**The Property Redress Scheme Conflict of Interest Policy**

Those in restricted posts are required to inform your line manager of any private or personal interest which may affect your ability to deal with a particular complaint or to do your job.

**Staff in restricted posts**

The restricted posts are:

PRS Directors

PRS Head of Redress

PRS Senior Case Officers

PRS Case Officers

PRS Complaints and Membership Co-Ordinator

PRS First Contact Team – Complaints Officers

**Position of the Scheme and Head of Redress**

The Property Redress Scheme is impartial and independent.

The Head of Redress must not be appointed by those who are subject to investigation by him.

The Head of Redress should be appointed for a period of office of sufficient duration to ensure the independence of his actions and not be removable from his duties without just cause. The appointment should be for a minimum of three years and may be renewable.

The Head of Redress should not, during the three years prior to assuming his present function, have occupied a position in the industry to be regulated, remunerated or otherwise, which may cast doubt about his independence from the industry and his ability to reach impartial decisions.

The appointment must not be subject to premature termination other than for incapacity or misconduct or other good cause. The grounds on which dismissal can be made should always be stated. Those subject to investigation by the ombudsman should not be entitled to exercise the power to terminate the Head of Redress’ appointment, but this does not exclude their minority representation on the body which is authorised to terminate.

The Head of Redress alone (or an appointed deputy) must have the power to decide whether or not a complaint is within the scheme’s jurisdiction. If it is, the Head of Redress (or an appointed deputy) must have the power to determine it.

The Head of Redress should be required to report to a body independent of those subject to investigation, but this does not exclude their minority representation on that body. At least one member of the reporting body should be from an organisation representing consumers. The body should also be responsible for safeguarding the independence of the ombudsman.

**Other restrictions relating to bodies within jurisdiction**

Those in restricted posts are required tell your line manager of any personal interest which may affect your ability to deal with a particular complaint, examples of such situations are:

* Complaints against a body within jurisdiction where, within the last five years, you have either been a member or were employed.
* Complaints against a Member in which you have had any commercial dealings in the last three years.
* Complaints against a Member who are based in an area where you live and where the outcome of the complaint could have an impact on you.
* Complaints against a Member in which you might reasonably be thought to have a personal interest which could be seen to influence your handling of the complaint because, for example, of friendship, family relationship or other personal involvement with members or officers of the authority.
* Complaints made by relatives, friends or associates.

Unless expressly authorised to do so by the Head of Redress or a member of senior management, staff on the restricted list should take no part in the handling of any complaint in which they have a personal interest.

Where the member of staff is a Senior Case Officer then the Head of Redress shall take direct ownership of the complaint. Where the member of staff is the Head of Redress then the complaint will either be dealt with by a Director or the scheme may decide that due to the conflict of interest it is not in the best position to resolve the matter and advise on a different course of action.

**Working for other organisations**

The scheme expects those in restricted posts to work full time for the scheme. The scheme does not however wish to prevent the taking of work, whether paid or voluntary, outside the duties with the scheme, provided that the outside work does not harm or conflict with the work of the scheme.

You must tell your line manager (or a member of the senior management), in confidence, and before making any commitment of any outside work (including public service eg as a JP or a school governor).

The scheme reserves the right to instruct any member of staff not to do outside work which it considers harmful to its interests. ‘Harmful’ in this context includes outside work which could give rise to a conflict of interest in the investigation of a complaint or otherwise jeopardise public confidence in independence and impartiality of the scheme or Head of Redress. It also includes outside work which would, in the scheme’s view, have a negative impact on the individual’s ability to perform their job effectively

**Personal relationships**

Where you work with colleagues to whom you are related or are involved in a personal relationship, and a potential conflict of interest arises, you have a duty to advise your line manager of this. Your manager will carry out a risk assessment and action will be taken to remove or minimise any risks.

**Political activities**

You are free to engage in political activity outside work, provided that this activity is carried out only outside working hours and in your own time and provided also that the activity does not:

* interfere in any way with your work for the scheme, and
* jeopardise public confidence in independence and impartiality of the Head of Redress or the scheme.