



HOUSE OF LORDS



# House of Lords Conduct Committee - Lay Members

## Candidate Brief 2024

OAKABD



# A message from the Conduct Committee

Thank you for your interest in applying to be a lay member of the House of Lords Conduct Committee.

The Conduct Committee keeps the House of Lords Code of Conduct, Guide to the Code and Code of Conduct for Members' Staff under review, and oversees the operation of the codes and the work of the independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards. We adjudicate on reports from the Commissioners on complaints made under the codes against either members of the House or their staff. These include cases of alleged bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, cases relating to members' registration and declaration of outside interests, and allegations of paid lobbying on behalf of outside bodies.

The Conduct Committee was formed in 2019 as part of a package of changes to the way the House dealt with complaints against members. These important changes were part of a wider, cross-party effort in both Houses of Parliament to improve the culture in Westminster, following reports in the media of bullying and harassment at Westminster.

In establishing the Conduct Committee, the House recognised that lay or external members were a vital part of many organisations' arrangements for professional regulation. Since 2019 the House has benefited hugely from the independent challenge and the variety of experiences and perspectives that lay members have brought. The Conduct Committee, made up of five peer members and four lay members, has become a cohesive, effective standards body.

The first four lay members were appointed in 2019 for three years, with the option of extending their appointment for a further three years. As we approach the six-year mark, and to avoid the upheaval of losing all our lay members simultaneously, two of our lay members are now standing down a year early. The remaining two will complete their term in late 2025.

As you consider this opportunity further you will find information on the committee's work and that of the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards on the Parliament website. Much of the committee's work is low-profile, but individual cases can generate a great deal of interest, so lay members have to be comfortable with this level of scrutiny.

We have no preconceived ideas about the backgrounds lay members should come from and are interested in candidates from across the United Kingdom who may have gained relevant experience in all sorts of ways, in the private, public or charitable sectors at a senior level. Lay members need independence, objectivity and resilience, and the ability to get their views across clearly. If you can show you have these qualities and meet the criteria below, then please consider applying.

If you believe that you have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience, we encourage you to apply.

# The House of Lords Code of Conduct

## Overview

Like many organisations, the House of Lords regulates the compliance of its members with its own Code of Conduct. Like other professional regulators, the House's system incorporates strong independent elements. One of these is the independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards. The other key independent element is the lay membership of the Conduct Committee.

The House of Lords Code of Conduct contains rules about registering and declaring outside interests, about accepting payment in return for parliamentary activities, provisions to deal with complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, and a longstanding requirement that members act always on their 'personal honour'. Members are, of course, also subject to the criminal law, like all other citizens. The Code is set by the House on the advice of the Conduct Committee, and is reviewed from time to time.

## Conduct Committee

The five peer members of the Conduct Committee are:

- Lord Garnier
- Baroness Kidron
- Baroness Mallalieu
- Baroness Manningham-Buller (Chair)
- Lord Scriven

Peer members are appointed for three years, and the next change in membership will be in early 2025, at which point a new Chair will be appointed to succeed Lady Manningham-Buller.

The four lay members are:

- Cindy Butts
- Mark Castle
- Andrea Coomber
- Vanessa Davies

Of these, two lay members have agreed to stand down a year early: we are now recruiting their successors.

Peer and lay members have the same speaking and voting rights. The quorum of the committee, without which it cannot undertake any formal business, is three peer members and two lay members.

# The independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards

The House of Lords Commissioners for Standards are independent of the House. They are appointed for a non-renewable term of five years, so that they cannot be influenced by the prospect of reappointment. They are responsible for the objective and impartial investigation of alleged breaches of the House of Lords Code of Conduct. This includes investigating breaches of the rules on members' financial support, use of parliamentary facilities and treatment of those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities.

## The complaints process

A complaint against a member of the House of Lords may be submitted by email or in writing to the Commissioners' office. One or other Commissioner conducts a preliminary assessment of all complaints. Only if a complaint falls within the scope of the Code, and there is sufficient evidence to establish a *prima facie* case that the Code has been breached, is a formal investigation launched. If, following investigation, the Commissioner finds the member in breach of the Code, they also recommend an appropriate sanction.

The Conduct Committee is the appellate body. The member has a right of appeal to the Conduct Committee against the Commissioner's finding and/or recommended sanction. In cases of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, a complainant may also appeal the Commissioner's finding that a member is not in breach of the Code.

A full explanation of the investigation process is in the Guide to the Code of Conduct.

## Keeping the system under review

The rules of conduct are agreed by the House of Lords itself, but the Conduct Committee is responsible for keeping them under review and recommending changes. These are typically brought forward as a package once a year.

In early 2024 the committee launched a full review of the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code of Conduct – the first such review since 2009. Although the review was interrupted by the dissolution of Parliament ahead of the general election in July, it resumed in September, and the outcome of the review will be published in early 2025, ahead of the new lay members taking up their positions.

# About the role

We are seeking two lay members for the House of Lords Conduct Committee.

## Purpose

Lay members participate fully in the work of the committee. This involves considering appeals in cases where a member is found in breach of the Code of Conduct, as well as more general consideration of the Codes of Conduct and matters relating to the conduct of members.

## Key relationships

- Chair of the House of Lords Conduct Committee
- Four other members of the House of Lords appointed to the committee by the House
- Other lay members of the committee
- Staff of the committee, including the Clerk of the Journals (who acts as clerk to the committee) and the Registrar of Lords' Interests

The committee collectively has a relationship with the independent House of Lords Commissioners for Standards and with the House staff who support them.

# Responsibilities of the House of Lords Conduct Committee lay members

The work of a lay member typically involves the following:

- You will be required to spend significant time reading reports and papers. This means you will probably spend more time preparing for than actually attending committee meetings. You can either travel to Westminster for meetings (which may if necessary involve overnight stays in London – both travel and accommodation costs are reimbursed) – or you can participate remotely in meetings via Microsoft Teams.
- You should be prepared for a sharp learning curve about the workings of Parliament and the House of Lords in particular, and you will need to analyse complex information, often at speed.
- You should be your own person – that's why lay members are appointed. Your opinion, your experience, your knowledge: they are what add value to the work of the Conduct Committee.
- It is important to understand what the role is and what it is not. It is not a political role. This is a regulatory role that, if carried out effectively, can enhance the public's trust and confidence in the House of Lords.
- It takes time and effort to make an application, so you should be sure this is what you wish to do and that you are comfortable in a role that does not publicly recognise individual contributions.
- If you believe that you have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience, we encourage you to apply.

# Person specification

The lay members will come from a range of backgrounds and areas of the United Kingdom.

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.**

## Knowledge and experience

### Essential

- An understanding of the role of a standards body and the importance of standards in public life;
- Experience of contributing to decision-making on matters where there were strong and contested views;
- Experience of putting forward your independent opinion in a diverse group and working to come to an agreed approach;
- Experience of considering and reviewing large amounts of information to come to sound evidence-based judgments which take account of codes of conduct, rules or organisational context; and
- Experience of working strategically with or within complex organisations or complex situations, to develop and improve systems and processes and to challenge where necessary.

### Desirable

- A general understanding of the role of the House of Lords and its members and the UK Parliament;
- Involvement in the issues or investigations likely to arise under the Code of Conduct including those arising from complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

# Skills and attributes

## Essential

- Absolute integrity;
- Intellectual agility to navigate complex regulatory and legal principles and fact patterns.
- A personal commitment to and understanding of the importance of the standards elaborated in the Code of Conduct;
- The communication skills to get your view across in meetings or in writing;
- Confidence and strength of character to contribute to committee work assertively and sensitively, a willingness to compromise where necessary and accept collective responsibility for decisions;
- Respect for the sensitive and confidential nature of information acquired during the course of the work;
- The ability to forge relationships of trust while retaining independence of thought; and
- The resilience required to work in an environment of close parliamentary, media and public scrutiny.

# Additional information

## Time commitment

The committee normally meets about once a month when Parliament is sitting, but it may need to meet at short notice from time to time, depending on the caseload of investigations into members' conduct. Meetings are typically held in person on the parliamentary estate in Westminster with some joining remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Currently meetings are held on Wednesday afternoons, but this may change. In total, candidates should be willing to dedicate around 10 days a year, when Parliament is sitting, to the Conduct Committee. Additional days might be required, depending on the workload. As a guide, meetings are likely to last approximately two hours but will require time in advance to read the relevant papers (thus one meeting will likely count as one day). As a guide, Parliament sits in every month except August, with breaks for half term (February and May), Easter, the party conferences (three weeks in September/October) and Christmas.

## Terms of appointment

The appointment will be for a fixed term of three years, with the possibility of renewing for up to another three years. It is possible that the length of appointment offered to the successful candidates may vary in order to phase the recruitment of lay members in the future. The appointment is not renewable at the end of a second three-year term.

## Remuneration

This is a remunerated non-executive position paying £600 per 8-hour day (proportionate to actual hours worked, including preparation time, and excluding breaks). Travel and other reasonable expenses will be paid.

## Political activity

Lay members have to demonstrate complete impartiality during their time on the committee and should not during their term of office undertake any party-political activity. See also the section on declaration of interests below.

Party political activity includes:

- holding office in a party political organisation;
- speaking in public on matters of national or local political controversy;
- expressing views on political matters in the media, or in books, articles or leaflets, or on social media;
- being a candidate for election to a local authority or Parliament;
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate for election to a local authority, Parliament or a political party;
- attending, in a member or delegate capacity, conferences or functions arranged by party political organisations; or
- being involved in campaigning in a national referendum campaign.

Some candidates may have undertaken party political activity in earlier periods. The Political Activity Declaration will be kept separate from your application and will only be seen by the consulting team at Saxton Bampfylde and the panel prior to interview. In the initial interview with Saxton Bampfylde the consultant may explore with candidates any potential issues including actual and perceived conflict. The panel may also explore with candidates any potential issues at panel interview.

Party political activities may have given you relevant skills, including experience gained from committee work, collective decision making and resolving conflict. If you have had such experience and you consider it relevant to your application for this post, you may choose to include it in the main body of your application.

Individuals are ineligible for this role if they are current or former MPs or members of the House of Lords. Serving lay members of the House of Commons Standards Committee will not be eligible to serve concurrently as lay members of the Lords Conduct Committee.



## 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.

## Declaration of interests

The purpose of requiring interests to be declared is to avoid any danger of lay members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties.

These appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the Conduct Committee should be declared. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for this appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

There is a requirement to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest you may have in being appointed in a separate form. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest may be explored by Saxton Bampfylde in the initial interview and by the panel at panel interview.

## 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, 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 role.

The House of Lords takes security very seriously and complies 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 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. 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.

# 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](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code **OAKABD**.

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 **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

\* 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](mailto:maria.dodson@saxbam.com)



