

# FTM London Code of Conduct

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## **What is a Code of Conduct?**

A code of conduct describes the way FTM London members, volunteers, beneficiaries and guests are expected to behave towards one another, and towards other people when they are taking part in FTM London activities or are on FTM London business.

## **Why have a Code of Conduct?**

A code of conduct encourages everyone to behave well towards one another to the mutual benefit of all.

It enables the group to ask anyone who doesn't keep to the code to leave a meeting or event or, if the breach is serious, to be suspended from the group. This enables us to keep meetings and other FTM London environments safe and welcoming for everyone.

## **When does the Code of Conduct apply and to whom?**

The Code applies to:

- Anyone taking part in any FTM London meetings, events, publications, online forums or any other service or activity for which FTM London is responsible
- Anyone representing FTM London or acting on behalf of FTM London

## **Code of Conduct**

Members, trustees, volunteers, beneficiaries and guests are expected to:

1. Respect the differing views, opinions, identities and experiences of members, beneficiaries and guests
2. Act in accordance with the FTM London Equal Opportunities policy.  
Racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic or other offensive language or behaviour is not acceptable
3. Behave appropriately at meetings.  
Violent, aggressive, disruptive or unwanted sexual behaviour is not acceptable.  
Inappropriate behaviour resulting from drug or alcohol use is not acceptable.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of members, beneficiaries and guests in accordance with the FTM London Confidentiality policy
5. Abide by the rules of the venue used by FTM London for its meetings
6. Abide by any applicable laws, including laws relating to the possession and use of drugs
7. Be truthful regarding FTM London.  
Slandorous comments or libellous blogs, texts or similar which bring FTM London into disrepute are unacceptable

## **Responsibility of members and beneficiaries for the conduct of their guests**

Members and beneficiaries bringing guests to FTM London events are expected to ensure that their guests are aware of this Code of Conduct and know that they may be asked to leave the meeting or event if they fail to comply with the Code.

## **Limitations of the Code – Staying Safe**

FTM London cannot investigate complaints about behaviour which takes place outside its meetings, events and activities or when a person is not engaged on FTM London business (see ‘When does the Code of Conduct apply and to whom?’)

Those participating in FTM London activities are reminded that they do have responsibility for taking steps to ensure their own safety. FTM London offers basic ‘Staying Safe’ information in support of this, which includes sources of help if you do experience difficulty outside FTM London’s environment.

## **What to do if you have a complaint about someone’s behaviour**

Any current member, trustee, volunteer, beneficiary or guest of FTM London may make a complaint about the conduct of any other current member, trustee, volunteer, beneficiary or guest.

Any former member, trustee, volunteer, beneficiary or guest of FTM London may make a complaint about the conduct of any current member, trustee, volunteer, beneficiary or guest, if the relevant conduct occurred while they were a member, trustee, volunteer, beneficiary or guest of FTM London.

Make your complaint to a trustee of FTM London as soon as possible, preferably be in writing.

The Trustees will investigate as described below.

## **Complaints and Breaches of the Code - Responsibilities**

### Overall Responsibility

It is the duty of the FTM London Trustees to deal with any complaint or breach of this Code, investigating where necessary and deciding on a course of action.

### Leading and Carrying Out the Process

This process will normally be led by one of the Co-Chairs or, by agreement of the Trustees, by another trustee. This person is called the ‘Leader’ in this procedure. The Leader should be appropriately independent of all parties involved i.e. not a close friend, partner or relative. The Leader may carry out the actions required themselves or may delegate to whoever has the most appropriate skills for the circumstances. The Leader may only act as authorised by the Board of Trustees which remains collectively responsible overall.

### Conflicts of Loyalty / Interest

No-one who is personally involved in a complaint or incident either as the person complaining or as the person whose behaviour is complained about/ who is identified as in breach of the Code, should take any part in investigating or resolving the issue, nor in any votes on the matter, nor in any panel convened in relation to the matter, nor in any role other than their role as complainer/person complained about as described below.

External Support

The Trustees may, at their discretion, seek external advice and support at any stage to help resolve the matter, but retain overall power over and responsibility for the decisions.

### Timing

The Trustees should aim to resolve an issue within 6 weeks, or as soon thereafter as practical.

### Personal Contact

Complaints and breaches are best resolved in person. Face to face meetings with the involved parties should be arranged wherever possible, with Skype or phone conferencing as a fall-back. E-mail conversations with the involved parties should be avoided wherever possible as these do not convey tone of voice or body language which are key factors in enabling a conversation to reach a successful outcome. The Trustees have a duty to prioritise any meetings required to resolve the issue and to make every effort to attend as necessary.

### No Investigation

If the Trustees decide not to investigate a complaint, their reasons for doing so should be minuted and the complainant informed (see 'Updating Complainant'). The Trustees should be very certain that a complaint is truly unjustified or outside their remit if they decide not to investigate.

## **Complaints and Breaches of the Code - Actions**

### Overt Breaches of the Code During Meetings and Events

Anyone who breaches the Code of Conduct in such a way as to prevent others from benefitting from the meeting or event and/or put the well-being of other participants at risk may be asked to leave by the Trustees. The incident will then be followed up with an investigation and the appropriate stage(s) below.

**In the case of a serious breach of the Code, the Trustees may act to implement an immediate Stage 4 suspension in the course of a meeting or event to ensure the current and future safety of group members.**

### Other Breaches of the Code or Complaints

It is the Trustees' responsibility to decide on the appropriate Stage(s) and Method(s) to use as set out below.

### Methods of Investigation

The investigation may include any or all of the following methods at any of the stages as the Trustees decide is appropriate.

Informal Conversation

Mediation

Complaint Panel

### Stages of Disciplinary Action

The Trustees may use any or all of the following stages as appropriate. All stages must be minuted so it is clear what steps have been taken and why. Any disciplinary action must also be minuted at the next Trustee meeting.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Stage 2 – Verbal Warning

Stage 3 – Written Warning

Stage 4 – Suspension

### *Appeals and Updates*

It is also important to treat both the complainant and the person(s) complained about fairly. The complainant should be kept up to date and the person(s) complained about should be able to appeal a decision.

Updating Complainant

Appeals

### *Anonymous Complaints / Complainants Requesting Anonymity*

From time to time the Trustees may receive either an anonymous complaint or a complaint where the complainant wishes to remain anonymous in relation to the person complained about.

The following should be noted:

- There may be limited scope for investigation and action where a complainant requires anonymity from the person they have complained about. Complaints typically need factual information to be investigated and assessed. The person complained about needs to know what reports have been made in order for them to be given a fair opportunity to respond and this is likely to disclose the identity of the complainant.

The Trustees are ultimately responsible for deciding on appropriate action in relation to any form of anonymous complaint or complainant requesting anonymity.

## **Methods of Investigation**

### *Informal Conversation*

The initial investigation should include discussions with the parties concerned. The discussions should focus on establishing the facts. Where more than one person is involved, it is at the Trustees' discretion whether these discussions are held separately with each party, together or both.

### Mediation

The Leader may recommend a mediation stage to the Trustees. If mediation goes ahead, it should be carried out by someone with suitable skills.

### Complaints Panel

The Leader may recommend a Complaints Panel stage to the Trustees.

The Complaints Panel should be made up of three trustees. If that is not possible (for example because there are only three trustees and one is involved in the complaint), the Panel should be made up of as many trustees as are able to take part, with the remainder of the three Panel spaces taken by an ordinary member or members who the Trustees deem to be appropriate for the role and who are willing to act. A Panel member should be someone independent, objective and fair-minded.

The Complaints Panel should review all facts and information and then recommend a course of action to the Trustees. Unless the Panel feels no further action is justified, this will be one of the Stages 2-4. The Complaints Panel should recommend Stage 2 unless they have reason to believe the matter is of a seriousness that warrants one of the other stages.

Those involved in the matter should be informed of the Trustees' decision as soon as possible, ideally within one week.

Any or all of these methods may be used throughout Stages 1-4.

## **Stages of Disciplinary Action**

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

For minor incidents, an amicable informal resolution should be sought without recourse to further stages, typically by informal conversation, but if that is insufficient or inappropriate, by mediation.

### Stage 2 – Verbal Warning

This stage will typically be used where a member's behaviour is causing repeated disruption in the group, for example by talking over other members.

The Leader or their delegated representative will meet with the individual concerned. They must state:

- That the meeting constitutes a verbal warning
- Why the person is being warned
- That repeated breaching of the Code may lead to the other Stages of written warning and/or suspension

### Stage 3 – Written Warning

This stage will typically be used where there are further repeated breaches or a serious breach of the Code.

Examples of serious breaches include:

- Bringing illegal drugs to FTM London events
- Being aggressive or disruptive as a result of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

The examples given are indicative, not exhaustive. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to decide whether a breach is serious.

The Leader or their delegated representative will contact the individual concerned to advise them a written warning is being issued. The written warning must state:

- That the letter/e-mail constitutes a written warning
- Why the person is being warned
- That repeated breaching of the Code may lead to suspension

#### Stage 4 – Suspension

This stage will typically be used where there are ongoing repeated breaches or an extremely serious breach of the Code.

Examples of extremely serious breaches could include:

- Using racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist or ableist language, or acting in a discriminatory way
- Bullying
- Physical violence or threatening physical violence towards members
- Distributing drugs at FTM London events
- Blackmail
- Major breaches of confidentiality

The examples given are indicative, not exhaustive. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to decide whether a breach is extremely serious.

The Leader or their delegated representative should, where appropriate, arrange to meet with the individual concerned. They must state:

- That the meeting constitutes notification of suspension from FTM London activities, effective immediately
- Why the person is being suspended
- The procedure for lifting / extending suspension
- That if the period of suspension covers an AGM, the suspension means they will not be able to exercise their vote

The individual concerned should be given written confirmation of the above points.

#### Procedure for lifting or extending suspension

FTM London is a lifeline for many people and that lifeline should not be cut off without very good reason. The approach of this Code is therefore to let people rejoin the group wherever possible, using the following steps:

- The suspension must be reviewed at the Trustee meeting closest to 6 months after the date of suspension.
- At this point, the suspension will be lifted, unless upon review the Trustees decide the suspension should be extended.
- The Trustees will notify the suspended person of their decision within one week of this meeting.
- The above procedure will be repeated on a 6-monthly basis until the Trustees decide to lift the suspension, or to extend the review interval. The interval should be a maximum of 12 months.

At any point, the Trustees may contact and/or ask to meet with the suspended person in order to help the Trustees carry out the review and make their decision. The Trustees may delegate this contact to an authorised representative who they deem to be appropriate for the role and who is willing to act.

In the event that a suspension continues for a longer period of time, the Trustees may agree with the suspended person to cease contacting them with the results of the periodic review. This may be appropriate where continued notification of extension of suspension is likely to cause distress or annoyance.

Any such agreement should be confirmed in writing and should include the fact that FTM London would welcome the suspended person approaching them at any point in the future for a review if the person wishes to seek re-admittance to the group's activities.

## **Appeals and Updates**

### Updating Complainant

A complainant has a right to know what has happened to their complaint. However, the person complained about also has a right to appropriate confidentiality.

The Trustees should therefore use their discretion when updating the complainant at the end of the process (and at any interim stages they deem appropriate) typically stating that the complaint has been taken seriously, and giving only basic factual information about the steps taken.

If the Trustees have decided not to investigate a complaint, the complainant should be informed of the reasons why.

### Appeals

An individual may make an appeal against a decision made under this procedure. This should be done in writing within 14 days of notification of the decision.

An Appeal Panel will then be convened. An Appeal Panel should consist of two trustees, if possible people not closely involved with the original investigation, and two ordinary (non-trustee) members of FTM London selected by the Trustees, who the Trustees deem to be appropriate for the role and who are willing to act. An Appeal Panel member should be someone independent, objective and fair-minded.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

**Underpinning Rules**

This Code is consistent with and underpinned by the following clauses of the FTM London Constitution:

- Clause 24 – Rules
- Clause 25 – Disputes
- Clause 21 – Irregularities in Proceedings

Date: .....

Due for review: .....