

Induction Training

The Role of the Commissioned Elder within Presbytery

What is the
Code of
Conduct?

What do I
have
to do?



The Church of Scotland

The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles

Congratulations, your Kirk Session has appointed you as a commissioned elder at Presbytery.....

Primary Roles

Report back to Kirk Session about presbytery decisions

Build positive relationships between the congregation and Presbytery.

Register attendance at meeting or put in apologies

To submit a gifts and skills form and be willing to be appointed to a committee.

To engage with the workings of Presbytery as a trustee, serving as dictated by their conscience and by the requirements of Presbytery.

Be willing to attend Presbytery meetings either in person or online having read reports and deliverances

All full members of Presbytery have an equal voice and may serve as ordinary members, as Committee Conveners, as Presbytery Clerk or as Moderator.

What does this look like in practice?

Register attendance at meeting or put in apologies

- You will need to register for the meeting and where it is to be a hybrid meeting, select whether you are attending onsite or online.
- If attending onsite you will be asked to provide dietary information where lunch is being provided.
- There may be a small charge for the catering

- When you receive notice of a Presbytery meeting, there will be quite a lot of paperwork which comes along with it. As with every organisation this comes with a certain level of jargon. For clarification of terms please see Appendix 1
- Read through the agenda and highlight anything which may be of particular interest to you or your Kirk Session.
- Read the reports and make notes of any questions you may have.
- If you have a question then contact the convener – contact info on each report

Be willing to attend Presbytery meetings either in person or online having read reports and deliverances

To engage with the workings of Presbytery as a trustee, serving as dictated by their conscience and by the requirements of Presbytery.

- You cannot edit a report – that is the work of a committee, but you can request changes (in the form of an amendment) to the sections of deliverance, either to provide clarity to what is being agreed or to suggest a different course of action.
- A counter motion is suggesting something completely different to the written deliverance
- If you wish to make a counter-motion or amendment to a deliverance, it helps the smooth running of Presbytery if you notify the Presbytery Clerk & convener of the committee in advance and they can help you to write your counter-motion or amendment so that it complies with Church law; they will also advise you if what you are suggesting is in order. This also allows for presbytery to be given a printed copy of the wording in advance making it clear as to what is being suggested.
- If you are making a counter-motion or edit, you will be asked to speak to it in order to explain your reasons, so have a short speech ready (around 5 minutes maximum, as per standing orders).

- As a Commissioned Elder your duty is normally to consider each piece of business using your experience, attention to the arguments made, conscience and prayer, and decide as you individually believe is right. Usually, you are not there to represent anyone else.

Build positive relationships between the congregation and Presbytery.

- Occasionally, you will be given the task of representing your congregation e.g. if your congregation has been cited to attend a meeting to discuss a buildings issue and you are asked to speak. In these circumstances you do have to present the views of the Kirk Session.
- Presbytery is also about building connections with other congregations, so where possible get to know your fellow Presbyters and share experiences with them.
- Presbytery always opens with worship. If possible, please attend the worship as well as the business of the meeting. First and foremost, we are a worshipping community and participating in worship helps to set the tone for the rest of the meeting.
- At the start of the meeting there is the opportunity to share notices – take note of anything which may be of interest to your congregation.
- Be attentive throughout the meeting – there may be some items which you didn't originally consider as relevant to your congregation but with discussion they become more pertinent.
- Note any changes to sections of deliverance.
- At the meeting, be prepared to make notes, either on a laptop / tablet or with pen and paper – whatever is easiest for you.
- As soon as it is reasonable draw up your full report for your Kirk Session, so that you don't forget important details.
- Your Kirk Session do not need to know the detail of every discussion, they just need to know the outcome.
- If any business was conducted that was declared private, then you must not share that with your Kirk Session or anyone outside of presbytery. This may be a disciplinary matter which Presbytery needs to be aware of but is not for general circulation.
- When presenting your report to Kirk Session, be prepared to answer questions on it.
- See Appendix 2 for a suggested format for reporting back to your Kirk Session.

Report back to Kirk Session about presbytery decisions

To submit a gifts and skills form and be willing to be appointed to a committee.

- When you first join Presbytery, you will be asked to submit a gifts and skills form. This will help the Connections and Nominations Committee appoint you to a committee where there is a vacancy which matches your interests. Alongside this is the opportunity to request to participate in the work of a particular committee.
- You will be given information beforehand on what each committee does so that you can make an informed selection.

- As with the Presbytery meetings, you are asked to attend or put in your apologies for committee meetings. Most will be online due to the widespread geographical coverage of Presbytery.
- This is a smaller group of Presbyters, so there is the opportunity to get to know some of them better.
- But once again, be prepared to contribute to the committee and to take on certain allocated tasks.
- You may find at times that you are part of committee work which directly impacts your congregation, but which requires even-handedness across presbytery. This is when you need to refer to the Code of Conduct and consider how you negotiate the potential conflicts in your role.



What is the Code of Conduct? - And why do we have one?

Purpose

This Code of Conduct for all members of Presbytery is intended to assist you to carry out your duties with confidence and to protect you and the Presbytery from any allegations of misconduct.

Those who are recognised ministers and deacons within the bounds, commissioned elders, and appointed additional elders are also charity trustees for the Presbytery.

The principles of Charity Trusteeship are the same for a presbytery as for a congregation.

The Code of Conduct can be found in full at:

<https://nenipresbytery.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Paper-3-Code-of-Conduct-June-2026.pdf>



Appendix 2 Conflicts of Interest 3 Conflict of Interest Policy



3.1 Introduction

Charity trustees have a primary duty in terms of S.66 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 to act in the best interests of the charity at all times.

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a trustee's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent the trustee from making a decision only in the best interests of the Presbytery.

A conflict of interest arises when the interests of a trustee (or a person closely connected to them, whether by family or business) are incompatible or in competition with the interests of the Presbytery.

The most common types of conflict include:

- direct financial interest – where there is, or appears to be, an opportunity for personal financial gain
- indirect financial interest – the financial gain of a close relative or close friend or business associate
- non-financial or personal conflicts – a non-financial interest can take many forms and is generally one where there is, or appears to be, an opportunity for personal benefit, advantage or enhancement to prospects for the individual (direct), or similar gains to someone in their immediate family or a person with whom the individual has a close personal relationship (indirect)
- conflicts of loyalties – a particular type of conflict of interest in which a trustee's loyalty or duty to another person or organisation could prevent the trustee from making a decision only in the best interests of the Presbytery.

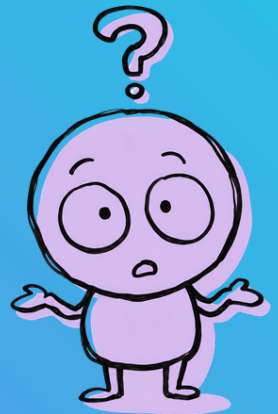
3.4.3 Managing conflicts of interest



If a potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest is identified the trustees must act only in the best interests of the Presbytery. This means the trustees must consider the issue of the conflict of interest so that any effect this may have on good decision-making is eliminated.

In deciding whether a conflict of interest exists trustees must consider the following:

- Has the decision been taken in the best interests of the Presbytery?
- Does the decision protect the reputation of the Presbytery?
- What impression does the decision have on those outside the Presbytery?
- Can the trustees demonstrate that they have made the decision in the best interests of the Presbytery and independently of any competing interests?
- Does the presence of a conflicted trustee inhibit free discussion and influence the decision-making process in any way?



Where the trustees decide that there is a potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest the conflicted trustee should not participate in the decision-making process.

The conflicted trustee should withdraw from the meeting prior to discussion of the item, unless given permission by the Convener or Moderator to remain.

A conflicted trustee should not take part in any vote on the item which is the subject of the conflict.

Appendix 5

Summary of Obligations for Charity Trustees

6 Obligations for Charity Trustees

6.1 Obligations

The obligations of Charity Trustees are set out in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, and subsequent Guidance from OSCR (The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

- The Trustees must act in the interests of the Charity (and not therefore in their own personal interests or the interests of an outside body).