

This policy is to help trustees of the charity avoid conflicts of interest; and to act appropriately where a conflict of interest does arise. This policy also covers the receipt of gifts and hospitality. This policy is also relevant for employees and volunteers.

1. The context

A conflict of interest or loyalty arises where a trustee's personal interests or loyalties, or the interests or loyalties which that trustee owes to another charity, arise at the same time. The trustees must manage any situation where a trustee has the potential to benefit personally from his or her position as trustee or is influenced by conflicting loyalties.

Interests can be financial or non-financial and direct or indirect. A direct financial interest arises where a trustee is selling an asset to the charity or becoming an employee. A direct nonfinancial interest can arise where a trustee is a service user of the charity and benefits more than a typical service user. An indirect benefit is one which accrues to a close member of the trustee's family, a business colleague or other close relationship.

A conflict of loyalty arises where a trustee's decision-making is influenced by another appointment, employment or association of that trustee. This list of conflicts is not intended to be definitive or prescriptive. Each trustee is responsible for declaring actual or potential conflicts or the reasonable perception of such conflicts.

The policy for dealing with conflicts is set out below, including a Register of interests, loyalties, gifts and hospitality.

2. Management of a conflict

A conflict is managed in four ways:

- A conflict should be declared at the earliest opportunity
- A trustee who declares an interest should leave the meeting to allow the other trustees to decide whether his or her absence is necessary or appropriate
- The other trustees should agree how to deal with the conflict, for instance by allowing the conflicted trustee to speak on the matter concerned but not to vote
- The other trustees should make sure that the process is properly minuted.

3. Why we have a policy

Trustees have a legal obligation to act in the best interests of the charity and in accordance with the governing document.

A conflict of interest or loyalty may arise where an individual's personal or family interests and/or loyalties to some other individual or group conflict with those of the charity. Such conflicts may bring risks. They can:

- prevent open discussion
- result in decisions or actions which are not in the best interests of the charity

- result in the impression that the trustees have not acted properly

The purpose of this policy is to protect the trustees and the senior staff from these risks.

What to do if you face a conflict of interest or loyalty

All conflicts of interest or loyalty, whether actual or potential, should be declared promptly at the earliest possible opportunity:

- A trustee who has a financial interest in a matter under discussion should declare the nature of their interest and withdraw from the meeting, unless they have been given permission by the Chair to stay and either speak or not, as the case may be. Such a trustee may not vote.
- A trustee who has any interest in a matter under discussion, which creates a real or perceived risk of bias should declare the nature of the interest and withdraw from the meeting, unless they have been given permission by the Chair to stay and either speak or not, as the case may be. Such a trustee may not vote.
- A trustee who has any other interest which does not create a real risk of bias, but which might reasonably cause others to think it could influence their decision, should declare the nature of the interest, but may remain in the meeting, participate in the discussion and vote if they wish.
- If a trustee is in any doubt about the application of this policy, he or she should heed the spirit as well as the wording of the policy and consult the Chair.
- If a trustee fails to declare an interest that is known to the Chair or company secretary, the Chair or company secretary will declare that interest. The interests of trustees should be listed in a register, as set out below.

Gifts and hospitality

The charity has a policy to deal with personal gifts or hospitality provided to trustees. This protects the trustees against the accusation that such gifts or hospitality are intended to influence the decisions they take in administering the charity's affairs.

1. All gifts to and hospitality for trustees should be declared and recorded in the Register of interests, loyalties and gifts kept for this purpose. The information recorded should include its estimated value, the date on which it was received, who it was given by and the reason for the gift
2. Gifts and hospitality should never be solicited
3. Gifts and hospitality with a value of under £50 can be accepted providing that the gift or hospitality is not given or accepted with an expectation that there is any obligation owed as a result of the gift. Usually but not always, the gift will not be specific to the charity, for instance an accountant or lawyer may take a trustee to a Dinner along with the trustees of other charities.
4. Where a gift or hospitality is received or offered which exceeds the value of £50, the hospitality should be declined, or the gift be returned to the sender, the market price should be paid, or the gift should be donated to the organisation directly or to another charitable organisation as appropriate.
5. Gifts and hospitality intended to influence the decisions of trustees should NEVER be accepted.

The declaration of interests, loyalties, gifts and hospitality

Trustees are asked to declare their interests and loyalties and any gifts or hospitality received in connection with their role in the charity. A declaration of interests and loyalties form is provided to keep the register up to date.

The declaration of interests and loyalties should be updated at 1 January each year, being the first day of the accounting year. It should be updated at least annually and also when any changes occur. If you would like to discuss this matter, please contact the Chair or company secretary.

7. Record keeping

Where the trustee makes a decision on a matter in which a trustee has an interest, all decisions will be made by majority vote. A quorum must be present for the discussion and decision. The conflicted trustee will not count towards the quorum. All decisions where there is a conflict of interest will be minuted accordingly to include:

- the nature, extent and value of the conflict
- the discussion which took place
- the action taken to manage the conflict.

8. Staff and volunteers

This policy has been written to help trustees to discharge their legal duty to act only in the best independent interests of the charity. Although this legal duty does not extend to staff or volunteers, the spirit of this policy applies equally to staff and volunteers to enable trustees to discharge their duty. In practice, therefore, staff and volunteers should act appropriately where a conflict of interest or loyalty arises over above those which are inherent in their role as employee or volunteer.