

## Value 1 – Civil Service values

**Integrity** – putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests

**Honesty** – being truthful and open

**Objectivity** – basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of evidence

**Impartiality** – acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well Governments of different political persuasions

### **Integrity**

*You must:*

- *fulfil your duties and obligations responsibly;*
- *always act in a way that is professional<sup>1</sup> and that deserves and retains the confidence of all those with whom you have dealings;*
- *make sure public money and other resources are used properly and efficiently;*
- *deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively, to the best of your ability;*
- *handle information as openly as possible within the legal framework; and*
- *comply with the law and uphold the administration of justice.*

*You must not:*

- *misuse your official position, for example by using information acquired in the course of your official duties to further your private interests or those of others;*
- *accept gifts or hospitality or receive other benefits from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise your personal judgement or integrity; or*
- *disclose official information without authority. This duty continues to apply after you leave the Civil Service.*

### **Honesty**

*You must:*

- *set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, and correct any errors as soon as possible; and*
- *use resources only for the authorised public purposes for which they are provided.*

*You must not:*

- *deceive or knowingly mislead Ministers, Parliament or others; or*
- *be influenced by improper pressures from others or the prospect of personal gain.*

<sup>1</sup>Including taking account of ethical standards governing particular professions.

### **Objectivity**

*You must:*

- *provide information and advice, including advice to Ministers, on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts;*
- *take decisions on the merits of the case; and*
- *take due account of expert and professional advice.*

*You must not:*

- *ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice or making decisions; or*
- *frustrate the implementation of policies once decisions are taken by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from those decisions.*

### **Impartiality**

*You must:*

- *carry out your responsibilities in a way that is fair, just and equitable and reflects the Civil Service commitment to equality and diversity.*

### **Political Impartiality**

*You must:*

- *serve the Government, whatever its political persuasion, to the best of your ability in a way which maintains political impartiality and is in line with the requirements of this Code, no matter what your own political beliefs are;*
- *act in a way which deserves and retains the confidence of Ministers, while at the same time ensuring that you will be able to establish the same relationship with those whom you may be required to serve in some future Government; and*
- *comply with any restrictions that have been laid down on your political activities.*

*You must not:*

- *act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests.*

*You must not:*

- *act in a way that is determined by party political considerations, or use official resources for party political purposes; or*
- *allow your personal political views to determine any advice you give or your actions.*

## Value 2 – Focusing on customers and providing excellent value for money

**Organisations that provide effective customer service understand the needs of both their internal and external customers. They understand these needs may change, and are committed to meeting these needs in a positive, cost effective, secure and businesslike way. Our customers range from individuals contacting their local office to a Government department commissioning us to administrate a tax. We will understand and aim to give these customers what they want rather than what is convenient to us, control our costs and income, and do things promptly and flexibly. We may not be a business by private sector definitions but we must be businesslike and market our strengths to compete for work.**

When we do this well we...

- comply with the Agency's published standards of service
- provide a cost effective service to our customers, being mindful of how much our actions cost the taxpayer
- explain simply and clearly what, why and when things are going to happen
- will be sensitive and trustworthy when dealing with customers and information, and adhere to the Agency's mandatory data security instructions
- admit when we have made a mistake and explain how we will put things right
- speak positively about the VOA and our colleagues
- actively seek opportunities to build relationships with existing and new customers

When we do this badly we...

- lack knowledge of our business and procedures
- expect the customer to know how our business works and make assumptions about their level of knowledge
- fail to consider security before undertaking a process involving customer data
- lose sight of a customer's needs when trying to meet a deadline
- do not listen to a customer's concerns
- expect a customer to chase us for action
- have no regard for cost
- act in an unprofessional or discourteous manner
- fail to uphold or improve the reputation of the Agency and criticise the VOA or our colleagues to the public

### Value 3 – Working effectively as teams and in partnership with others

**In an increasingly competitive and challenging world we all need the mutual support, guidance and trust of colleagues. Our strength will come from working with each other in teams and partnerships to achieve excellence. As an Agency we work in partnership both internally with other teams and externally with other organisations to meet our personal and organisational goals. To do this effectively, we build long-term relationships based on mutual trust and respect. We will communicate effectively with each other, providing our different teams with the relevant information to allow them to accomplish their work. We will work in partnership with others by providing information where we can.**

When we do this well we...

- build good working relationships both internally and externally
- appreciate other perspectives and work towards a solution which benefits everyone
- are open about challenges we face, so our team can find a solution
- actively promote and encourage team working and partnership across all business streams and external stakeholders
- understand our role in helping to achieve team and Agency targets and contribute fully towards these
- challenge complacent attitudes to how the team works and meeting team objectives
- give timely, positive and constructive responses to colleagues when our input is sought

When we do this badly we...

- are dismissive towards others when they have a different point of view
- rely on grade or length of time in the job as an indicator of ability, inability or quality of contribution
- leave a colleague in the lurch
- always see and state the negative and display negative behaviour
- fail to see the wider picture and fail to focus on the outcome for our customers
- refuse to seek help from or offer help and guidance to others
- work only in line with our own priorities, not seeing the need to contribute to the team
- refuse to take on team tasks and isolate ourselves

#### Value 4 – Continuously improving, changing and adapting

**To meet the challenge of change in everything we do, we need to review our position regularly. We welcome ideas and suggestions. We must plan and consider what improvements are needed to meet the expectations of our customers, clients and colleagues. This can be achieved through encouraging innovation and feedback from everyone concerned. We will ensure any changes are beneficial and will actively support them. We will explain the need for change and adapt in order to enable a smooth transition. We will evaluate the benefits of each change, learning lessons and continuing to improve.**

When we do this well we...

- think about how we work, see a difference between what is being done and what could be done and try out new things
- are willing to make and receive suggestions for improvement
- act quickly when things are going wrong, and learn from our experience
- share best practice when things work well
- consider all ideas and suggestions, including those from outside the Agency
- adapt quickly as the business requires to meet changing customer and client needs
- act on feedback i.e. staff surveys, customer surveys, business results, audit results
- ask if we are unclear about the reasons for change

When we do this badly we...

- resist change and make cynical remarks
- remain set in our ways regardless of the need to change
- stay in our comfort zone
- refuse to try doing something a different way
- do not consider how our daily processes and procedures could be improved
- do not contribute ideas and feedback to others concerning change
- ignore feedback and fail to see matters from a customer perspective
- make assumptions and rely on gossip regarding the reasons for change

## Value 5 – Being clear and open in our communication

**We will be clear, open and transparent in all our different forms of communication to ensure everyone understands our messages. Our communication will be straightforward and accessible. We will use the best medium, with an appropriate level of security for each message, so the right people receive it at the time they need it. We will communicate effectively with customers, which includes keeping in regular contact, providing the information they are entitled to, answering enquiries, returning phone calls promptly and being clear in our in written communications.**

When we do this well we...

- always speak politely and courteously and maintain a professional manner when dealing with the public
- use appropriate language so we are clear, concise and easily understood
- have regard to security when selecting a method of communication
- are prepared to have difficult conversations and are tactful and sensitive to the situation
- get the message across first time
- choose a method of communication which is appropriate and timely for the message and its audience
- know who to consult and involve all interested parties, sharing information with those who need to know
- seek and listen to feedback, being tolerant when others express a different view and find out more to try to understand their point of view
- ask questions to find out fully what the customer wants and

When we do this badly we...

- are misunderstood and it takes longer to get the message across
- are aggressive or vague in our responses
- do not ensure sensitive information is protected from unauthorised disclosure
- only communicate to the people in the office that day, and do not follow up with absent colleagues
- do not give everyone the same message
- hide behind broad statements when a specific answer is required
- tell people what you think they want to, or should, know
- are unclear as to why you are unable to provide the answer or deal with the problem
- use jargon and do not explain technical terms

listen to them before trying to give an answer

## Value 6 – Respecting people and valuing difference

**We respect and value everyone for what makes them different as well as what we have in common. We value people's different backgrounds, beliefs and life choices and the diversity this brings to our community. We seek to reflect the diversity of the communities within which we operate and we go beyond meeting our legal obligations as an employer and contribute positively to the communities we serve. We will give everyone the opportunity to succeed and to contribute to the success of the Agency. We recognise both the Agency and our personal lives will be better for respecting people and valuing difference.**

When we do this well we...

- treat everyone with respect regardless of grade, qualifications, experience or background
- challenge behaviours, attitudes and language amongst our staff which do not show respect for others
- make use of our colleagues' diverse knowledge, aptitude, experience, and language skills to add value to the Agency
- show tolerance when someone else does it differently
- respect people's different family circumstances, religion and community customs

When we do this badly we...

- are disrespectful to people
- refer to stereotypes rather than individuals
- make assumptions based on our perception of a person
- consider grade or qualification to be an indication of a person's worth and 'weight' their input accordingly
- make derogatory comments or tell jokes about individuals or stereotypes
- exclude certain individuals from conversations, meetings, discussions and decisions
- discard someone's opinion because we do not identify with them
- always try to find someone to blame