



## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Introduction**

Sutton Neighbourhood Watch (SNHW) is an all-inclusive organisation that does not discriminate, which aims to promote good citizenship and greater participation in the work of the police and other organisations striving to improve community safety in the London Borough of Sutton. So it is essential that our standards of behaviour reflect our objects, aims and values.

In support of our Constitution, this Code of Conduct has been prepared to aid understanding and give greater detail to the behaviours required of our members in support of our objects, aims and values, and to ensure public confidence in SNHW. It is essential therefore that members adhere to these standards of behaviour.

Whilst this code may appear lengthy, it is expected that it will only reflect the behaviours that our members currently exhibit and desire from others.

### **The Code**

Whilst this code applies to all SNHW members, it is particularly relevant to members in a representational role, e.g. Coordinators and Committee members.

As SNHW recognises the huge contribution made by our members, the purpose of this Code is to maintain high standards of conduct, assist individuals in their voluntary role and to protect the best interests of our Association.

Committee members and Ward Coordinators should hold their position primarily for their knowledge, skill set and experience and their ability to actively contribute to the running of SNHW, whilst exemplifying the standards of behaviour outlined in this Code of Conduct.

As SNHW encourages the use of all forms of communication to promote our aims and share information with our members and the general public, this code also sets out what is expected from our members when communicating on behalf of SNHW (both spoken and written).

### **The code aims to:**

- Protect the reputation of SNHW and its members.
- Encourage members to take responsibility for what they say and write and exercise good judgement and common sense.
- Give clear guidance on what members of SNHW can say about the SNHW organisation and our strategic partners.
- Help members draw a line between their private lives and their volunteering when it comes to communicating with other SNHW members and the public.
- Protect the SNHW organisation against liability for the actions of their members.
- Be clear about how inappropriate communications will be addressed.
- Promote close and co-operative relationships with the police and local partners.

## The scope of this code applies to:

- All members of SNHW.
- Any spoken or written, public or private communication from (or implied to be from) a representative of SNHW.

Written communication includes - but is not limited to:

- Posters, brochures and flyers;
- E-mails, Alerts, websites and blogs;
- All forms of social networking (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, LinkedIn etc).

## Guiding principles:

Any communication from SNHW members should not breach any SNHW policies and guidelines especially those that refer to data protection and our non-party-political status.

In general, members should not behave in a manner which brings discredit upon SNHW, undermines public confidence, damages its relationship with its partners or brings SNHW into disrepute.

Members should therefore:

1. Act and communicate respectfully, lawfully and with integrity at all times when representing SNHW.
2. Avoid any situation where a conflict of interest may arise or exist with other parties and/or SNHW.
3. Not make disparaging or defamatory comments about:
  - The SNHW organisation.
  - The Police and other affiliated stakeholders in the community.
  - Other SNHW members or members of the public.
4. Without permission from the Chair, members should not communicate anything on behalf of SNHW that is deleterious to the reputation of an individual or organisation.
5. Not communicate to other members or the general public on behalf of SNHW, any information that:
  - Is a politically biased comment of any kind (e.g. endorsement, debate or electioneering).
  - Discriminates against any person's politics, religion, gender, marital status, race, colour, age, disability or sexual orientation.
  - Promotes any form of vigilantism.
  - Without dispensation, discloses any confidential or sensitive information relating to SNHW, its representatives, or the Metropolitan Police.
  - Makes defamatory or libellous comments, is abusive and/or harasses or threatens others or contains obscene or offensive language.
  - Infringes the intellectual property rights or copyright of others.

6. Care must be taken when communicating with others about criminal, or potentially criminal, activity, for example:
- When passing on information about criminal activity, personal details of victims or witnesses or the address of the scene of crime should never be given.
  - Specific details, such as descriptions of suspects, vehicle registration or other information, including images or videos, about a crime given by the police, should only be shared with their approval.

This will ensure we do not publicise anything that may compromise a police investigation.

7. Truthfulness and Trust.

So that all sections of the community, irrespective of personal opinion, allegiance or background trust us, care must be taken to ensure that all communication supports our values.

- Endeavouring to exercise probity at all times, means we may have to hold back from responding or commenting as we may be inclined to.
- Communication should be constructive and never misleading or disingenuous.
- Being economical with the truth or biasedly presenting information, whilst de rigueur or custom and practice in some circles, is not acceptable.
- Making accusations, however worded to appear non judgemental, without verifiable evidence is not acceptable.
- Sending copies of messages in order to endear support for an argument should be avoided.
- It is understood that frank discussion between colleagues may take place, but care should be taken that such correspondence respects our values and is not copied to a wider audience.

8. Use of Social Media.

- Only those authorised by the Chair of SNHW may set up social media accounts in the name of SNHW or parts thereof.
- Details about the use of social media on behalf of SNHW or parts thereof are outlined in our Social Media Guidelines.

9. Data Protection.

- Members must comply with our 'Data Protection Policy' and our 'Working Arrangements In Support Of The Data Protection Policy'.

## Committee Members and Ward Coordinators

Committee Members and Ward Coordinators should consider themselves as being regarded as ambassadors of SNHW and should, therefore, ensure that their conduct does not have the effect of bringing SNHW into disrepute.

Except for personal or private matters, or when specifically representing another constituted body, any communication with the police or government officials by Committee Members and Ward Coordinators may be regarded as being on behalf of SNHW.

Committee Members and Ward Coordinators undertake to:

- promote the aims and values of SNHW by acting as its ambassadors and always presenting SNHW and its members in a positive light.
- act in the interests of SNHW as a whole.
- listen to and respect the views of others and always use appropriate and respectful language and behaviour.
- manage SNHW funds so as to maximise value for money in all financial dealings.
- champion equality and respect the rights, dignity and worth of all people involved in SNHW, regardless of gender, race, marital status, colour, disability, sexuality, age, occupation, religion or political opinion.
- actively contribute to the effective work of the Committee by:
  - good preparation for meetings by reading all papers which have been circulated prior to meetings;
  - regular attendance, participation and contribution at meetings;
  - dealing with issues of agenda clarification before meetings and maintaining a sharp focus on agenda items in meetings so that time is used effectively;
  - respecting the office of the "chair of the meeting" to ensure the orderly conduct of meetings and any management of conflict;
  - attempting to reach decisions by consensus and always publicly support group decisions even if personal opinions differ;
  - ensuring timely response to, and completion of, agreed actions;
  - responding in a timely manner to Committee correspondence and not allowing questions to be unanswered;
  - supporting fellow Committee members in their roles;
  - attending the AGM and any other meeting as and when required.
- take reasonable steps to ensure familiarity with all rules, policies, procedures and website content.

## Breaches of this code

As we believe this code only reflects the behaviours that our members currently, or aspire to exhibit, it should be used for guidance and to aid understanding. However, if it is established that a breach of this code has occurred, then advice or guidance will be given or if necessary, further action in accordance with our constitution.

**This Code of Conduct was approved by the Committee of the Association on 7 March 2023.**