



10 DOWNING STREET
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THE PRIME MINISTER

13 April 2009

Dear Gus

I am writing about the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the proposals I want to make to tighten this up.

I am assured that no Minister and no political adviser other than the person involved had any knowledge of or involvement in these private emails that are the subject of current discussion, and I have already taken responsibility for acting on this – first by accepting Mr McBride's resignation and by making it clear to all concerned that such actions have no part to play in the public life of our country. I have also written personally to all those who were subject to these unsubstantiated claims.

Mr McBride has apologised and done so unreservedly. But it is also important to make sure such behaviour does not happen again. Any activity such as this that affects the reputation of our politics is a matter of great regret to me and I am ready to take whatever action is necessary to improve our political system.

I would therefore now like a more explicit assurance included in the special advisers Code of Conduct that not only are the highest standards expected of political advisers but that the preparation or dissemination of inappropriate material or personal attacks have no part to play in the job of being a special adviser, just as it has no part to play in the conduct of all our public life.

I also think it right to make it a part of the special advisers contract by asking our political advisers to sign such an assurance and to recognise that if they are ever found to be preparing and disseminating inappropriate material they will automatically lose their jobs.

I think you will agree that all of us in public life have a responsibility to ensure that those we employ and who are involved in our parties observe the highest standards.

Like the overwhelming majority of figures in public life across the political spectrum, I entered politics because of a sense of public duty and to improve the lives and opportunities of those less fortunate than me. My undivided focus as Prime Minister is on acting to make Britain a fairer, safer and more prosperous nation and, in particular, on guiding the country through the current economic difficulties. The public would expect no less and would also expect the highest possible standards from all their politicians and all those who work for them.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Brown

Sir Gus O'Donnell

REVISION OF CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SPECIAL ADVISERS – SUGGESTED CHANGES

Advisers

6. Special advisers should not use official resources for party political activity. They are employed to serve the objectives of the Government and the Department in which they work. It is this which justifies their being paid from public funds and being able to use public resources, and explains why their participation in party politics is carefully limited. They should act in a way which upholds the political impartiality of civil servants and does not conflict with the Civil Service Code. **The highest standards are expected of political advisers and, specifically, that the preparation or dissemination of inappropriate material or personal attacks has no part to play in the job of being a special adviser as it has no part to play on the conduct of our public life. Political advisers will sign this assurance and if they are ever found to be disseminating inappropriate material they will automatically lose their jobs.** They should avoid anything which might reasonably lead to the criticism that people paid from public funds are being used for party political purposes.