



**PRCA Professional Charter, Public Affairs Code of Conduct,
Healthcare Public Relations Code of Practice,
Arbitration and Disciplinary Procedures**

PRCA Professional Charter

A member shall:

1.1 Have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of public relations. Furthermore a member has the responsibility at all times to deal fairly and honestly with fellow members and professionals, the public relations profession, other professions, suppliers, intermediaries, the media of communication, colleagues, and above all else the public.

1.2 Be expected to be aware of, understand and observe this code, any amendment to it, and any other codes which shall be incorporated into this code, and to remain up-to-date with the content and recommendations of any guidance or practice papers issued by the PRCA, and shall have a duty to conform to good practice as expressed in such guidance or practice papers.

1.3 Uphold this code and co-operate with fellow members in so doing by enforcing decisions on any matter arising from its application. A member that knowingly causes or permits a colleague to act in a manner inconsistent with this code is party to such action and shall themselves be deemed to be in breach of it.

A member shall not:

1.4 Engage in any practice nor be seen to conduct themselves in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Association or the reputation and interests of the public relations profession.

2 Conduct towards the Public, the Media and other Professionals

A member shall:

2.1 Conduct their professional activities with proper regard to the public interest.

2.2 Have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently.

2.3 Have a duty to ensure that the actual interest of any organisation with which they may be professionally concerned is adequately declared.

2.4 When working in association with other professionals, identify and respect the codes of these professions and shall not knowingly be party to any breach of such codes.

2.5 If a member of either House of Parliament, member of a Local Authority or of any statutory organisation or body, record that material in the relevant section of the PRCA Register.



2.6 Honour confidences received or given in the course of professional activity.

2.7 Neither propose nor undertake any action which would constitute an improper influence on organs of government, or on legislation, or on the media of communication.

2.8 Neither offer nor give any inducement to persons holding public office or members of any statutory body or organisation who are not directors, executives or retained consultants, with intent to further the interests of the organisation if such action is inconsistent with the public interest.

3 Conduct towards Colleagues

A member shall:

3.1 Adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.

A member shall not:

3.2 Injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.

4 Discriminatory Conduct

A member is required to take all reasonable care that professional duties are conducted without causing offence on the grounds of gender, race, religion, disability or any other form of discrimination or unacceptable reference.



PRCA Public Affairs Code of Conduct

Preamble

This Code of Conduct covers the activities of regulated political consultants (defined as PRCA individual members, member organisations, their staff and non-executive consultants) in relation to all United Kingdom, English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland central, regional and local government bodies and agencies, public bodies and political parties (hereinafter “institutions of Government”).

It is a condition of membership of the PRCA that members should accept and agree to abide by this Code. Regulated political consultants are required to endorse the Code and duties set out in it in relation to their business dealings with institutions of government.

Other conditions of individual membership of the PRCA include:

- Being bound by terms of the PRCA Professional Charter
- Where they have undertaken public affairs activity, declaring such activity on the quarterly PRCA Register.

Other conditions of corporate membership of the PRCA include:

- Being bound by terms of the PRCA Professional Charter
- Undertaking an annual compliance procedure in respect of the Code
- Providing four times a year to the PRCA the names of all clients and consultancy staff involved with public affairs during the previous three months for publication in the PRCA Register.

The Code of Conduct applies the principles that political consultants should be open, transparent and honest in their dealings with parliamentarians or representatives of institutions of government; and that there should be no financial relationship between them. PRCA members are determined to act at all times with the highest standards of integrity and in a professional and ethical manner reflecting the principles applied by this Code. In the view of the PRCA, it is inappropriate for a person to be both a legislator and a political consultant.

The Code of Conduct

1 In pursuance of the principles in this Code, political consultants are required not to act or engage in any practice or conduct in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Association or the profession of political organisations in general.

2 Political consultants must act with honesty towards the institutions of government.

3 Political consultants must use reasonable endeavours to satisfy themselves of the truth and accuracy of all statements made.

4 In making representations to the institutions of government, political consultants must be open in disclosing the identity of their employers and must not misrepresent their interests.

5 Political consultants must advise colleagues where their activities may be illegal, unethical or contrary to professional practice, and to refuse to act in pursuance of any such activity.

6 Political consultants must not make misleading, exaggerated or extravagant claims, or otherwise misrepresent, the nature or extent of their access to institutions of government or to political parties or to persons in those institutions.

7 Save for entertainment and token business mementoes, political consultants must not offer or give, or cause a colleague to offer or give, any financial or other incentive to any person in public life, whether elected, appointed or co-opted, that could be construed in any way as a bribe or solicitation of favour. Political consultants must not accept any financial or other incentive, from whatever source, that could be construed in any way as a bribe or solicitation of favour.

8 Political consultants must not:

- Employ any MP, MEP, sitting Peer or any member of the Scottish Parliament or the National Assembly of Wales or the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Greater London Assembly;
- Make any award or payment in money or in kind (including equity in a member organisation) to any MP, MEP, sitting Peer or to any member of the Scottish Parliament or the National Assembly of Wales or the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Greater London Assembly, or to connected persons or persons acting on their account directly or through third parties.

9 Political consultants must comply with any statute, Westminster or Scottish Parliamentary or National Assembly of Wales or Northern Ireland Assembly or Greater London Authority resolution and with the adopted recommendation of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in relation to payments to a political party in any part of the United Kingdom.

10 Political consultants who are also local authority councillors are prohibited from working on an assignment of which the objective is to influence a decision of the local authority on which they serve. This restriction also applies to political consultants who are members of other public bodies.

11 Political consultants must keep strictly separate from their duties and activities as political consultants any personal activity or involvement on behalf of a political party.

12 Political consultants must abide by the rules and conventions for the obtaining, distribution and release of parliamentary and governmental documents set out by the institutions of government.

13 Political consultants must not hold, or permit any staff member to hold, any pass conferring entitlement to access to the Palace of Westminster, to the premises of the Scottish Parliament or the National Assembly of Wales or the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Greater London Assembly or any department or agency of government. The one exception is where the relevant institution is a client of the political consultant and requires the political consultant to hold a pass to enter their premises.

14 Political consultants must conduct themselves in accordance with the rules of the Palace of Westminster, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly of Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly or Greater London Assembly or any department or agency of government while within their precincts, and with the rules and procedures of all institutions of government.

15 Political consultants must always abide by internal rules on declaration and handling of interests laid down by any public body on which they serve.

16 Political consultants must not exploit public servants or abuse the facilities or institutions of central, regional or local government within the United Kingdom.

17 Political consultants must disclose their names in the PRCA Register.

In all their activities and dealings, political consultants must be at all times aware of the importance of their observance of the principles and duties set out in this Code for the protection and maintenance of their own reputation, the good name and success of their organisation, and the standing of the profession as a whole.



PRCA Healthcare Public Relations Code of Practice

1 Definition

'Healthcare public relations' is defined as the area of public relations activity involving ethical (prescription only) medicines, medicines available only under the supervision of a pharmacist ('P' category), proprietary ('over-the counter') and other products such as food and drink items which are promoted under a health claim as well as health services such as primary (GP, nurses and pharmacists) and secondary (hospital) healthcare services.

2 The Code

Every member involved in healthcare public relations shall ensure that:

2.1 They are familiar with, and do not breach relevant national regulations (i.e. the Medicines Act, ABPI and PAGB Code of Practice) or codes of professional conduct.

2.2 They ensure that information disseminated is balanced and accurate and not likely to mislead.

2.3 Activities should not encourage or induce patients to request a specific prescription medicine from their doctor.

2.4 The source of information disseminated is either explicitly stated or could readily be identified.

3 Enforcement

Complaints of a breach of this Code of Practice will be treated as would a breach of the Professional Charter and the same arbitration and disciplinary rules shall apply.

A member shall:

3.1 Have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of public relations. Furthermore a member has the responsibility at all times to deal fairly and honestly with fellow members and professionals, the public relations profession, other professions, suppliers, intermediaries, the media of communication, colleagues, and above all else the public.

3.2 Be expected to be aware of, understand and observe this code, any amendment to it, and any other codes which shall be incorporated into this code, and to remain up-to-date with the content and recommendations of any guidance or practice papers issued by the PRCA, and shall have a duty to conform to good practice as expressed in such guidance or practice papers.

3.3 Uphold this code and co-operate with fellow members in so doing by enforcing decisions on any matter arising from its application. A member that knowingly causes or permits a colleague to act in a manner inconsistent with this code is party to such action and shall themselves be deemed to be in breach of it.



PRCA Arbitration and Disciplinary Procedures

Introduction

1 The purpose of the Arbitration and Disciplinary Procedure is to have a mechanism whereby the Professional Charter of the PRCA is seen to be capable of enforcement.

2 It also provides a mechanism by which complaints under the Charter against members may be processed effectively and fairly.

3 Additionally it allows parties in disagreement to submit their cases by mutual agreement to arbitration and settlement.

Complaints

4 The following complaints will be covered by this procedure:

- i) An apparent breach of the PRCA Professional Charter or the Memorandum and Articles of Association by a member.
- ii) Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a member has brought discredit upon the profession or the Association.
- iii) Where one member considers they have cause to complain about the professional behaviour of a fellow member.
- iv) Where having regard to both the letter and the spirit of the Charter, a member of the public believes cause for complaint against a member exists.

5 Stages in the procedure are specified and are designed to ensure that any complaint is dealt with as speedily as possible whilst giving all parties concerned adequate time to respond to each stage.

6 A complaint may be originated by any individual, whether a member of the Association or not, or by any organisation, or by any Committee of the Board, or by the Board itself.

7 It shall be the duty of the Professional Practices Committee promptly to investigate any complaint properly brought before them against a member.

8 The Committee will recommend to the Board sanctions on the member concerned where serious breaches of the Charter or Memorandum and Articles of Association have been proven. Such sanctions may extend to suspension or termination of membership coupled with a published censure. The Committee is empowered to impose sanctions (short of suspension or termination) on the member concerned where minor breaches of the Charter or Memorandum and Articles of Association have been proven, including, but not necessarily limited to warnings, admonishments or reprimands which may be published.

9 Matters that are currently the subject of a legal action will not be covered by the Committee. The Committee should advise all parties concerned of this as soon as possible.

Definitions

10 **'Board'** - The duly-elected directors of the PRCA.



'Committee' - The Professional Practices Committee of the Public Relations Consultants Association Limited (PRCA).

'Complainant' - The person, organisation, or Association Committee making the complaint.

'Defendant' - The member against whom the complaint is being made.

Procedure and Timings

11 On receipt of a formal complaint the Secretary of the Association shall if necessary correspond with the complainant in order to clarify any matters of uncertainty and to identify the specific clause or clauses of the Charter or the Memorandum and Articles of Association which relate to the complaint. The Secretary must inform the complainant in writing of the Committee's disciplinary procedure and in particular explain that the defendant will be notified of the complaint in order he may exercise the right to reply. The Secretary shall then send details of the complaint to the defendant and invite him to submit written observations within 14 days which will be placed before the Professional Practices Committee together with the original complaint.

12 Any complaint must be placed before the Committee in session as soon as possible but no longer than 8 weeks after the complaint was received except in exceptional circumstances. If the Committee consider that there is no prima facie case for invoking disciplinary procedure the respective parties should be notified accordingly.

13 Each party shall supply within 30 days to the Committee, and to the other party, a written summary of their case, with copies of any relevant documents. If both parties agree to the procedure, and sign their respective summaries and documents as fairly representing the facts, then the Committee may proceed to give their decision upon the evidence contained in the documents. Otherwise the Committee shall fix a time and place for the hearing of both parties and of any witness each party may consider necessary.

14 In the event of a hearing both parties shall be entitled to make oral submissions to the Committee either personally or through a representative. The Committee may invite further representations from either or both parties. Any such representations shall be made within 14 days of the Committee meeting.

15 Any party may by notice in writing at any time not later than 9 days before the day fixed for the hearing call upon any other party to admit any document and if such other party desires to challenge the authenticity of the document, he shall within 6 days after service of such notice, give notice that he does not admit the document and requires that it be proved at the hearing.

16 The proceedings of the Committee shall be held in private unless otherwise agreed by all parties.

17 After consideration of the case, the Committee shall decide whether there has been a breach of the Charter of Memorandum and Articles of Association and, if so, what sanctions should be applied against the defendant. Such decisions shall be made by a majority vote at the Committee Meeting where the matter is considered. The Committee's decision except in the case of a resolution of suspension or termination shall be final and binding on all concerned (subject to the member's right of appeal). The Committee shall give their decision in writing.

18 If the Committee decide that the correct sanction is one of suspension or termination then it shall recommend this decision to the Board who shall consider the report and recommendations of the Committee and shall approve, amend or overrule the recommendation of the Committee and shall give its judgement in writing.

19 Where suspension or termination of membership is the outcome, then following appeal the terms of censure will always be published. If the decision is to warn, admonish or reprimand then an additional vote must be taken as to whether or not following appeal the terms of the censure will be published.

20 Any appeal by a member against a disciplinary decision must be lodged in writing to the Board through the Secretary at the Association's registered office within 2 weeks of the Committee's or Board's decision being notified to the defendant. Such appeal shall be considered by the Board



together with the report of the Professional Practices Committee and the Board shall approve, amend or overrule the decision which was the subject of the appeal.

21 In the unlikely event that the Committee are unable to settle a grievance or there is a conflict of interest within the Committee, the Chairman shall nominate a Subcommittee of three who are not associated with the parties concerned, and who shall have the power to hear both parties and decide between them.

22 The Committee may appoint legally qualified assessors and in appropriate cases instruct one or more to sit and act as non-voting members of the Committee to ensure that the proceedings are conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the law. The Committee shall be bound by the legal rules of evidence.

Arbitration

23 By mutual written consent of both parties a Subcommittee of the Professional Practices Committee may arbitrate and determine settlement of disputes either between fellow members or between non-members and members of the PRCA. The above rules of procedure apply equally to the handling of complaints and to requests for arbitration.