put into the pool of such gifts, and consumed or raffled at staff Christmas parties and similar events. It must be made clear to the giver of the gift that it will not be received personally. Such gifts must remain at a token value.

The second circumstance in which this rule can be varied relates to 'thank you' presents from tenants and co-ops. From time to time individual tenants and client co-ops make gifts to individual members of staff in circumstances where even polite refusal would cause distress and offence. In such circumstances you must discuss the situation immediately with your manager and put all the relevant facts in writing to the Company Secretary.

Plus Dane People Team will place the information on your personal file. In the event of a gift of any significant value being given, the Company Secretary would report the matter to the Board at their next meeting.

This approach can only be taken where gifts are clearly a 'thank you' for services already received and could in no way constitute an inducement. You should be zealous in ensuring that no climate of expectation is built up over 'thank you' presents, and there is no question of soliciting for them.

A Hospitality Record Form must be completed, authorised and forwarded to Plus Dane People Team in all circumstances

The Giving of Hospitality

It is essential that any hospitality offered can be justified as being in the interests of Plus Dane Housing as a whole. Staff wishing to offer hospitality other than an in house "working sandwich lunch" must obtain the permission of their Director. Staff needing to entertain in a restaurant must seek the permission of their Director and agree spending limits in advance. Lavish and expensive meals are not allowed. Limited alcohol may be provided with due care.

The image and integrity of Plus Dane Housing as a social landlord must be safeguarded at all times.

Professional Behaviour

At any event where hospitality is given or received and Staff are attending as representatives of Plus Dane Housing they are expected to dress and conduct themselves in a professional manner. Behaviour, which may bring Plus Dane Housing into disrepute, will be viewed very seriously.

Use of Plus Dane Housing's Contractors/Firms

You may seek approval to use firms/contractors/consultants used by Plus Dane Housing for private and personal work only. Usually this would relate to such matters as legal work, building work, etc., where it can be reassuring to know you are dealing with reputable firms.

The rules relating to the use of such firms must be rigorously adhered to, and any abuse will lead to disciplinary action:

Discuss with, and obtain the approval of, your Director or Company Secretary in advance, or as soon as possible, in the event of an emergency.

Complete a Declaration Form, obtainable from Plus Dane People-Team in advance or as soon as possible in an emergency. This must state the name of the firm, the date of work undertaken, a clear and ample description of the work involved and the total cost of the work. This form must be endorsed by the appropriate Director.

A copy of this Declaration form will be placed on your personal file. Information on work of a substantial nature will be individually reported to the next Board Meeting by the Company Secretary.

You must pay the commercial rate for the work, and must satisfy yourself this is so. Free work, or work at reduced rates would constitute the receipt of unauthorised gifts or inducements and could lead to disciplinary action. If you are in any doubt about the value of the transaction or any other aspects of the procedure you must discuss the matter immediately with the appropriate Director.

Dress

A smart appearance is a requirement of the job. Staff clothing should be clean, presentable, suitable for the work to be carried out and should not be such as might be reasonably expected to cause offence or embarrassment to members of the public or other staff.

A smart standard of dress is particularly important when representing Plus Dane Housing, and for staff who have day to day contact with the public and Plus Dane Housing's clients.

There may be occasions, when, with the agreement of your line manager, a more casual dress may be appropriate in order to carry out a specific task.

If your line manager considers any item of clothing to be unsuitable, you will be sent home and instructed to return to work more suitably dressed.

Any breach of the dress code may result in disciplinary action, unless medical or other substantial reasons apply.

Application of the dress code will respect cultural and religious beliefs.

We acknowledge the current fashionable trend for body/face piercing and don't want to limit individual right to express themselves or dress in accordance with their religious or cultural beliefs.

However, we ask that staff maintain a professional appearance at all times, this is particularly true when dealing the members of the public, To this end we would ask that any face jewellery is discrete and not excessive by reasonable standards.

Staff should consider that health and safety risks from piercing or the wearing of any jewellery. The opportunity for others intentionally or unintentionally to pull on jewellery and cause harm cannot be overlooked. Likewise it is wise to minimise the risk of injury by jewellery catching on equipment etc.

Hard hats must be worn to any building sites where there may be any possibility of danger and certainly whilst building work is taking place. Technical staff must wear the appropriate protective clothing provided.

Trading

Private trading is forbidden on Plus Dane Housing's premises. Employees who engage in private trading without the specific permission of a senior manager will be subject to disciplinary action.

Fund-raising

Fundraising events for charitable purposes may be held with the prior written permission of a senior manager. Plus Dane Housing will not be held responsible for the way in which any unofficial employee funds are conducted or the safety of these funds.

Betting and gambling

Betting and gambling are prohibited on Plus Dane Housing's premises. Exceptions may be made with the specific prior permission of managers, for weekly football pools, the Grand National Sweepstake and the National Lottery. In relation to these, Plus Dane Housing takes no responsibility for monies involved.

Plus Dane Housing is not responsible for unauthorised employee savings funds, collections etc. and staff enter into such schemes at their own risk. Plus Dane Housing will not be liable for any loss incurred.

Alcohol and drugs

Use of alcohol or illegal substances must not impair the safe and efficient operation of Plus Dane Housing or the health of its employees.

You may not:

- report for duty under the influence of alcohol or other substances
- be in possession at work of alcohol or illegal substances
- consume alcohol at work without the permission of a Director.

Doing so will be regarded as gross misconduct.

If, for medical reasons, you are required to take drugs which might impair your ability to do your job, you must report this to your manager. Such information will be regarded as confidential.

Literature

Non-Association literature or notices may not be distributed or displayed on Plus Dane Housing's premises without the express permission of a senior manager.

A notice board is provided for use by recognised trades unions in each office for the display of directly relevant trades union information.

Publication of information

You must not knowingly pass on information of a confidential nature gained during the course of your employment with Plus Dane Housing to unauthorised staff or to third parties.

You may not publish or broadcast or otherwise make public information regarding Plus Dane Housing or its clients without the prior agreement of the appropriate Director or the Group Chief Executive. Any fees earned from such activities must be paid to Plus Dane Housing.

Data Protection

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Plus Dane staff **and** tenants have the right of access to personal information held by Plus Dane either on computer or manual records.

Whistle-blowing

Plus Dane Housing encourages employees who may have serious concerns about any aspect of Plus Dane Housing's work to come forward and express those concerns. This will be treated in complete confidence.

Within the framework of Plus Dane Housing's whistle-blowing policy, staff will receive support in reporting genuine concerns in any of the following areas, or in any other matter seriously affecting the business of Plus Dane Housing.

- Fraud, corruption and malpractice
- Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people
- Failure to deliver proper standards of service
- Damaging personal conflicts at senior level
- Bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the workplace

In the first instance concerns must be raised with line managers or another senior manager, if they are not available.

If the matter is extremely serious, staff should speak to the Head of People, Company Secretary, Chief Executive, A Board Member (The Chair of the Audit Committee) or an external agency, for example concerning any of the following areas:

- If the problem involved very senior staff of the organisation – the designated board member
- In the case of a criminal offence – the police
- In the case of abuse of vulnerable people in a residential home – the local authority social services registration officer.
- In the case of abuse of public funds – the Housing Corporation, which is responsible for regulating all, registered social landlords.
- In the case of any fraud – Associations' external auditors, and/or the Housing Corporation

Your concerns will be dealt with carefully and thoroughly. Plus Dane Housing will investigate and listen to all parties involved. If you wish, the results of investigations and any action taken will be made known to you and Plus Dane Housing will respect any concerns regarding the safety of staff and their careers.

Abuse of this confidential reporting system will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

The Money Laundering Regulations 2007

The organisation has a responsibility to notify the National Crime Intelligence Unit when we are made aware of any transaction that might involve the proceeds of a crime. The organisation has a "nominated officer", who will be the person responsible for reporting any suspicions of money laundering to the National Crime Intelligence Unit.

All incidents which involve cash transactions of £1000 or more should be reported to the nominated officer who will then decide whether or not to make a report. (Example: the receipt of cash as payment for rent arrears, although it is not our policy to accept cash we do so on occasions). In reality we should not expect to see many instances of money laundering but if any member of staff should ever become aware that a transaction may involve the proceeds of crime then the nominated officer should be advised as soon as possible. If you have any suspicions then provided you make the nominated officer aware of your suspicions, your personal obligation to report has been met.