

# Hartlepool Jobs and Skills Service



## Conflict of Interest Policy

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## **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to maintain the positive reputation of the Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service by providing guidance and direction on managing and handling any potential conflict of interest between a learner and staff, volunteers and Subcontractors directly or indirectly employed by the Service.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

The Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service is wholly committed to ensuring that all learners receive and experience the highest quality, influential and inspiring teaching, learning and assessment.

The Service is driven by its vision to be recognised by external regulators, such as Ofsted, as an outstanding provider. Achieving this requires continuous quality improvements in all types of provision, including subcontractor provision. The Service prides itself on providing consistent, impartial and professional teaching, learning and assessment within a safe, friendly and non-discriminatory environment.

The Service also has very high expectations of staff, volunteers and subcontractors to raise standards and prevent any conflict of interest which may bring into disrepute the name of the Council. This should be read alongside the Council's Code of Conduct for all Employees.

## **3. WHO THE POLICY APPLIES TO**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and subcontractors supporting a learner enrolled on a Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service course to achieve their regulated and/or non-regulated qualification with the relevant Awarding Body.

However, the policy is primarily written for the particular attention of tutors, assessors and/or internal verifiers who may be at the greatest risk of exposure to accusations of a conflict of interest due to teaching, assessing or internally verifying associates such as a family member, friend and/or family friend.

## **4. WHAT IS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

A conflict of interest is when an individual or organisation has competing interests or loyalties.

In the context of this Service, a conflict of interest could arise in a number of ways, such as an Assessor or Internal Verifier being more lenient in marking the work of a close associate or family member. An exhaustive list cannot be provided as there are a variety of circumstances where conflicts of interest may arise. Therefore, all staff, volunteers and subcontractors need to inform the Service Manager at the earliest opportunity if they suspect that a conflict has arisen or may arise.

## 5. MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All Staff Members are ultimately accountable for understanding this Conflict of Interest Policy alongside the wider Council Code of Conduct.

All staff, volunteers and subcontractors are responsible for reading, understanding and ensuring that it is effectively embedded within all aspects of the Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service.

The Service Manager will instruct the Lead Officer – Skills to lead on any feedback or complaints relating to a conflict of interest. Where it is not appropriate to appoint the Lead Officer – Skills to investigate, another Senior Manager, such as Lead Officer – Employment, will be directed to investigate on behalf of the Service.

All tutors, assessors and internal verifiers will be advised that they must inform the Lead Officer – Skills if they are teaching, assessing or internally verifying a relative, friend or associate or any other learner where it could be deemed that there is a conflict of interest.

All staff receive regular updates from the Council on policies such as the Council's Code of Conduct, which sets out that they must:

- Always consider the best interests of the Council in everything they do and declare any non-financial and financial interests that they consider bring about any conflict with the Council's interests.
- Seek advice from their Line Manager if they think there may be a potential conflict of interest.

All learners will receive guidance within their induction on conflicts of interest and how to raise any concerns. The Service will conform to all relevant guidance, policy direction, intent and expectations of external regulators such as Awarding Bodies.

## 6. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Where an alleged conflict of interest is raised, whether through formal mechanisms such as Complaints Procedure, Whistle Blowing Policy or via informal mechanisms, the Service Manager will immediately instruct the Lead Officer – Skills to commence an investigation in line with the Council's Complaints Policy.

Where a conflict of interest is raised and investigated, with the outcome informed to the Independent Strategic Board and relevant Awarding Body.