

Political and Other Affiliations Policy

1. Purpose

This policy provides direction on upholding the Fundamental Principles when our people engage in political activities, particularly regarding the public perception of the neutrality of the British Red Cross (BRC) and the wider Movement. It outlines the BRC's position in relation to staff members or volunteer who:

- holds or seeks to hold political or other public office, or
- engages with political, racial, religious, or ideological organisations or movements

2. Scope

This policy applies to all BRC officials, staff, and volunteers in the UK and internationally ('our people').

3. Policy Statement

3.1. To ensure we uphold our Fundamental Principles, our people must:

- 3.1.1.** Avoid having a high public profile in the political sphere or in other fields which might reflect adversely on BRC or on the Fundamental Principles.
- 3.1.2.** Refrain from utilising their BRC position when seeking political or other public office.
- 3.1.3.** Declare any positions held, memberships, or engagement in the political sphere or other public offices, in accordance with the instructions in the Conflict of Interest, Gifts, and Hospitality Policy and Procedure.

3.2. To ensure that our people's involvement in political or other public office or activities does not impact, or appear to impact, our ability to uphold the Fundamental Principles, we must consider:

- 3.2.1.** The decision-making power and the status of the BRC staff or volunteer concerned. A high-ranking BRC official or a person whose function carries some moral authority must be very careful not to create any confusion in the public mind regarding the neutrality of the organisation.
- 3.2.2.** The association which might be made in the view of the public between the political function and the responsibilities of the BRC official concerned. The BRC official must be capable of keeping the two affiliations quite separate and be clearly seen to do so at all times.

- 3.2.3.** The compatibility between the political platform the person would defend and the ideals and mission of the BRC. This is difficult to assess and may be subjective. However, the BRC stands for humanity; concern for the suffering of others, whoever they may be; and solidarity between human beings. These values would have to always be present in the mind of any BRC official with a simultaneous political function.
- 3.2.4.** A BRC official who holds public office may put the Fundamental Principles of independence and neutrality at risk. The danger of a BRC official holding office within a political party is that some people would lose confidence in the organisation because of the presence in its midst, at a high level, of someone whose political opinions they do not share.
- 3.2.5.** The potential controversy associated with the activity. Highly respected people in a local community whose governmental or political roles may not necessarily be a source of controversy, and whose presence in the BRC could be an asset, are welcome. To ensure awareness of the Movement, the Fundamental Principles, and the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law, we provide regular internal training opportunities to our people. This includes the 'IHL and the Movement' course which we deliver as part of the induction for new starters, as well as regular refresher presentations delivered internally.

3.3. Lessons Learned from Policy Evaluation

A review of this Policy was undertaken, and feedback requested from identified users of the Policy and received from International Humanitarian Law and Governance. There haven't been substantial changes. Improvements includes clarifying provisions and relationship with conflicts of interest, shortening the policy and restructuring the content in the new policy template.

4. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees (BoT) has overall accountability for ensuring the organisation's overall commitment to and adherence with the Fundamental Principles.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) are responsible for championing this policy and its approach to political and other affiliations within their areas of responsibility.

The Chief Executive (Policy Owner) is the member of the Executive Leadership Team who is responsible for this policy on behalf of the Board.

The Regulatory Reporting Manager together is the policy lead and is responsible for the development, monitoring, and review of this policy.

All our people are responsible for adherence to this policy.

5. Governance

Associated policy document/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct • Conflict of Interests, Gifts and Hospitalities 	
Policy(ies) superseded	N/A	
Legislation/ regulatory requirements and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal Charter • Standing Orders • Observation of strict political neutrality by National Societies, Board of Governors, XXVth Session, Athens 1959, Resolution 16 • Article 44, First Geneva Convention of 1949 • National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as Auxiliaries to the Public Authorities in the Humanitarian Field, Report to the Council of Delegates, Geneva, 2003 	
Equality impact assessment	'No equality impact identified'	
Data Protection impact assessment	'No data protection impact identified'	
Environmental impact assessment	'No environmental impact identified'	
Endorsing Authority; Endorsement date	ELT; July 2024	
Approval Authority; Approval date	ELT, August 2024	
Policy Owner	Chief Executive	
Policy Lead	Regulatory Reporting Manager	
Date effective	August 2024	
Interim update date	January 2024	
Review date	July 2027	
Version	4.0	
Keywords	Fundamental principles, neutrality, independence, impartiality, politics, political, affiliation, parties, media, reputation, conflict of interest, disclosure, conduct, standards, personal interests, decision making, compliance, conflicts management	
Revision history	Version	Summary of change (s)
	1.0	New Policy
	2.0	Scheduled review; minor edits to reflect organisational change
	3.0	Scheduled review; minor edits to reflect organisational change

	3.1	Minor update to reflect organisational changes.
	4.0	Scheduled review: compliance with the new Policy and Procedure Framework; minor edits and clarification on how to make declarations

Appendix: Definitions

BRC Official: a member of staff or volunteer, including office holders, who holds a position of authority within the BRC, responsible for making decisions and/or representing the BRC in an official capacity.

Fundamental Principles: the seven principles that guide the actions and operations of the Movement: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality.

- **Neutrality** means that, “in order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not ... engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial¹, religious or ideological nature.”
- **Independence** means that “... National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.”
- **Voluntary Service** means that our involvement with the Movement is “not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.”

Movement Red Cross: the international humanitarian network composed of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies

¹ *The Society firmly and unequivocally condemns racism and adverse discrimination in all its forms, and commits to taking steps toward ensuring an environment free from all adverse discrimination within our Movement. This commitment lies at the heart of the Fundamental Principles and values, and the principle of neutrality does not mean staying silent in the face of adverse discrimination. This commitment shall not be construed as taking sides in any political, religious, or ideological controversies, but rather as an unwavering expression of our core values and a necessary component of maintaining the Movement's neutrality.*