



# House of Commons Committee on Standards

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## Jess Phillips

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### Eleventh Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 6 June 2023*

## Committee on Standards

The Committee on Standards is appointed by the House of Commons to oversee the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, except in relation to the conduct of individual cases under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme; to examine the arrangements proposed by the Commissioner for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Financial Interests and any other registers of interest established by the House; to review from time to time the form and content of those registers; to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests referred to it by the Commissioner; to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged breaches in the Code of Conduct which have been drawn to the Committee's attention by the Commissioner; and to recommend any modifications to the Code of Conduct as may from time to time appear to be necessary.

### Current membership

[Sir Chris Bryant MP](#) (*Labour, Rhondda*) (Chair)

[Andy Carter MP](#) (*Conservative, Warrington South*)

[Alberto Costa MP](#) (*Conservative, South Leicestershire*)

[Allan Dorans MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock*)

[Yvonne Fovargue MP](#) (*Labour, Makerfield*)

[Sir Francis Habgood](#) (*Lay member*)

[Sir Bernard Jenkin MP](#) (*Conservative, Harwich and North Essex*)

[Dr Michael Maguire](#) (*Lay member*)

[Mehmuda Mian](#) (*Lay member*)

[Dr Rose Marie Parr](#) (*Lay member*)

[Victoria Smith](#) (*Lay member*)

[Dr David Stirling](#) (*Lay member*)

[Sir Charles Walker MP](#) (*Conservative, Broxbourne*)

[Carys Williams](#) (*Lay member*)

### Powers

The constitution and powers of the Committee are set out in Standing Order No.149. In particular, the Committee has power to order the attendance of any Member of Parliament before the Committee and to require that specific documents or records in the possession of a Member relating to its inquiries, or to the inquiries of the Commissioner, be laid before the Committee. The Committee has power to refuse to allow its public proceedings to be broadcast. The Law Officers, if they are Members of Parliament, may attend and take part in the Committee's proceedings, but may not vote.

### Publications

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Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/standards](http://www.parliament.uk/standards) and in print by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr Robin James (Head of staff team), Su Panchanathan (Committee Operations Officer), Stuart Ramsay (Acting Clerk), Silas Scott (Senior Media Relations Officer), and Wafia Zia (Second Clerk).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Committee at the Committee's email address, [standards@parliament.uk](mailto:standards@parliament.uk). The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6615.

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# 1 Report

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1. We note the Commissioner's memorandum and are grateful to him for his diligence.<sup>1</sup> This case underlines the need for Members to submit their complete registrations in good time.
2. *We recommend no further action.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Commissioner's memorandum is published as an Appendix to this report. Written evidence relating to the Commissioner's inquiry is published on the Committee's webpages.

# Appendix: Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards memorandum

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## Summary

This memorandum reports on an inquiry I commenced on 24 April 2023.

I began the investigation following a complaint from a member of the public that Ms Jess Phillips MP had failed to register a financial interest within the 28-day deadline set by the House. Specifically, the complainant alleged that Ms Phillips had not registered income from an appearance on a television programme, broadcast on 17 January 2020, on the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

In the course of my investigation I reviewed Ms Phillips' current entries on the Register and it appeared that a payment received from the University of Bristol and registered by Ms Phillips on 4 November 2022 was registered two days after the 28-day deadline set by the House.

My investigation accordingly sought to establish whether Ms Phillips: (a) failed to register an interest under Category 1: Employment and earnings; and (b) registered a further interest outside of the 28-day deadline set by the House; in each case breaching paragraph 14 of the Rules as set out in the 2019 Code of Conduct for Members ("the Code").

During my investigation, I sought a written submission from Ms Phillips who informed me she did not receive remuneration for the television programme broadcast on 17 January 2020. Ms Phillips also explained that the delay in registering the payment from the University of Bristol was due to administrative changes in her office and a failure, on her part, to provide the Registrar with all the information required by the rules.

Accordingly, I do not uphold the complaint that Ms Phillips failed to register her appearance on television on 17 January 2020. However, with respect to the payment from the University of Bristol, I am of the view that Ms Phillips breached paragraph 14 of the 2019 Code of Conduct.

Although this is a relatively minor breach, I am referring it to the Committee on Standards because it occurred less than six months after rectification by Ms Phillips of a number of late registrations of financial interests. A casual attitude to the Register is unacceptable, and accordingly I consider it right to refer this breach to the Committee.

**Daniel Greenberg CB**

**Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards**

**19 May 2023**

## Report

### Background

1. On 28 March 2023 I received a complaint from a member of the public about the conduct of Ms Jess Phillips MP.
2. The complaint concerned Ms Phillips' failure to register the income she received following her appearance on the Channel 4 television programme "The Last Leg", broadcast on 17 January 2020. The complainant provided evidence that when Ms Phillips appeared on the same programme in 2022, she was paid £3,000 for her appearance, which she registered on the Register of Members' Financial Interests.
3. In preparation for opening my inquiry and in line with my usual practice, I undertook a review of Ms Phillips' most recent entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, dated 17 April 2023.<sup>2</sup> My review found that, on 4 November 2022, Ms Phillips registered under Category 1: Employment and earnings a payment of £1,000 that she had received from the University of Bristol on 6 October 2022. This interest was registered two days after the 28-day deadline set by the House.<sup>3</sup>
4. My predecessor Kathryn Stone OBE concluded an inquiry into the timeliness of Ms Phillips' Register entries on 23 May 2022. Ms Stone found that Ms Phillips had been late registering eighteen financial interests. Ms Stone stated that:

*"Given the number and lateness of some of the registrations involved, I gave serious and lengthy consideration to the most appropriate means of concluding this matter. When making my decision, I took into account the fact that this was the first time the timeliness of Ms Phillips' register entries had been brought to my attention, the content of Ms Phillips discussions with the Registrar when registering these matters, and the measures Ms Phillips has now put in place to ensure the timely management of her future registrations ... I found that, based on the information available to me, the breaches were inadvertent, insofar as they were the result of a longstanding inattention to administrative detail on the part of Ms Phillips and that there was no deliberate attempt to mislead. I decided therefore, on this occasion, the inquiry could be concluded by way of the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order No. 150."*

### My inquiry

5. I started my inquiry on 24 April 2023. I sought to establish whether Ms Phillips had failed to register an interest under Category 1: Employment and earnings. My inquiry also sought the reasons why Ms Phillips had appeared to register a further interest outside of the 28-day deadline set by the House for registration and, therefore, breached paragraph 14 of the rules of conduct as set out in the 2019 Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament.
6. Paragraph 14 of that Code states:

<sup>2</sup> [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/230417/phillips\\_jess.htm](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/230417/phillips_jess.htm)

<sup>3</sup> The payment was received on 6 October 2022 and registered on 4 November 2022.

*“Members shall fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the registration of interests in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. They shall always be open and frank in drawing attention to any relevant interest in any proceeding of the House or its Committees, and in any communications with Ministers, Members, public officials or public office holders.”*

7. The Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members, which was appended to the 2019 Code, states the following in Chapter 1: Registration of Members’ Financial Interests.

### **Requirements of the House**

#### **Registration of interests**

*2. The House requires new Members, within one month of their election, to register all their current financial interests, and any registrable benefits (other than earnings) received in the 12 months before their election. After that, Members are required to register within 28 days any change in those registrable interests. Such a change includes both the acquisition of a new interest and the ceasing of any registered interest, for example because an employment has ceased or because a holding has reduced in value or been sold.*

...

#### **Category 1: Employment and earnings**

##### **Threshold for registration**

*6. Members must register, subject to the paragraphs below, individual payments of more than £100 which they receive for any employment outside the House. They must also register individual payments of £100 or less once they have received a total of over £300 in payments of whatever size from the same source in a calendar year.*

##### **Requirements for registration**

###### **7. Under this category Members must register:**

*Any of the following received as a director or employee or earned in any other capacity:*

*a) Salaries, fees and payments in kind; gifts received in recognition of services performed;*

...

8. The standard of proof I have applied in reaching my conclusions below is the balance of probabilities.

9. During my inquiry, in response to questions from me, I received a written submission from Ms Phillips on 24 April 2023.



10. A timeline of my investigation is set out at Appendix 1.

## My findings

11. I wrote to Ms Phillips on 24 April 2023, requesting information about any financial remuneration she received following her appearance on the television programme *The Last Leg*, broadcast on 17 January 2020, and why it was not registered. I also asked Ms Phillips for an explanation of what appeared to be the late registration of the payment for £1,000, made to her by the University of Bristol on 6 October 2022.

12. Ms Phillips responded to my letter on the same day. In her response Ms Phillips explained that regarding the television programme broadcast on 17 January 2020, “...I didn’t receive a fee for my first appearance on the *Last Leg*, so there was nothing to declare ...”.

13. With respect to the University of Bristol registration, Ms Phillips said,

*“On the late registration please find attached emails between me and the Registrar that show that I did attempt to declare the University of Bristol Payment within the 28 days and in fact sent the declaration in on the 2nd of November, however I had simply omitted the amount, which the registrar did not alert me to until 2 days later when I immediately responded with an apology. I hope you can see that it was completely my intention to make the declaration within the time frame and ordinarily I would have done it well before. It was as I hope you can see a simple error in including the amount. It was in this period that my administrator who manages my diary etc (where the process for alert of any declarations was in place) changed and the induction and process for the new administrator was hampered by closure of parliament initially for the process of the passing of the Monarch that then ran in to conference recess meant that the office was in some flux in that period. As you can see from my declarations since then this has not been of any further issue.”<sup>4</sup>*

14. Ms Phillips also stated, “... I am satisfied that all of my registrations are up to date ...”.

## Analysis

### *The television programme*

15. Ms Phillips had a duty to register under Category 1: Employment and earnings, any income over £100 that she received from that television appearance. Ms Phillips said that she was not paid for her first appearance on the programme, so she had nothing to register, and I have no reason to disbelieve her.

### *The University of Bristol*

16. Under the rules of registration for Category 1 interests, payments over £100 must be registered within the 28-day deadline set by the House. Ms Phillips has accepted that,

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4 See written evidence below for emails exchanged with the Registrar

although she contacted the Registrar on 2 November 2022, a “*simple error*” led to the value of the interest being omitted from her email, which, in turn caused the failure to meet the 28-day deadline.

17. The information Members are required to provide is clearly set out in the Guide to the Rules and it is a Member’s responsibility to ensure that all details are provided in line with the deadline set by the House.

18. The value of an interest is not an incidental detail and the email entry that was initially submitted to the registration team by Ms Phillips on 2 November 2022 omitted to include this information. Therefore, the entry submitted by Ms Phillips was incomplete. By the time Ms Phillips had corrected the error and submitted a complete entry, the 28-day deadline had passed.

## Conclusion

19. Having considered the information available to me I am satisfied that Ms Phillips did not receive a payment for her appearance on *The Last Leg*, which was broadcast on 17 January 2020, and therefore had no remuneration to register.

20. I am also satisfied that Ms Phillips received £1,000 from the University of Bristol on 6 October 2022 but failed to register that payment in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests within the 28-day deadline set by the House.

21. I consider this failure of timely registration to be very much at the minor end of the spectrum and I have therefore not taken the decision to refer Ms Phillips to the Committee on Standards lightly. I am, however, referring for the following reasons:

- a) This is the second time in 12 months that Ms Phillips’ failures to register financial interests in line with the rules have come to light.
- b) In her letter to Ms Phillips dated 12 April 2022, my predecessor explained she had given serious consideration to referring those earlier breaches of registration to the Committee, remarking on Ms Phillips’ “... *longstanding inattention to detail*”. This inattention to detail appears to have continued and has resulted in her submitting incomplete registration details to the Registrar of Members’ Financial Interests, which required the Registration Team to go back to Ms Phillips and request the missing information, resulting in a failure to register on time.
- c) Paragraph 14 of the 2019 Code of Conduct states that Members shall ‘*fulfil conscientiously*’ the registration of their financial interests.
- d) Having experienced the rectification procedure for a recent and substantial rectification, I would have hoped that Ms Phillips would have learned the need to apply rigour within her office to ensure timely and accurate registration; that she has failed to do so is the primary reason for my referring this latest breach, in itself relatively trivial, to the Committee.

- e) It is essential for the credibility and authority of the Register that Members understand that repeatedly treating it in a casual and inattentive fashion is a serious matter.

22. I consider that the failure to register the income Ms Phillips received from the University of Bristol within the 28-day deadline set by the House was a breach of paragraph 14 of the 2019 Code of Conduct.

23. In referring this matter to the Committee, I draw to their attention my opinion that Ms Phillips' breach of the Code of Conduct, although warranting the attention of the Committee for the reasons given above, was a relatively minor breach because:

- The registration was only two days late.
- The payment was of a relatively low value (£1,000).
- Ms Phillips did make some attempt to register the interest in time, albeit without including the amount.
- It is the only late registration on Ms Phillips' Register entry since the rectification of the previous inquiry in May 2022.
- Ms Phillips has apologised for her late registration and accepted responsibility for it.

**Daniel Greenberg CB**

**Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards**

**19 May 2023**

## **Appendix 1: Timeline of investigation**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
28/03/2023	Initial complaint received from a member of the public
05/04/2023	Complainant provides supporting evidence
06/04/2023	I undertake a review of the Member's entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests
24/04/2023	I write to Ms Phillips informing her of my decision to start an investigation
24/04/2023	Ms Phillips provides a written response to my questions
15/05/2023	Ms Phillips is sent a draft copy of my memorandum to the Committee for her factual accuracy comments
18/05/2023	I receive Ms Phillips' comments on my draft memorandum
19/05/2023	I conclude my memorandum and pass it to the Committee for their decision-making

# Formal minutes

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**Tuesday 6 June 2023**

## **Members present:**

Sir Chris Bryant, in the Chair

Allan Dorans

Andy Carter

Alberto Costa

Sir Francis Habgood

Sir Bernard Jenkin

Dr Michael Maguire

Mehmuda Mian

Dr Rose Marie Parr

Victoria Smith

Dr David Stirling

Sir Charles Walker

Draft report (*Jess Phillips*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 read and agreed to.

A paper was appended to the Report.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Eleventh Report of the Committee to the House.

None of the lay members present wished to submit an opinion on the Report (Standing Order No. 149(8)).

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

The following written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for publication:

Written evidence bundle from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

## **Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned.

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

## Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	New Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules: promoting appropriate values, attitudes and behaviour in Parliament	HC 227
2nd	Code of Conduct: Procedural Protocol	HC 378
3rd	New Guide to the Rules: final proposals	HC 544
4th	Andrew Bridgen	HC 855
5th	Precautionary exclusion: response to the House of Commons Commission's consultation	HC 1049
6th	Alex Davies-Jones	HC 1048
7th	Rules for the use of House of Commons stationery	HC 1263
8th	All-Party Parliamentary Groups: final proposals	HC 228
9th	Margaret Ferrier	HC 1276
10th	Matt Hancock	HC 1417
1st Special	Government Response to the Committee's First, Second and Third Reports	HC 709

## Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Boris Johnson	HC 549
2nd	Mrs Natalie Elphicke, Sir Roger Gale, Adam Holloway, Bob Stewart, Theresa Villiers	HC 582
3rd	Mr Owen Paterson	HC 797
4th	Review of the Code of Conduct: proposals for consultation	HC 270
5th	Daniel Kawczynski	HC 1036
6th	Review of fairness and natural justice in the House's standards system	HC 1183
7th	All-Party Parliamentary Groups: improving governance and regulation	HC 717

## Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Kate Osamor	HC 210

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
2nd	Stephen Pound	HC 209
3rd	Greg Hands	HC 211
4th	Conor Burns	HC 212
5th	Mr Marcus Fysh	HC 213
6th	Confidentiality in the House's standards system	HC 474
7th	Sanctions in respect of the conduct of Members	HC 241
8th	David Morris	HC 771
9th	Dr Rosena Allin-Khan	HC 904
10th	The House of Commons and the criminal law: protocols between the police and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Committee on Standards	HC 883
11th	ICGS investigations: Commons-Lords agreement	HC 988
12th	Sanctions and confidentiality in the House's standards system: revised proposals	HC 1340