

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS AND STAFF OF COMBAT POVERTY

Introduction

This Code of Conduct has been prepared on a collaborative basis, involving Members of the Board, management, and staff of Combat Poverty Agency, for approval and adoption by the Board of Combat Poverty, taking into account the implications of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995, and the Terms and Conditions of Employment and the Human Resource Policies of Combat Poverty.

Purpose of Combat Poverty

The Combat Poverty Agency is a statutory agency established under the Combat Poverty Agency Act 1986. The four general functions of Combat Poverty under the Act are:

- Advising and making recommendations to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs on all aspects of economic and social planning in relation to poverty in the State
- The initiation of measures aimed at overcoming poverty in the State and the evaluation of such measures
- The examination of the nature, causes and extent of poverty in the State and for that purpose the promotion, commission and interpretation of research
- The promotion of greater public understanding of the nature, causes and extent of poverty in the State and the measures necessary to overcome such poverty

Given this remit, we work to the best of our abilities, based on our knowledge and experience, to support the implementation of our Strategic Plan and fulfil our mission and objectives.

Intent and scope

This Code sets out the ethical principles which Members of the Board, Management and Staff, of Combat Poverty have agreed and confirmed through existing Human Resource and Organisational policies, procedures and practices. Where necessary, it is supplemented with additional policies, procedures and guidelines to fulfil the requirements of the Code of Ethics for State Bodies.

Objectives

The Code of Conduct adopted by Combat Poverty seeks to

- Outline agreed set of ethical principles that govern our behaviour
- Promote and maintain confidence and trust
- Prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practice

Combat Poverty Principles

As stated in our most recent Strategic Plan, Combat Poverty recognises the structural nature of poverty and acknowledges that effective, sustainable economic and social development requires the prevention and elimination of poverty. Accordingly, we will be guided in our work by the principles set out in the current Strategic Plan of Combat Poverty.

The other fundamental principles which inform and guide this Code include integrity, transparency, loyalty, fairness and responsibility in relation to our working and external environment.

1. Integrity

We are committed to carrying out our responsibilities ethically and honestly as Members of the Board, Management and Staff of Combat Poverty. In so doing, we will manage and operate the business of Combat Poverty with the utmost integrity.

We confirm the commitment to the disclosure by Members of the Board, of outside employment/business interests which may be in conflict or in potential conflict with the objectives and activities of Combat Poverty.

We accept and agree that management and employees should not be involved in outside employment/ interests in conflict or in potential conflict with the objectives and activities of Combat Poverty.

We are committed to ensuring that

- Combat Poverty's resources or time are not used for personal gain, or for the benefit of persons/organisations unconnected with Combat Poverty or its activities

- Combat Poverty's financial accounts and reports accurately reflect performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading
- Corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment or benefits are not offered or accepted, which might affect or appear to affect the ability of either the donor or the recipient to make independent judgement that bears on the activities of Combat Poverty
- The conduct of purchasing goods/services is in accordance with best practice as contained in established public procurement procedures

2. Transparency

Board Members, management and employees of Combat Poverty support the provision of access to general information relating to Combat Poverty's activities in a way that is open and that enhances the accountability of Combat Poverty to the general public.

We respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by Combat Poverty. This would constitute material such as:

- Personal information
- Information received in confidence by Combat Poverty
- Any potentially sensitive information (including but not limited to future plans or details of major organisational or other changes such as restructuring)

We observe appropriate prior consultation procedures with third parties where, exceptionally, it may be proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest.

We confirm that we comply with relevant statutory provisions, including data protection legislation and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Loyalty

Members of the Board, Management and Staff of Combat Poverty acknowledge the responsibility to be loyal to Combat Poverty and fully committed to all its activities. We are mindful of the fact that the organisation itself must at all times take into account that it is a State-funded agency with a clear and unique role defined by statute.

We acknowledge the duty on the part of all to conform to the highest standards of work ethics.

4. Fairness

Combat Poverty was created to work for the prevention and elimination of poverty and towards a more equal and fair society.

We strive at all times to be in compliance with employment equality and equal status legislation.

We are committed to fairness in all dealings and we value all our customers and treat all customers equally.

5. Work/External Environment

We place the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of all those who work with us and those visiting our premises.

We will continue seeking to minimise any detrimental impact which the operations of Combat Poverty may have on the environment or the wider community. In that regard, we also recognise our responsibility to continually develop our awareness of the need to protect our environment for the benefit of future generations.

6. Responsibility

We accept and seek to fulfil all regulatory and statutory obligations imposed on Combat Poverty. Our tendering and purchasing procedures are designed to achieve and uphold compliance as well as meeting prescribed levels of authority, as amended from time to time, for sanctioning any relevant expenditure. We are committed to putting in place and maintaining controls to prevent fraud, including adequate controls to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to claiming of expenses.

Members of the Board are committed to making use of their reasonable endeavours to attend all Board meetings.

The terms and conditions of employment of staff, the engagement of outside consultants and contractors and the appointment of Members of the Agency, all necessitate the enforcement and monitoring of procedures in relation to respecting and maintaining confidentiality.

Notwithstanding the significant openness and informality about communication which we share and value within Combat Poverty, we recognise the need to monitor and safeguard confidence and trust in all our internal or external information-sharing and contacts.

7. Compliance

This Code of Conduct is to be circulated to and retained by all Board Members, management and employees. It should be read alongside the existing and circulated policy document on disclosure of interests.

Board Members, management and employees are asked to acknowledge receipt and understanding of these documents.

Board Members, management and employees are similarly asked to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the Agency's guidelines on receipt of gifts and on other ethical considerations which arise routinely.

8. Review

Combat Poverty is committed, at least every three years, to review and update this Code of Conduct as appropriate.