

SCENARIO

USE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

Family man

Councillor Turner's daughter has just finished her university degree and is looking for a job. It's so difficult to get a foot in the door these days, he's keeping an ear out for opportunities for her.

At a council meeting, the corporate services manager provides a report on her team's activities, noting that the HR department has been swamped with work in recent months. Following the meeting, Councillor Turner sympathises with the manager about being understaffed. The manager notes that she would like to recruit more staff but will need to get the proposal through council, which will be tricky in the current financial environment.

Councillor Turner reassures her that he will support any proposal for a budget increase when the next budget is tabled. He also mentions that his daughter has just finished her studies, with a major in human resources, and is particularly keen to work in a local government environment – any opportunity for her to gain some experience would be much appreciated.

When the budget proposals come before council, Councillor Turner votes in favour of an increase in staffing for the HR department. Six months later, he is happy to learn that his daughter has a job with the HR department of council.

What are the ethical issues in this situation?

- Use of power and authority
- Conflict of interest
- Not acting in the public interest
- Not acting with honesty and integrity

What could be the impact of this situation?

- The HR manager (and other managers) may come to believe that, if they want Councillor Turner's vote on an issue, they just need to give him something he wants.
- Other councillors will know that Councillor Turner's daughter has been given a job at council and may believe that he voted in favour of the budget increase in order to secure her a job. Tension could build between Councillor Turner and other councillors.
- Other staff may become aware of how Councillor Turner's daughter got the job. This could affect both her experience at council and the morale of staff as a whole.





What processes could be put in place to ensure this doesn't happen?

- Having a clear policy on councillor-staff interactions.
- Having a recruitment policy and ensuring that people involved in recruitment processes declare conflict of interest (including any inappropriate approaches from councillors or staff).
- Councillors understand their obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Information used in this scenario is not based in fact, but has been created for the purpose of education and discussion. Any likeness to real persons or events is coincidental.

