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Simon Hoare MP
Chair of the Public Administration and
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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hoare'.

13 October 2025

I am writing to you to inform you about a number of ethics and integrity policies that are coming into force today, which I am introducing to Parliament via Written Ministerial Statement.

Ethics and Integrity Commission

The government has established the Ethics and Integrity Commission which begins its work today. The Prime Minister has written to its Chair, Doug Chalmers, to issue its terms of reference, which have also been laid in Parliament and published on the Commission's website, and which I also attach to this letter.

Since the Cabinet Office first announced its policy intention on the Ethics and Integrity Commission via its 'Government of Service' Written Ministerial Statement on 21 July, the Government has introduced to Parliament a Bill to enact a Hillsborough Law. Chapter 2 of the Bill, 'Standards of Ethical Conduct', will require all public bodies to establish a professional duty of candour for staff, to be set out within a wider code of ethics. These obligations will be underpinned by a new duty requiring public bodies to promote the ethical conduct of their employees.

The Ethics and Integrity Commission will play a vital role in supporting public bodies to meet these planned forthcoming obligations. The Prime Minister has written to the Commission's Chair today asking it to "report on how public bodies can develop, distribute and enforce such codes so that they effect meaningful cultural change, ensuring public officials act with honesty, integrity and candour at all times." Once published, and on the Hillsborough Law receiving Royal Assent, the Commission will "act as a Centre of Excellence on public sector codes of conduct, providing guidance and best practice to help all public bodies put ethics and integrity at the heart of public service delivery."

You will note the terms of reference for the EIC include a provision for the Government to conduct a review of the ToRs annually. The Cabinet Office will consider any recommendations from PACAC's current review into "Propriety, Ethics, and the wider Standards Landscape in the UK" as part of that process. We look forward to engaging with the Committee as that inquiry progresses.

The Government is today launching a recruitment campaign for three independent members for the Ethics and Integrity Commission. This will mean, when this campaign is complete, that the Commission will comprise of an independent chair, six additional independent members, and four political members, reducing to three on the expiry of the SNP member's term. With a strong independent majority, our Ethics and Integrity Commission will ensure that British public life will continue to benefit from a strong, authoritative voice on ethical standards.

An updated Ministerial Code

The Prime Minister has today re-issued the Ministerial Code to implement reforms in relation to ministerial severance payments and changes to the operation of the Business Appointment Rules.

The Ministerial Code makes clear that ministers will be expected to forgo their severance payment if they leave office having served less than six months, or if they leave office following a serious breach of the Ministerial Code. Similarly, the new Code states that if a former minister is re-appointed to a ministerial office within three months of leaving, they will be expected to waive their salary for the period that overlaps with their severance payment.

The updated Code and terms of reference for the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards also reflect changes to the operation of the Business Appointment Rules for former Ministers. From today, advice under the Rules will be provided by the Independent Adviser, and former ministers will also be expected to repay their severance payment if they are found to have seriously breached the Business Appointment Rules.

One further change to the Ministerial Code is that the Cabinet Office will advise the Prime Minister before any decision to establish a public inquiry is taken, and before the terms of reference are agreed. This is to ensure decisions are well judged and proportionate, and that inquiries focus on finding the right answers and help effect change.

The closure of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments

The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA) has now closed. From today, its function to provide independent advice on the application of the Business Appointment Rules in respect of the most senior civil servants and special advisers is transferred to the Civil Service Commission (the Commission). Similarly, ACOBA's function to provide independent advice in respect of former ministers is from today transferred to the Prime Minister's Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards, Sir Laurie Magnus,

who already provides independent advice to the Prime Minister on adherence to the Ministerial Code, and to individual Ministers on the appropriate management of their private interests while in office.

This structural change is accompanied by wider reforms to strengthen and streamline the system and enhance compliance. As set out above, in the event of a serious breach of the Business Appointment Rules, ministers will now be expected to repay any severance payment they have received. To improve the consistency of the application of the Rules in departments, the Civil Service Commission, which already audits departments for compliance with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles, will undertake regular audits of departmental decisions of Business Appointment applications for grades below the level currently administered by ACOBA. This enhanced sanction and oversight will be underpinned by a more efficient and responsive system, focused on ensuring applicants understand their obligations under the Rules. New guidance on the system has been published on GOV.UK today to reflect these changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Thomas-Symonds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**RT HON NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP
MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE
HIS MAJESTY'S PAYMASTER GENERAL**

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Terms of reference

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1. Purpose

The purpose of the Ethics and Integrity Commission is to promote the highest standards in public life.

2. Responsibilities

The Ethics and Integrity Commission will:

- A. Promote and safeguard the Seven Principles of Public Life;
- B. Conduct research and thematic inquiries and make recommendations on changes to present arrangements to help ensure the highest standards in

public life;

- C. Advise public authorities on the development of clear codes of conduct with effective oversight arrangements, in line with the planned forthcoming obligations of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill;
- D. Examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all public office holders, and report annually to the Prime Minister on the health of standards in public life;
- E. Engage and inform the wider public on the values, rules and oversight mechanisms that govern standards in public life;
- F. Convene ethics and standards bodies in central government (and parliamentary standards bodies, with their agreement) to share best practice and identify and address areas of common concern.

3. Remit

The Ethics and Integrity Commission may:

- A. Examine any systems in place to uphold ethical standards across public life in England, including those relating to conduct, and the financial activities and commercial endeavours of a public office holder;
- B. Examine any arrangements relating to the funding of political parties, elections, and referendums;
- C. Not inquire into matters relating to the devolved administrations, except with their agreement;
- D. Not investigate individual cases.

“Public life” includes the following:

- E. Ministers, civil servants, and special advisers; and non-ministerial office holders in central government;
- F. Members of Parliament and Peers sitting in the House of Lords;
- G. Members and officers of all public bodies; and members and officers of other bodies discharging public functions;
- H. Elected members and officers of local authorities, including directly elected Mayors;

- I. Private and voluntary sector organisations involved in the delivery of public services, when commissioned by public bodies or paid for through public expenditure.

4. Leadership and Membership

- A. The Commission is comprised of an independent chair, six additional independent members^[2], and political members nominated by the leaders of the three largest political parties in the House of Commons.
- B. The chair and independent members are appointed by the Prime Minister to serve a single non-renewable five-year term. The appointment of the chair and independent members are regulated by the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The role of the chair has been designated as a significant public appointment.
- C. Political members are appointed by the Prime Minister for a renewable three-year term.^[3]

5. Governance

- A. The Ethics and Integrity Commission is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body of the Cabinet Office.^[4] It is sponsored by the Cabinet Office through its senior sponsor, the Director of Propriety and Ethics.
- B. It publishes a code of conduct that sets out the values and standards of behaviour expected of members of the Commission.
- C. The Cabinet Office provides an annual budget and secretariat to the Commission. The Ethics and Integrity Commission will have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cabinet Office, which it will publish on its website.

^[2] The Commission currently has an independent Chair and three additional independent members. The Government will be recruiting three further independent members.

^[3] There are currently four political members on the Commission. Following the 2024 General Election, the Liberal Democrats became the third largest party and were invited to nominate a political member. The SNP nominated Ian Blackford in 2023 and, at the end of his term in June 2026, the Commission will revert to three political members.

[4] In line with this governance arrangement, the Cabinet Office may review these terms of reference annually.

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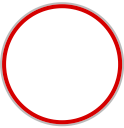
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Government of Service

Statement made on 13 October 2025

Statement UIN HCWS939

Statement made by



Nick Thomas-Symonds

Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office

Labour

Torfaen

Commons

>

Statement

On 21 July 2025 the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster laid out the government's plans to put ethics and integrity at the heart of the Government’s approach to public service. Today, we are delivering on those plans.

Ethics and Integrity Commission

The Ethics and Integrity Commission has launched today. The Prime Minister has written to the EIC’s independent chair, Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE, to issue the Commission's terms of reference. A copy of the terms of reference have also been deposited in the House library.

The Commission will play a leading role in supporting public bodies as they implement the planned forthcoming obligation in the Public Office (Accountability) Bill for all public bodies to have a code of ethical conduct. The Prime Minister has commissioned the EIC to report on how public bodies can develop, distribute and enforce codes so that they effect meaningful cultural change, ensuring public officials act with honesty, integrity and candour at all times. On the publication of its report, and on the Hillsborough Law receiving Royal Assent, the EIC will act as a Centre of Excellence on public sector codes of conduct, providing guidance and best practice to help all public bodies put ethics and integrity at the heart of public service delivery.

As previously announced, the Commission will have a responsibility to engage and inform the wider public on the values, rules and oversight mechanisms that govern standards in public life; and to convene the leaders of ethics and standards bodies in central government and Parliament to identify and address areas of common concern. The Commission will also report annually to the Prime Minister on the overall health of our standards system. The Commission will not have the ability to launch investigations or field complaints.

The Government is launching today a recruitment campaign for three new independent members to join the Commission, to ensure a strong independent majority. The Commission otherwise takes on the existing members and governance structure of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The Commission also inherits CSPL's mandate to be the custodians of the Seven Principles of Public Life, and to report to government on how arrangements to uphold standards in public life can be strengthened in specific areas.

An updated Ministerial Code and terms of reference for the Independent Adviser

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Statement from

Cabinet Office