



HOUSE OF LORDS

House of Lords Commissioners for Standards

Annual Report 2023–24



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Foreword

This is our third annual report as the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards. Having two Commissioners has continued to prove to be valuable. By dividing cases equally between us, we can ensure timely investigations, as well as take advantage of opportunities to discuss cases and ensure we maintain a rigorous and fair process.

This report covers the reporting year from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024. During this period, we considered 75 cases, and completed 14 investigations.

As in our previous annual reports, we include statistics about the work that we have done over the year with comparative figures from previous years, along with brief summaries of our published reports. We have also this year included a new section summarising trends from the year.

This year saw a slight increase in the number of cases considered and investigations completed. We have continued to improve the timeliness of our work, increasing the percentage of complaints that are responded to within 10 days and reducing the average time taken to complete investigations.

This year saw our second investigation that resulted in an agreed resolution. This process, subject to the discretion of the investigating Commissioner, allows a complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct to be resolved by agreement between the parties, without requiring a report to be published. We have found this to be a useful tool in helping to facilitate an acceptable outcome for all parties.

As Commissioners, we continue to engage with other standards bodies, including attending meetings with officials from across Parliament and Government, and roundtables facilitated by the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. A review of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme was undertaken this year by Paul Kernaghan CBE, QPM. We welcome his findings on the success of the process followed in the House of Lords and note the recommendations to improve the process further. We also note with interest the Conduct Committee's review of the Code of Conduct. We will welcome the opportunity to engage with this review and look forward to the outcome of the review in due course.

We also note the continued public interest in standards of conduct in the House of Lords, as well as interest in the investigation into Baroness Mone. As set out

in paragraph 145 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct and on our website, we are unable to finalise or publish any report concerning Baroness Mone while any criminal investigation is under way. Once any criminal process is complete or has ceased, the investigation will be completed and the report will be published.

Our office is currently composed of two and a half members of full-time equivalent staff employed by the House of Lords Administration: the Standards Clerk, the Assistant Standards Clerk, and the Conduct Assistant. This is an appropriate level of staffing for our workload, but our office includes the capacity to increase staff support if necessary. We have also benefitted from the support of ICGS independent external investigators when investigating complaints relating to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. We would like to thank Michael Torrance and Melanie Moore for all their work, as they have both this year been promoted out of our office, and welcome Gabby Longdin, Standards Clerk, and Lucy Valenza, Conduct Assistant, to our office.

Finally, we continue to be grateful to those who have come forward with complaints and to members for their cooperation in responding to our work on those complaints.

Martin Jelley QPM DL

Akbar Khan

Commissioners for Standards

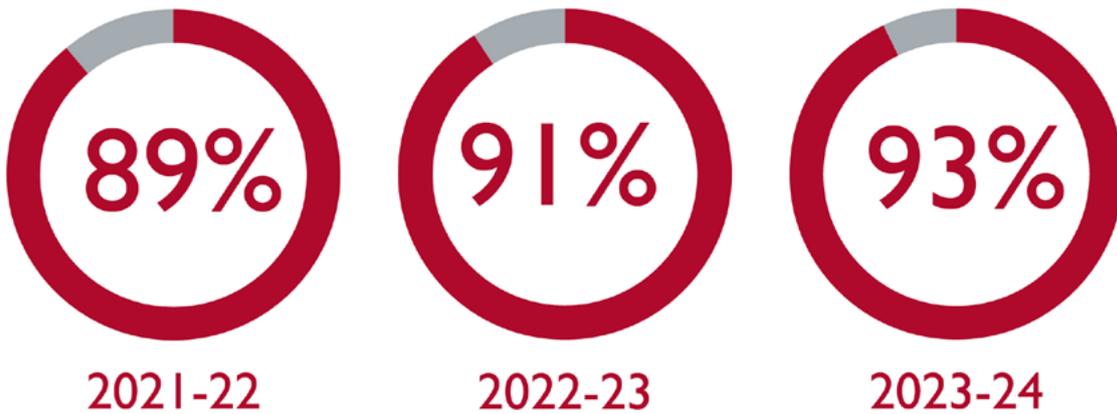
Overview of the year

Statistics on the Commissioners' work

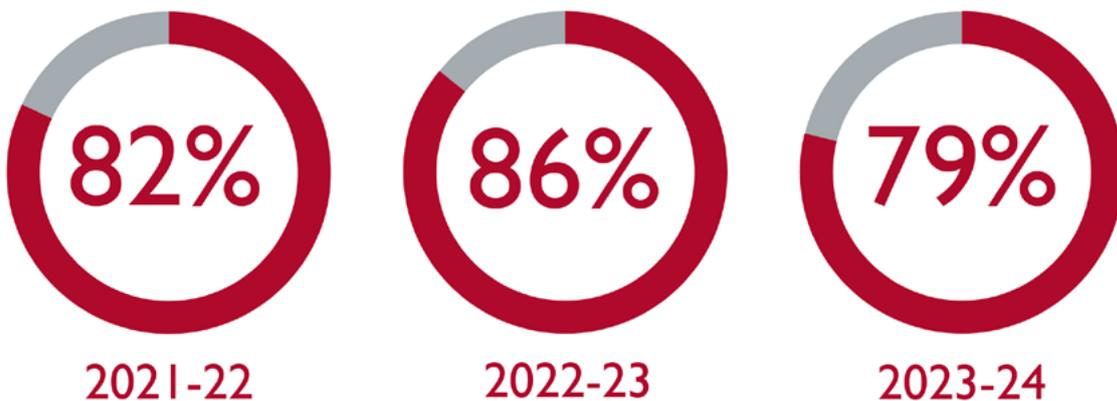
Number of cases considered (including ongoing cases not yet reported)



Percentage of complaints answered in 10 working days



Percentage of cases dismissed following preliminary assessment



Number of investigations completed

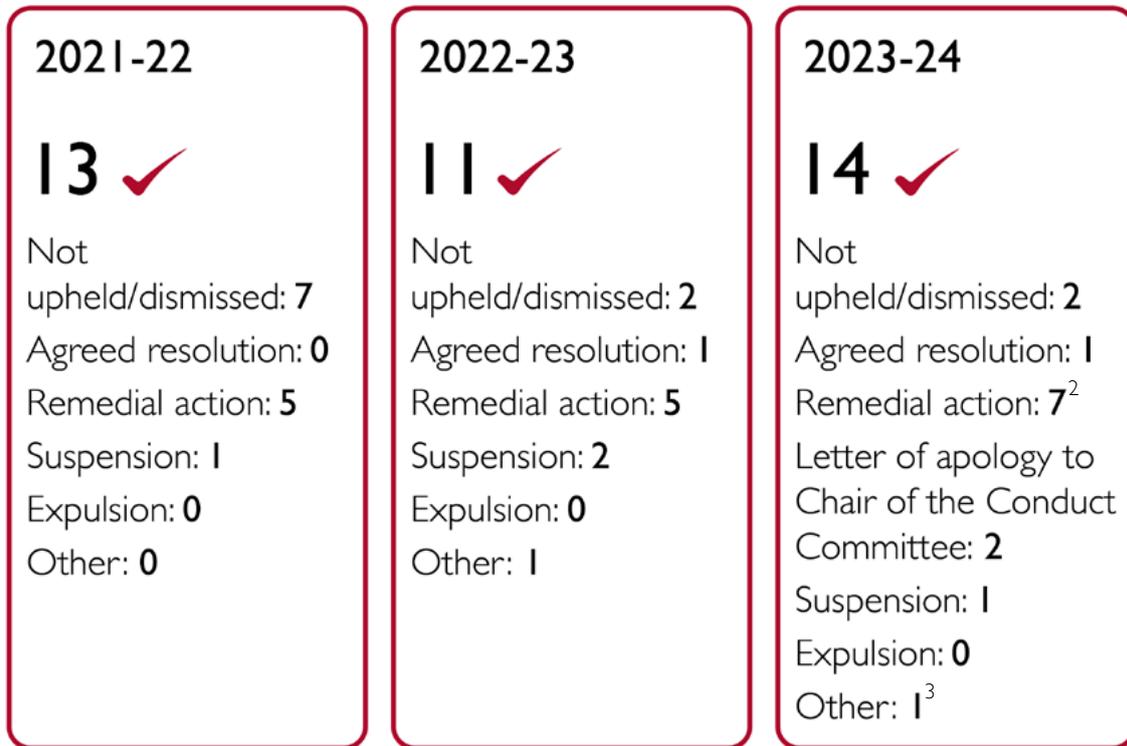


Number of breaches of provisions of the Code of Conduct¹



¹ Paragraphs relate to the 13th edition of the Code of Conduct.

Investigation outcomes



2 Remedial action may be agreed if the Commissioner finds a breach to have been minor and it is acknowledged by the member concerned. This year, remedial action has included correcting the members' register of interests, and sending a letter of apology to the Chair of the Conduct Committee.

3 The Conduct Committee recommended a suspension from the House for three weeks with a ban from purchasing alcohol on the parliamentary estate for 12 months. Due to the dissolution of Parliament the sanction has yet to be considered by the House.

Average time taken to conclude investigations (working days)



Trends from the year

In this section we outline trends we've seen in complaints and investigations through the year.

A number of investigations we launched this year were about members' registration of interests. There were several cases where members had not registered non-financial interests, when they held roles such as trustees of charities. As detailed below, we found that many of these breaches of the Code were minor and inadvertent, and they were resolved through remedial action.

A particular issue arose in cases in which members were both a trustee of a charity and a director of the charity's corporate arm. The Guide to the Code of Conduct requires all directorships to be registered, yet in some cases the member registered only the trusteeship and not the directorship. If a member is unsure whether to register an interest the Registrar of Lords' Interests is available to advise.

This year, 79% of cases considered at preliminary assessment were dismissed. To proceed to investigation, complaints must be within the scope of the Code of Conduct and be supported by *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the Code. Complaints that fell outside the scope of the Code of Conduct included those relating to a member's non-parliamentary activities, and those relating to a members' expression of views or opinions.

4 This investigation began in the previous reporting year.

The House of Lords Commission released social media guidance for members earlier this year.⁵ Social media has continued to constitute a high proportion of complaints: 27% of cases that were dismissed following preliminary assessment related to members' social media. This includes several cases in which numerous complaints were submitted about the same social media activity, which were considered as one case. This year we did not investigate any complaints about members' social media activity. This was because, after conducting preliminary assessments, we determined that the conduct complained of was not part of the members' parliamentary duties or activities, or was an expression of a members' views and opinions, both of which fall outside our remit.

This year included two completed investigations on misuse of parliamentary facilities. During these investigations, the members involved expressed confusion about the proper use of parliamentary accommodation. The rules on the use of facilities are available for all members in the *Handbook on facilities and services for members and their staff*, and the Director of Facilities is available to advise on the proper use of parliamentary facilities.

There were two investigations this year in which members referenced advice they received from Government officials. While members may be subject to other standards regimes which have overlapping rules, members should not rely on advice concerning other standards rules when ensuring their compliance with the House of Lords Code of Conduct.

Finally, during several investigations members told us they were unclear about, or unaware of, the relevant rules in the Code of Conduct and Guide. We note that in launching its review of the Code, the Conduct Committee has made improving the clarity of the Code a priority. However, it remains at all times incumbent on members to be aware of, and comply with, all rules. If a member is unsure, advice can always be sought from the Registrar.

5 House of Lords Commission, *Social media guidance for members of the House of Lords*: committees.parliament.uk/publications/42617/documents/211805/default.

Investigations

We completed 14 investigations in this reporting year, which are summarised below. Further investigations that began in this reporting year, but were not completed, will be included in next year's annual report.

One investigation this year was resolved by an agreed resolution, and therefore no report was published and there is no summary below. One investigation referred to below was finalised this year but initiated in the previous reporting year, 2022–23. While we have organised the investigations by category for ease, some investigations covered multiple breaches of the Code.

All reports on cases that were resolved by remedial action or dismissed are published by the Commissioners. Where reports were made to the Conduct Committee, either due to the recommended sanction or due to an appeal, the Commissioner's reports are annexed to the Conduct Committee's reports. All our reports, including those published by the Conduct Committee, are on our webpage on the parliamentary website: parliament.uk/hl-standards.

Bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct

In this reporting period, we completed one investigation into a complaint made under the bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct provisions in the Code of Conduct, and one complaint relating to these provisions was resolved by agreed resolution.

Lord Ranger of Northwood⁶

I received two complaints from two members of the parliamentary community about Lord Ranger of Northwood. The complainants alleged that one evening they were approached by Lord Ranger in Strangers' Bar, who they believed was heavily intoxicated. During their interaction, they said that Lord Ranger had displayed unprovoked aggressive behaviour by swearing and shouting at them, and invading their personal space.

After taking evidence from the complainants, Lord Ranger and witnesses, I found that Lord Ranger's behaviour constituted bullying and harassment, and therefore that he had breached paragraph 19 of the Code of Conduct. I recommended to the Conduct Committee that Lord Ranger should be suspended from the House

6 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

for one week. The Conduct Committee considered my report, and sought further representations from myself, the complainants and Lord Ranger, on the recommended sanction. After considering aggravating and mitigating factors, the Committee concluded that Lord Ranger should be suspended from the House for three weeks and be banned from purchasing alcohol on the parliamentary estate for 12 months.⁷

Declaration and registration of interests

We investigated six complaints about non-registration or non-declaration of interests. Two further investigations (Lord Skidelsky and Lord Mann) also involved non-registration of interests, and are covered in another section.

*Baroness Amos*⁸

I received a complaint from a member of the public that Baroness Amos had failed to register five roles she held.

Three of the interests complained of involved Baroness Amos holding concurrent roles as both a trustee of a charity and a director of its associated company. Baroness Amos responded setting out the times during which she held each role, and provided evidence of registering one of the roles.

For two roles I was satisfied that there was no breach. In one case Baroness Amos did not hold the position alleged, and in the other Baroness Amos had registered the role but it did not appear on her register of interests due to administrative error. I found that Baroness Amos had breached paragraph 17 of the Code in relation to one role for which she registered her interest late after the permitted month. For the final two roles, I found that she had breached paragraph 14(a) of the Code in not registering non-financial interests, one as a director, and the other as a trustee and director. I considered these to be minor and inadvertent breaches. I recommended that Baroness Amos update her register with respect to the one current interest that was incorrect, and so the case was resolved by remedial action.

*Lord Fink*⁹

I received a complaint from a member of the public that Lord Fink had incorrectly registered several roles.

7 Due to the dissolution of Parliament, the sanction has yet to be considered by the House.

8 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

9 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

Lord Fink explained that when he returned from leave of absence (during which he did not need to have any entries in the Register of Lords' Interests), he had registered a number of interests. In one case, his interest was registered before his leave, but due to administrative error on his part it was not re-registered. Lord Fink's remaining interests were registered, however the names and categories were not all accurate. Therefore, Lord Fink breached paragraphs 14(a) and 17 of the Code of Conduct.

As I considered these to be minor breaches of the Code with mitigating factors, I proposed that Lord Fink correct his registration of interests. He corrected his entries accordingly, and so the case was resolved by remedial action.

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws¹⁰

I received a complaint from a member of the House, Lord Jackson of Peterborough, that Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws had not registered her interest in the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

After consulting the Register of Lords' Interests and Companies House records, I considered there to be *prima facie* evidence that Baroness Kennedy had not registered her interest as a trustee and unremunerated director of the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

Baroness Kennedy responded that her late registration of her trustee role was an oversight, and she provided me with email correspondence showing she had been unaware that she had been appointed a director of the associated company. I therefore found Baroness Kennedy breached paragraphs 14(a) and 17 of the Code of Conduct. I considered these breaches to be minor and inadvertent. The case was therefore resolved by remedial action, through Baroness Kennedy correcting her entry in her Register of Lords' Interests.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark¹¹

I received a complaint from a member of the public alleging that Lord Kennedy of Southwark had incorrectly registered his interests.

After consulting the Registrar of Lords' Interests, I considered Lord Kennedy's interest in the Credit Union Foundation and Millwall Community Trust showed *prima facie* evidence of breaches of the Code of Conduct. In Lord Kennedy's response to me, he explained the roles he held, and how he had registered them.

¹⁰ Investigated by Martin Jelley.

¹¹ Investigated by Martin Jelley.

I found that Lord Kennedy had correctly registered his interest as Chair and trustee of the Credit Union Foundation. However, while Lord Kennedy had registered his role as trustee of Millwall Community Trust, I found that he had not registered his unremunerated directorship of the associated company, therefore breaching paragraph 12(a)¹² of the Code. I considered this a minor and inadvertent breach, and Lord Kennedy had already corrected his register entry, which I considered sufficient remedial action.

Baroness Smith of Basildon¹³

I received a complaint from a member of the public alleging that Baroness Smith of Basildon had not registered her role as director of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust and her former role as director of Production Exchange Limited.

I found that Baroness Smith's former interest in Production Exchange Limited had been registered correctly. While Baroness Smith had registered her role as trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust, she had not registered her role as a director of the associated company. I found this was a minor and inadvertent breach of the Code. Baroness Smith corrected her entry in the register of interests, which I considered sufficient remedial action.

Lord Vaizey of Didcot¹⁴

I received a complaint from a member of the public alleging that Lord Vaizey of Didcot had not registered his role as a trustee of a UK charity, Common Sense Media.

Lord Vaizey had registered his role as a paid adviser to the US charity Common Sense Media. In his response to me, Lord Vaizey explained that he had believed his role as a trustee to the related UK charity did not require registration, as he had registered his remunerated role for the US charity and believed the two charities were the same body.

I found that Lord Vaizey had breached paragraph 12(a)¹⁵ of the Code of Conduct in not registering his role as trustee of the UK charity; however it was a minor breach for which Lord Vaizey expressed regret. This was resolved by remedial action through a correction of Lord Vaizey's registration of interests.

12 Of the 12th edition of the Code of Conduct, which was in force at the time.

13 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

14 Investigated by Akbar Khan.

15 Of the 12th edition of the Code of Conduct, which was in force at the time.

Notifying the Clerk of the Parliaments of matter under investigation

We completed one investigation primarily concerning notifying the Clerk of the Parliaments that a member is under investigation by the member's professional regulator. One further investigation (that of Lord Skidelsky) related to this and is covered in a later section.

The Lord Bishop of Oxford¹⁶

I received complaints from two members of the public alleging that the Lord Bishop of Oxford had not notified the Clerk of the Parliaments that he was under investigation by the Church of England, which was a potential breach of paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Code of Conduct.

The Bishop of Oxford informed me that none of the complaints against him in the Church of England had reached the stage of an investigation, and that the lessons learned review that was initiated by the Church of England (and which formed the basis of the relevant complaints) was explicitly not a formal investigation or disciplinary process. Furthermore, most of these proceedings took place before the notification requirements were included in the Code of Conduct.

I therefore found that the Bishop of Oxford was not required to inform the Clerk of the Parliaments about the relevant Church of England complaints processes, and so he did not breach the Code of Conduct.

Members' financial support

We completed one investigation arising from a self-referral concerning misuse of members' financial support.

Lord Bird¹⁷

I received a self-referral from Lord Bird, informing me that his wife had been signing his expense and allowance claims on his behalf, which was a potential breach of paragraph 14(c) of the Code of Conduct.

As this resulted from a self-referral, I first received the consent of the Conduct Committee to investigate. As stated in Lord Bird's evidence, and corroborated by the Finance Department, Lord Bird's wife had been signing his claim forms

¹⁶ Investigated by Akbar Khan.

¹⁷ Investigated by Akbar Khan.

since he first joined the House in 2015. This was in contravention of the rules set out in the *Guide to members' financial support*. No issues were raised with the propriety of Lord Bird's claims beyond the authorising signature.

I found Lord Bird breached paragraph 14(c) of the Code of Conduct by having his wife sign his claims. Lord Bird told me he was unaware of the relevant rule and expressed regret. I therefore recommended remedial action. Lord Bird undertook to sign all future claims himself and wrote a letter of apology to the Chair of the Conduct Committee.

Parliamentary facilities

We completed two investigations into misuse of parliamentary facilities, both of which included other breaches of the Code of Conduct and one of which was initiated in the previous reporting year.

*Lord Mann*¹⁸

I received a complaint from a member of the public alleging that Lord Mann had not registered an interest in the form of the staff support he received from the Antisemitism Policy Trust, which he received because of his appointment by the Government as Independent Adviser on Antisemitism. During my preliminary assessment of the complaint, there emerged *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the House's rules on the use of parliamentary facilities.

In evidence Lord Mann told me he used his parliamentary office as the sole office for his role as Independent Adviser on Antisemitism. His member of staff was clear that they supported Lord Mann in his Independent Adviser role and in his parliamentary work. While Lord Mann had declared his role as Independent Adviser, and his staff member registered their interest, Lord Mann had not registered the staff support he received. Lord Mann told me this arrangement was sanctioned by House officials; however accounts from the relevant officials revealed no evidence that this was the case.

I concluded Lord Mann had breached paragraphs 14(a) and 14(c) of the Code of Conduct. In response to both breaches, I recommended that Lord Mann make a personal statement of apology to the House by way of remedial action.

Lord Mann appealed against my findings and my recommended sanction. The Conduct Committee rejected the appeal against my findings but upheld the

18 Investigated by Akbar Khan.

appeal against the recommended sanction. The Committee agreed that a letter of apology to the Chair of the Conduct Committee was sufficient in the circumstances.

*Lord Skidelsky*¹⁹

I received a disclosure from the Charity Commission informing my office that it was investigating the Centre for Global Studies (CGS), a charity chaired by Lord Skidelsky.

After obtaining the agreement of the Conduct Committee to investigate, I took evidence from Lord Skidelsky and two of his members of staff. Lord Skidelsky had been using his parliamentary office as the headquarters of the charity he chairs, which he said supported his academic and parliamentary work. Furthermore, following the Government imposing sanctions on two Russian businessmen who had been the primary funders of the charity, Lord Skidelsky removed the CGS from his entry in the register of interests.

I concluded that Lord Skidelsky breached paragraphs 12(a) and 15 of the Code of Conduct²⁰ in failing properly to register his interests in the charity; the staff support he received from the charity, and the advances and royalties he received from his publications. I also concluded that Lord Skidelsky had breached paragraph 12(c) of the Code by misusing his parliamentary office, and breached paragraph 20 by not informing the Clerk of the Parliaments that he was under investigation by the Charity Commission. I recommended that Lord Skidelsky be suspended from the House for one month.

Lord Skidelsky appealed against my recommended sanction. The Conduct Committee rejected the appeal and upheld the recommended sanction. The House agreed the Conduct Committee report on the case and the recommended sanction.²¹

Parliamentary advice and services

We completed two investigations into complaints about parliamentary advice and services.

19 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

20 This paragraph refers to the 12th edition of the Code of Conduct, which was in force at the time.

21 [HL Deb \(22 November 2023\)](#), Cols 734–735.

Lord Chadlington²²

I received a complaint from Lord Foulkes of Cumnock about Lord Chadlington, following an earlier complaint into alleged provision of paid parliamentary advice and services that I investigated and dismissed the previous year. Lord Foulkes alleged that Lord Chadlington had misled my first investigation by not disclosing a phone call he had with Lord Feldman of Elstree concerning PPE, which Lord Chadlington had discussed in an interview with the Guardian subsequent to my investigation.

Lord Chadlington clarified that he was mistaken in saying he had a phone call but there was a text exchange, which he shared with me. Lord Feldman could not recall any phone call due to the high volume of calls he received at the time.

Although it was regrettable the text exchange was not originally shared, I did not consider that the contents would have altered my findings and I accepted Lord Chadlington's account of why it was not shared. I therefore found that Lord Chadlington had not breached the Code of Conduct. During the investigation it was apparent that the complainant had released details of this complaint to the media. In my report I noted that complainants are bound by the Code of Conduct to maintain the confidentiality of all complaints made, in order to ensure the fairness of the process.

Lord Geidt²³

I received a complaint from a member of the public alleging that Lord Geidt had breached the Code of Conduct by providing paid parliamentary advice and services to a company, Theia Group Inc. The complaint said that Lord Geidt had provided a presentation on behalf of the company to Ministry of Defence officials.

I launched an investigation into alleged provision of a paid parliamentary service. Evidence confirmed that Lord Geidt had provided introductory remarks to officials on behalf of Theia Group Inc.

I concluded that Lord Geidt breached paragraph 9(d) of the 10th edition of the Code of Conduct. I did not consider this to be a significant breach so recommended that Lord Geidt write a letter of apology to the Chair of the Conduct Committee by way of remedial action.

22 Investigated by Akbar Khan.

23 Investigated by Martin Jelley.

Lord Geidt appealed against the findings. The Conduct Committee rejected the appeal and upheld the findings and recommended sanction.

The complaints process

If an individual is considering making a complaint it is important to note that by seeking support from sources including the independent helpline, they are not committing themselves to making a formal complaint but can simply raise concerns.

Any complaint alleging that a member of the House of Lords, or a member of their staff, has breached the Code of Conduct may be made by email or in writing, to:

The House of Lords Commissioners for Standards
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsstandards@parliament.uk

Anyone making a complaint about bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct by a member, or a member of their staff, may alternatively choose to submit their complaint by calling the ICGS Helpline. The Helpline provides advice and information about the two ICGS policies (the bullying and harassment policy and the sexual misconduct policy) and signposts other available support. They can be contacted on 0808 168 9281 (freephone 9am–6pm, Monday–Friday). The Helpline can also be contacted by email, on support@ICGShelpline.org.uk.

Martin Jelley QPM DL

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22 July 2024