

Project 53

Code of Conduct

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This Code of Conduct establishes the standards of behaviour, responsibility and judgement expected across Project 53, supporting humanitarian purpose, operational effectiveness, public trust and organisational integrity.

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Table of Contents

Version Control	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Core Values and Principles	5
Humanitarian Principles	5
Humanity	5
Impartiality	5
Our Values	5
Integrity	5
Respect	5
Collaboration	6
Excellence	6
Humility	6
Courage	6
Innovation	6
Applying Our Values	6
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	7
Expected Behaviour	7
Unacceptable Behaviour	8
Safeguarding and Duty of Care	8
Competence and Responsibility	9
Operational Conduct	9
Information and Confidentiality	10
Conflict of Interest and Integrity	10
Gifts, Hospitality and Donations	10
Representation and External Conduct	11
Health, Safety and Personal Responsibility	11
Compliance and Following Policies	12
Speaking Up and Reporting Concerns	12
Breaches and Consequences	13

Introduction

Project 53 exists to protect life, uphold dignity, strengthen resilience, and support communities affected by crisis. Achieving this requires more than technical capability. It requires trust, good judgement, accountability, and a shared commitment to acting in a manner consistent with the values and purpose of the Charity.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour, integrity, accountability and responsibility expected of all individuals acting on behalf of Project 53 ("the Charity").

The Code exists to protect the Charity, its beneficiaries, volunteers, trustees, partners and the wider public by establishing clear expectations regarding conduct, decision-making and behaviour. It supports Project 53's commitment to humanitarian principles, safeguarding, safety, ethical conduct and public trust.

The Code helps ensure that Project 53 remains a safe, effective and trusted organisation. It provides a common foundation for behaviour across all roles and activities, helping to ensure that individuals act consistently with the Charity's mission, values and principles.

This Code applies to all trustees, members of the Executive, volunteers, associate members, contractors and any other individuals representing or acting on behalf of the Charity.

This Code forms part of the Charity's management system and should be read alongside other relevant organisational policies, frameworks, procedures and guidance where applicable. Certain areas, including safeguarding, health and safety, data protection and risk management, may be supported by separate documents that provide additional requirements or guidance.

No document can provide guidance for every situation. Individuals are therefore expected to apply both the requirements of this Code and its underlying principles, seeking to do the right thing, act in the best interests of affected communities and the Charity, and make a positive contribution through their actions and decisions.

Compliance with this Code is a condition of involvement with Project 53.

Core Values and Principles

Project 53 exists to make a positive difference to people and communities affected by crisis. Our activities are guided by a commitment to humanity, recognising the importance of protecting life, reducing suffering, and upholding dignity. All individuals acting on behalf of the Charity are expected to act in a manner that reflects its humanitarian purpose and supports the trust placed in it by beneficiaries, communities, partners, and the public.

Humanitarian Principles

These are the ethical foundations of the organisation.

Humanity

We seek to protect life, reduce suffering, and uphold dignity.

Impartiality

We seek to provide support on the basis of need and to treat people fairly without discrimination.

Our Values

The following values guide how Project 53 operates, makes decisions, and works with others.

Integrity

We act honestly, ethically, transparently, and accountably. We take responsibility for our actions and decisions and seek to maintain the trust placed in us by those we serve, our partners, and the wider public.

Respect

We treat all people with dignity, professionalism, and compassion. We value diversity of experience and perspective and seek to create an environment in which people feel safe, supported, and included.

Collaboration

We believe better outcomes are achieved through partnership, shared learning, and collective effort. We seek to work constructively with individuals, communities, organisations, and agencies in pursuit of our humanitarian purpose.

Excellence

We strive for high standards in everything we do. We recognise that disaster response often takes place in high-consequence environments and are committed to professionalism, competence, preparedness, continual improvement, and the sharing of good practice.

Humility

We recognise that we do not have all the answers. We remain open to learning, seek feedback, and are willing to adapt our views and approaches when evidence or experience suggests a better way.

Courage

We are willing to raise concerns, challenge assumptions, speak up when standards are not being met, and make difficult decisions where required to protect people, uphold our values, or fulfil our responsibilities.

Innovation

We believe there is always potential to improve how disaster response and preparedness are delivered. We seek to responsibly explore, evaluate, and develop new ideas, technologies, and approaches, and to share learning that may contribute to wider improvements across the sector.

Applying Our Values

Project 53 brings together the principles of a humanitarian organisation, the discipline and competence required for search and rescue activities, the accountability and public trust expected of a charity, and the commitment and contribution of a volunteer-led organisation.

Technical capability alone is not sufficient. The manner in which objectives are achieved is as important as the objectives themselves. Individuals are expected to apply these values in their actions, decisions, and interactions with others, particularly where circumstances are challenging, uncertain, or time-critical.

All individuals acting on behalf of the Charity are expected to exercise sound judgement, act in the best interests of affected communities and those the Charity serves, and contribute positively to maintaining the trust and confidence on which the organisation depends.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Project 53 values diversity and recognises that different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives strengthen the organisation and improve decision-making.

Individuals must treat others fairly, respectfully and with dignity, creating an environment in which people feel able to participate, contribute and raise concerns. Discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or exclusion are inconsistent with the values of the Charity and may result in action being taken under this Code.

Expected Behaviour

Individuals are expected to contribute positively to the culture, effectiveness and reputation of Project 53.

This includes acting respectfully, collaborating with others, sharing knowledge and experience, supporting others involved in the Charity's activities, accepting feedback constructively, and seeking opportunities to learn and improve.

Individuals should take ownership of their responsibilities, follow through on commitments, and be accountable for their actions and decisions. Where mistakes occur, they should be acknowledged openly and used as opportunities for learning and improvement.

Individuals are expected to support the success of others as well as their own, recognising that effective humanitarian action depends upon teamwork, trust and mutual support.

Project 53 values initiative and innovation, but these should be exercised responsibly and within appropriate organisational arrangements. Individuals should seek to do the right thing, make a positive difference through their actions

and decisions, and contribute to the continuous improvement of the Charity and its activities.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Behaviour that undermines the safety, dignity, wellbeing or confidence of others is incompatible with involvement in Project 53.

This includes bullying, harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority, intimidation, dishonesty, misrepresentation, exploitation, retaliation against those who raise concerns, substance misuse that affects safety or operational effectiveness, reckless conduct, deliberate disregard for organisational requirements, and behaviour that damages trust in the Charity.

Competence, experience, position or operational capability do not excuse unacceptable behaviour.

Safeguarding and Duty of Care

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Individuals must act in a manner that protects children, vulnerable adults, beneficiaries, volunteers and others who may be affected by the Charity's activities. They should remain alert to signs that a person may be at risk and take concerns seriously when they arise.

Appropriate boundaries must be maintained at all times, and concerns regarding abuse, exploitation, neglect or harm must be reported promptly through the Charity's safeguarding reporting arrangements. Additional safeguarding requirements and reporting procedures are set out in the **Safeguarding Policy**.

The welfare, dignity and safety of people must always take precedence over personal interests, organisational convenience or operational objectives. Individuals should seek to identify and avoid actions that may unintentionally cause harm, recognising that good intentions do not remove the responsibility to consider potential consequences.

Competence and Responsibility

Project 53 values expertise, capability and continuous development. However, expertise and capability do not replace accountability, teamwork, governance or humility.

Individuals must act within the limits of their competence, authority and training. Activities should only be undertaken where appropriate capability, authorisation and support exist. Individuals must not misrepresent their qualifications, experience, competence or operational status.

Individuals are expected to maintain competencies, qualifications and training relevant to their role where required.

Individuals are expected to contribute to organisational learning by sharing knowledge, identifying lessons, and supporting continuous improvement.

Seeking assistance when required is a sign of responsibility, not weakness.

Operational Conduct

Operational activities require discipline, coordination, competence, trust and sound judgement.

Individuals are expected to comply with command and coordination arrangements, follow agreed procedures, communicate effectively, and support safe and effective operational delivery. Individuals must not self-deploy, undertake activities beyond their competence or authority, or act independently of agreed organisational arrangements.

Operational activities should be undertaken only through authorised organisational arrangements.

Operational decisions should be informed by risk, available information, humanitarian considerations and the wellbeing of affected communities.

Operational activities must be conducted in accordance with applicable operational procedures, deployment arrangements and other instructions issued by the Charity.

Information and Confidentiality

Information entrusted to Project 53 must be handled responsibly, respectfully and in a legally compliant manner.

Individuals must protect personal information, operational information and other confidential material obtained through their involvement with the Charity. Information should only be accessed, used or shared where there is a legitimate organisational need to do so and in accordance with organisational requirements.

The dignity, privacy and rights of beneficiaries, volunteers, members, partners and affected communities must be respected at all times. Individuals must take appropriate care when collecting, storing, using or sharing information and should avoid unnecessary disclosure of personal or operationally sensitive information.

Additional requirements relating to personal data are set out in the **Data Protection Policy**.

Conflict of Interest and Integrity

Individuals must act in the best interests of Project 53 and the communities it serves.

Personal interests, relationships, affiliations or external activities must not improperly influence organisational decisions or activities. Actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest should be declared promptly and managed transparently.

Individuals must not use their position, access or influence within the Charity for personal advantage or gain.

Integrity requires individuals to be honest and transparent about interests, motivations and influences that may affect their judgement.

Gifts, Hospitality and Donations

Project 53 is dependent upon public confidence and trust. Gifts, hospitality, benefits and donations must therefore be managed in a manner that

supports transparency, accountability and the humanitarian principles that guide the Charity's activities.

Individuals must not seek, offer or accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits that could create an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest, compromise their judgement, or influence decisions in a manner that is inconsistent with the Charity's values, humanitarian principles or best interests. Where uncertainty exists, advice should be sought before accepting any benefit.

Representation and External Conduct

Every individual acting on behalf of Project 53 contributes to how the organisation is perceived by others.

Individuals must represent the Charity accurately, honestly and responsibly. They must not claim authority, expertise or organisational positions that they do not hold, nor present personal opinions as official positions of the Charity.

Media engagement, public statements, social media activity and interactions with external organisations should support the values, reputation and legitimate interests of Project 53. Individuals should recognise that public trust can be strengthened or damaged through personal conduct.

Individuals should take reasonable care to represent the Charity consistently with its mission, values and publicly stated positions.

Health, Safety and Personal Responsibility

Project 53 is committed to maintaining safe systems of work and a positive culture of health, safety and wellbeing.

Individuals must take reasonable care of themselves and others, follow safety requirements, use equipment appropriately and report hazards, incidents and near misses. No individual should knowingly place themselves or others at unnecessary risk. Individuals are expected to recognise and communicate any circumstances that may affect their ability to participate safely in organisational activities.

Safety considerations must not be disregarded in pursuit of operational objectives. Additional responsibilities relating to health, safety and incident reporting are set out in the **Health and Safety Policy** and associated reporting procedures.

Compliance and Following Policies

This Code establishes the minimum standards of behaviour expected across Project 53.

Governance arrangements exist to support safe, ethical and effective delivery of the Charity's mission, protect those affected by its activities, and maintain public trust.

Individuals are expected to be familiar with and comply with organisational policies, procedures, guidance and lawful instructions relevant to their role and activities.

Where there is uncertainty regarding expectations or requirements, guidance should be sought before proceeding.

Speaking Up and Reporting Concerns

Project 53 encourages a culture of openness, accountability and continuous improvement.

Individuals are expected to raise concerns where they believe conduct, decisions, practices or behaviours may place people, communities, the organisation or its reputation at risk. Concerns should be raised constructively and in good faith.

Individuals should feel able to challenge unsafe, unethical or ineffective practices respectfully and without fear of retaliation. Learning, improvement and accountability depend upon people being willing to speak up when something does not appear right.

Concerns should be raised through the appropriate organisational reporting arrangements, including safeguarding and other designated reporting processes where applicable.

Breaches and Consequences

The standards set out in this Code are intended to protect the people, communities and organisations with whom Project 53 engages, as well as the Charity itself.

Alleged breaches of this Code will be considered fairly and proportionately, taking account of the circumstances and seriousness of the matter. Where necessary, action may be taken to protect individuals, maintain public confidence, safeguard organisational integrity and support accountability.

Serious breaches involving safeguarding, dishonesty, deliberate misconduct, abuse of authority, criminal activity or actions that place others at significant risk may result in suspension, removal from involvement with the Charity, referral to statutory authorities or other appropriate action.

The purpose of addressing breaches is not solely enforcement, but also learning, accountability, protection of others, and maintenance of organisational standards.