



HOUSE OF LORDS

Saxton Bampfylde



House of Lords Commissioner for Standards

Candidate brief 2024
OAKABC

Message from the Chair of the House of Lords Conduct Committee

Thank you for your interest in applying to be one of the two House of Lords Commissioners for Standards.

The House of Lords expects the highest standards of conduct from its members. An important part of this is having a robust Code of Conduct. It is the role of the two independent Commissioners for Standards to consider and investigate complaints of breaches of the Code of Conduct. This is challenging, often high-profile, work and it has an essential role to play in securing public confidence in the House.

The Code of Conduct is agreed by the House on the advice of the Conduct Committee. It contains rules on a range of matters. These rules include registering and declaring interests, not accepting payment in return for parliamentary influence and a longstanding requirement for members to act always on their 'personal honour'. Importantly, the Code also includes provisions for dealing with complaints of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct.

The successful candidate will work closely with the existing Commissioner to handle a caseload of complaints. I know from my experience on the Conduct Committee, which considers reports from the Commissioner, how varied the Commissioners' workload can be. I have seen how delicate some of the issues are, and the importance of the Commissioners' thorough and fair approach to the task.

A full review of the Code of Conduct was launched earlier this year by the Committee, the first such review since 2009. Once the review has concluded and any changes to the Code are agreed by the House, the successful candidate will play an important role in helping to ensure enforcement of the revised Code of Conduct.

In recruiting a new Commissioner, the House is seeking an individual with integrity, who will demonstrate an independent and objective approach to handling cases. If you think you have the appropriate attributes for this role, we would be delighted to hear from you.



**Baroness Manningham-Buller,
Chair of the Conduct Committee**

About the House of Lords

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament with around 800 members. It is independent from, and complements the work of, the elected House of Commons. The Lords has three main roles: helping to make laws, in-depth consideration of public policy and scrutinising government.

The House of Lords Administration employs around 700 people, delivering excellent services to the House and its members, including the Office of the Commissioners for Standards.

Background of the role of Commissioner

In 2009, the House of Lords adopted a new Code of Conduct for members and with it agreed to appoint an independent Commissioner for Standards. At this time the Code focused principally on members' financial and other interests, and their use of the facilities of the House.

In 2019, the House agreed to extend the provisions of the Code to cover allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, alongside the creation of the parliament-wide Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme. This extension in remit to cover these types of allegations increased the Commissioner's caseload and a decision was taken by the Conduct Committee in 2021 to appoint two Commissioners.

Two Commissioners have been in place since June 2021, sharing the workload between them. One role is now being advertised because one of the Commissioners is standing down.

More information on the work of the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards, including their annual reports, is at: <https://www.parliament.uk/hl-standards>.

Reports from the Commissioners for Standards on complaints are at: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-reports-on-complaints/>.

About the role

The Commissioners for Standards are responsible for independently assessing and investigating allegations of breaches of the House's Codes of Conduct by members and their staff.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the successful candidate will work with the existing Commissioner to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly, consistently and in a timely manner. Each Commissioner works independently with their own workload but also collaboratively with each other and the wider team. How the workload is split between the two Commissioners is a matter for them, with the support of their office.

Responsibilities of the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards

As one of two Commissioners for Standards, the successful candidate will be responsible for independently and impartially investigating alleged breaches of the House of Lords Code of Conduct.

Detailed responsibilities of the role include:

- Assessing and investigating allegations that members of the House of Lords have breached the House's Code of Conduct, including relating to the rules on:
 - declaring and registering interests;
 - the systems of financial support for members and use of the facilities of the House;
 - provision of parliamentary advice and services and
 - bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct;
- Reporting findings of fact and conclusions on whether the Code has been breached, as well as recommending appropriate sanctions;
- Assessing and investigating allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct for House of Lords Members' Staff, and reporting accordingly;
- Submitting to the Conduct Committee annually a report on the exercise by the Commissioners of their functions.

Person specification

Candidates will have operated at a senior level within a complex organisation in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors and will bring personal authority to the role. They must be able to reach objective conclusions based on evidence and rigorous analysis of often large volumes of complex information.

The Commissioners' duties involve handling confidential and sensitive material and taking decisions which will be subject to intense public and media scrutiny (though it is expected that the Commissioners will not engage directly with the media). They need to produce concise reports on cases which can withstand this scrutiny and uphold the standards set by the Code. The Commissioners need to demonstrate political impartiality, whilst maintaining absolute confidentiality. The appointees will demonstrate commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion as well as the highest levels of personal integrity, fairness and impartiality. Candidates must **not** be politically active or be known to have a close relationship with any political party.

The Commissioners must be able to make the time available to undertake the work required and must have the flexibility to be available for work at short notice when needed. The Commissioners will consider allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct fairly and in a timely manner.

The successful candidates must be able to demonstrate substantial relevant experience and achievements to show their competence for these roles. **When completing the application, please provide evidence and specific examples in response to the criteria below, against which applications will be assessed.**

Experience

Essential

- A successful track record within the public, private or not-for-profit sectors that includes experience of working at a senior level within complex organisations;
- Significant experience of conducting investigations and adjudicating on complaints, including carrying out investigative interviews;
- Demonstrable ability to assimilate and analyse large quantities of complex information and an ability to condense and encapsulate its essence in a robust, clear and concise written report which may be subject to public and media scrutiny;
- Experience of handling sensitive issues with impartiality and empathy.

Desirable

- A general understanding of the role of the House of Lords and its members and the UK Parliament.

Skills and attributes

Essential

- Proven analytical skills;
- Strong decision-making skills;
- Tact, discretion and excellent interpersonal skills, including proven experience of an inclusive approach;
- The highest levels of personal integrity, fairness and independence;
- Sound judgement and impartiality in relation to the sensitive nature of the work involved;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Ability to work at pace and to deadlines where required;
- Proven ability to inspire confidence and respect;
- Confidence in explaining and implementing complex procedures;
- The ability to reach and express objective conclusions supported by evidence and rigorous analysis;
- The ability to work closely and collaboratively with a diverse range of people;
- The ability to work impartially in a complex political environment.

Additional information

Terms of appointment

The appointment will be for a fixed term of five years. To ensure the Commissioners' independence, the term is not renewable. The appointment is by the House of Lords via a motion moved in the chamber.

Each Commissioner is contracted to work a minimum of five days per month. Further days may be worked if the need arises, sometimes at short notice.

Commissioners are required to attend the Parliamentary Estate as necessary to discharge the role, though some of the work may take place remotely. It is not possible to undertake the role fully remotely.

Candidates must be resident in the UK.

The appointment may be terminated by the Commissioner giving three months' notice in writing.

Remuneration

The Commissioners are not employees of the House. The Commissioner will be paid a retainer for five days per month at a rate of £633 per day. If further work is needed, the postholder will be paid at a daily rate. Remuneration rates are reviewed annually. Travel and other reasonable expenses will be paid.



Conflicts of interest and political impartiality

Each Commissioner for Standards is expected not to have any financial, personal or business interests which may conflict with the responsibilities of the post. Advice on what might constitute a conflict of interests is available during the selection process.

Each Commissioner must be, and must appear to be, politically impartial.

Once in post Commissioners are expected to consult the Standards Clerk before taking on any other external role. This is to ensure any other external roles do not create a conflict of interests or raise questions about political impartiality.

Inclusion & diversity

The House of Lords Administration is committed to increasing diversity and maintaining an inclusive workplace culture. We welcome applications from candidates from all backgrounds, regardless of their age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender/sex, gender reassignment/trans status, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

Pre-appointment checks

Appointment depends on satisfactory references, health and security checks and where necessary proof of qualifications. Successful candidates' publicly open social media profiles will also be checked under this stage of the process and information obtained may be used to review suitability for the job role.

Standards in public life

Although the appointment does not come within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, it is being made using a process which reflects the Commissioner's Code of Practice. The Seven Principles of Public Life, the 'Nolan' Principles, are to be upheld by all those taking up Public Appointments.

Baseline Security Standard

The House of Lords (along with all government departments) has to comply with a Baseline Security Standard. The standard requires that we ascertain the identity of the applicant, their right to work in the UK, their employment or academic history over the last three years, and their address history over the last three years.

Successful candidates will be required to complete pre-employment checks. This includes security vetting to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level unless otherwise specified. All successful candidates are required to pass these checks before an offer can be confirmed.

Applicants should be aware that if they have resided outside of the UK for a total of more than three of the last five years, they are not eligible for vetting.

In addition, applicants are required to give a reasonable account of any significant recent periods of time (more than six months) spent abroad. Applicants who have been unemployed or self-employed for over six months in the last three years (whose last three years' employment/academic history are not covered by references) will be asked to provide further documentation to prove their history.

Disability Confident Scheme

The House of Lords is a committed Disability Confident Employer and as such, operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for candidates. We are committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who provide evidence of meeting the essential requirements necessary for the post, as set out in this applicant pack.

To be eligible, your disability must be within the definition laid down in the Equality Act 2010. A disabled person is defined by the Act as someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. For the purposes of this recruitment, these words have the following meanings:

- 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial,
- 'Long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted, or is likely to last, 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions),
- 'Normal' day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking, and going shopping.

Should you consider yourself eligible to apply for this role under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, please ensure you fill in the appropriate section of the diversity monitoring form.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the House of Lords on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **OAKABC**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload the following documents:

- A detailed CV (maximum 2 sides) setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- A covering letter (maximum 2 sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the person specification. Please note that the covering letter is an important part of your application and will be assessed as part of your full application.
- A Conflicts of Interest Form
- A Political Activity Form
- Please complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form

The closing date for applications is 23.59 on **Friday 13th September**.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a call to discuss the role or if you require any reasonable adjustments during the application process please email: maria.dodson@saxbam.com



