

The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

In 1994 John Major, the then Prime Minister, announced the establishment of a Committee on Standards in Public Life, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan. It is an independent public body which advises government on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK.

Lord Nolan began the First Report of his Committee, published in May 1995, by setting out what he called "The Seven Principles of Public Life", often described as "the Nolan Principles".

These principles apply to all aspects of public life. The Committee set them out for the benefit of all who serve the public in any way. They are:

- Selflessness** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.
- Integrity** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- Objectivity** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- Openness** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- Honesty** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.