

## **CIVIL SERVANTS RECEIVING HOSPITALITY**

The Civil Service Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all civil servants. It applies to civil servants working in the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations.

The Code states that: **civil servants must not accept gifts or hospitality or receive other benefits from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity.**

In addition, departments will also have their own internal rules and guidance.

It is widely recognised that it is important for civil servants to maintain and build effective networks in order to support the work of Departments, and to gain a real understanding of the views of stakeholders. However, contact with organisations outside government can give rise to offers of hospitality, and while accepting hospitality in certain circumstances may further the Government's interests this must be balanced with upholding high standards of propriety and guarding against any reasonable suspicion of perceived or actual conflicts of interest or an undue obligation being created.

The following should be considered before accepting hospitality:

### Purpose

- Accepting hospitality should be in the interests of Departments and help further Government objectives.

### Proportionality

- Any hospitality accepted should not be over-frequent or over-generous. Accepting hospitality frequently from the same organisation could lead to a perception that the work of the department is being influenced by the objectives of a single organisation.
- On the same basis, any hospitality accepted should not seem lavish or disproportionate to the nature of the relationship you have with the provider.

### Conflict of interest

- There are strict rules in place for those responsible for procurement or management of contracts, but even if you are not directly involved in financial, contractual or regulatory matters connected to the organisation, it is essential to consider the relationship the organisation has with Departments.
- You should consider whether the organisation is bidding for work or grants from Departments, or if it is under investigation or had criticism.
- You should also consider whether it is appropriate to accept hospitality from a source if it is also a taxpayer-funded organisation.

All of the considerations above also apply before accepting gifts.

### **Recording hospitality**

Staff, including those on short term or agency contracts, should record all instances of hospitality accepted from organisations outside of Government. This includes any

instance involving a personal friend where the purpose of the hospitality was to cover business and/or was paid for by the individual's company expense account. When recording instances of hospitality, staff should also record whether they were accompanied by any guests at the expense of the source of the hospitality. There is no need to record minor refreshments or sandwich lunches.

In general, it is not necessary to record hospitality received from others within HM Government or the Devolved Administrations, the Palace, non-departmental public bodies and overseas governments. Hospitality received from universities, local authorities and police forces should be declared. More detailed guidance will be set out in departmental staff handbooks.

### **Audit**

Accounting Officers should ensure records are maintained as and when hospitality is received, and that procedures are in place to review staff registers in order to assess compliance with the guidelines and gauge if there is potential for conflicts of interest to arise.

If you are uncertain about any of these issues, you should discuss them with your line manager and/or your HR Division. If you feel concerned that accepting an offer of hospitality could give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest, it would probably be best to decline. The Propriety and Ethics Team in the Cabinet Office can also provide further guidance on 020 7276 2471/2470.

### **Publication**

The scope of the publication should include all Board Members, including Non-Executive Directors, and Director Generals to be published on a quarterly basis by departments on their websites. The first quarterly report should cover the period 1 April to 30 June 2009.

**[DEPARTMENT NAME]**  
**[QUARTERLY REPORTING PERIOD]**

<b>Director General or Permanent Secretary Name, Title</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Type of Hospitality Received</b>
xx April		Lunch
xx April		Dinner
xx May		Drinks
xx June		Accommodation: 1 night
xx June		Reception
<b>Name, Title</b>		
xx June		Conference: lunch