

THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

1 Introduction

The Scottish public has a high expectation of those who serve on the boards of public bodies and the way in which they should conduct themselves in undertaking their duties for The State Hospitals Board for Scotland. You must meet those expectations by ensuring that your conduct is above reproach.

The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 provides for new Codes of Conduct for local authority councillors and members of relevant public bodies; imposes on councils and relevant public bodies a duty to help their members to comply with the relevant code; and establishes a Standards Commission for Scotland to oversee the new framework and deal with alleged breaches of the codes.

This Code covers members of The State Hospitals Board for Scotland. As a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are familiar with, and that your actions comply with, the provisions of this Code of Conduct.

Guidance on the Code of Conduct

You must observe the rules of conduct contained in this Code. It is your personal responsibility to comply with these and review regularly, and at least annually, your personal circumstances with this in mind, particularly when your circumstances change. You must not at any time advocate or encourage any action contrary to the Code of Conduct.

The Code has been developed in line with the key principles listed in section 2 and provides additional information on how the principles should be interpreted and applied in practice. No Code can provide for all circumstances and if you are uncertain about how the rules apply, you should seek advice from the Chairperson, or the Chief Executive. You may also choose to consult your own legal advisers and, on detailed financial and commercial matters, seek advice from other relevant professionals.

Enforcement

Section 2 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 sets out the provisions for dealing with alleged breaches of this Code of Conduct and the sanctions that shall be applied if the Standards Commission finds that there has been a breach of the Code. Those sanctions are outlined in Annex A.

2 Key Principles of the Code of Conduct

The general principles upon which this Model Code of Conduct are based are:

Public Service

You have a duty to act in accordance with the core tasks and in the interests of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland of which you are a member.

Selflessness

You have a duty to take decisions solely in terms of public interest. You must not act in order to gain financial or other material benefit for yourself, family or friends.

Integrity

You must not place yourself under any financial, or other, obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence you in the performance of your duties.

Objectivity

You must make decisions solely on merit when carrying out public business.

Accountability and Stewardship

You are accountable for your decisions and actions to the public. You have a duty to consider issues on their merits, taking account of the views of others and must ensure that the State Hospital uses its resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

Openness

You have a duty to be as open as possible about your decisions and actions, giving reasons for your decisions and restricting information only when the wider public interest clearly demands, or in the interests of patient confidentiality.

Honesty

You have a duty to act honestly. You must declare any private interests relating to your public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

You have a duty to promote and support these principles by leadership and example, to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and its members in conducting public business.

Respect

You must respect fellow members and employees of the State Hospital and the role they play, treating them with courtesy at all times.

You should apply the principles of this Code to your dealings with fellow members of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and its employees.

3 General Conduct

Relationships with Employees of the State Hospital

You will treat any staff employed by the State Hospital with courtesy and respect. It is expected that employees will show you the same consideration in return.

Allowances

You must comply with any rules of the State Hospital regarding remuneration, allowances and expenses.

Gifts and Hospitality

You must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.

You are responsible for your decisions connected with the offer or acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. As a general guide, it is usually appropriate to refuse offers except:

- (a) isolated gifts of a trivial character or inexpensive seasonal gifts such as a calendar or diary, or other simple items of office equipment of modest value;
- (b) normal hospitality associated with your duties and which would reasonably be regarded as inappropriate to refuse; or
- (c) gifts received on behalf of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

You must not accept any offer by way of gift or hospitality which could give rise to a reasonable suspicion of influence on your part to show favour, or disadvantage, to any individual or organisation. You should also consider whether there may be any reasonable perception that any gift received by your spouse or co-habitee or by any company in which you have a controlling interest, or by a partnership of which you are a partner, can or would influence your judgement. The term "gift" includes benefits such as relief from indebtedness, loan concessions, or provision of services at a cost below that generally charged to members of the public.

You must not accept repeated hospitality from the same source. You must record details of any gifts and hospitality received and the record must be made available for public inspection.

You must not accept any offer of a gift or hospitality from any individual or organisation which stands to gain or benefit from a decision made by the State Hospitals Board for Scotland may be involved in determining, or who is seeking to do business with your organisation, and which a person might reasonably consider could have a bearing on your judgement. If you are making a visit to inspect equipment, vehicles, land or property, then as a general rule you should ensure that the State Hospitals Board for Scotland pays for the costs of these visits.

Confidentiality Requirements

There may be times when you will be required to treat discussions, documents or other information relating to the work of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland in a confidential manner. You will often receive information of a private nature which is not yet public, or which perhaps would not be intended to be public. There are provisions in legislation on the categories of confidential and exempt information and you must always respect and comply with the requirement to keep such information private.

It is unacceptable to disclose any information to which you have privileged access, for example derived from a confidential document, either orally or in writing. In the case of other documents and information, you are requested to exercise your judgement as to what should or should not be made available to outside bodies or individuals. In any event, such information should never be used for the purpose of personal or financial gain, or used in such a way as to bring the State Hospitals Board for Scotland into disrepute.

Use of Public Body Facilities

Members of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland must not misuse facilities, equipment, stationery, telephony and services, or use them for party political or campaigning activities. Use of such equipment and services, etc must be in accordance with the State Hospitals Board for Scotland policy and rules on their usage.

Appointment to Partner Organisations

You may be appointed, or nominated by the State Hospitals Board for Scotland, as a member of another body or organisation. If so, you are bound by the rules of conduct of these organisations and should observe the rules of this Code in carrying out the duties of that body. No NHS body is permitted to nominate a person to be a director of another Company.

4 Registration of Interests

The following paragraphs set out the kinds of interests, financial and otherwise which you have to register. These are called “Registerable Interests”. You must, at all times, ensure that these interests are registered, when you are appointed and whenever your circumstances change in such a way as to require change or an addition to your entry in the State Hospitals Board for Scotland Register.

The Board will maintain a formal Register of Members’ Interest, which should be available to the public, on request from Corporate Services, at the State Hospital, Carstairs. The Register will include details of all directorships and other relevant and material interests which have been declared by the Chairperson, executive and non-executive Board Directors/Members.

This Code sets out the categories of interests, which you must register. Annex B contains key definitions to help you decide what is required when registering your interests under any particular category. These categories are listed below with explanatory notes designed to help you decide what is required when registering your interests under any particular category.

Category One: Remuneration

You have a Registerable Interest where you receive remuneration by virtue of being:

- employed;
- self-employed;
- the holder of an office;
- a director of an undertaking;
- a partner in a firm; or
- undertaking a trade, profession or vocation or any other work.

The amount of remuneration does not require to be registered and remuneration received as a Member does not have to be registered.

If a position is not remunerated it does not need to be registered under this category. However, unremunerated directorships may need to be registered under category two, “Related Undertakings”.

If you receive any allowances in relation to membership of any organisation, the fact that you receive such an allowance must be registered.

When registering employment, you must give the name of the employer, the nature of its business, and the nature of the post held in the organisation.

When registering self-employment, you must provide the name and give details of the nature of the business. When registering an interest in a partnership, you must give the name of the partnership and the nature of its business.

Where you undertake a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work, the detail to be given is the nature of the work and its regularity. For example, if you write for a newspaper, you must give the name of the publication, and the frequency of articles for which you are paid.

When registering a directorship, it is necessary to provide the registered name of the undertaking in which the directorship is held and the nature of its business.

Registration of a pension is not required as this falls outside the scope of the category.

Category Two: Related Undertakings

You must register any directorships held which are themselves not remunerated but where the company (or other undertaking) in question is a subsidiary of, or a parent of, a company (or other undertaking) in which you hold a remunerated directorship.

You must register the name of the subsidiary or parent company or other undertaking and the nature of its business, and its relationship to the company or other undertaking in which you are a director and from which you receive remuneration.

The situations to which the above paragraphs apply are as follows:

- you are a director of a board of an undertaking and receive remuneration – declared under category one – and
- you are a director of a parent or subsidiary undertaking but do not receive remuneration in that capacity.

Category Three: Contracts

You have a registerable interest where you (or a firm in which you are a partner, or an undertaking in which you are a director or in which you have shares of a value as described in category 5 below) have made a contract with the State Hospitals Board for Scotland of which you are a member:

- (i) under which goods or services are to be provided, or works are to be executed;
and
- (ii) which has not been fully discharged.

You must register a description of the contract, including its duration, but excluding the consideration.

Category Four: Houses, Land and Buildings

You have a registerable interest where you own or have any other right or interest in houses, land and buildings, which may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work and operation of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

The test to be applied when considering appropriateness of registration is to ask whether a member of the public acting reasonably might consider any interests in houses, land and buildings could potentially affect your responsibilities to the organisation to which you are appointed and to the public, or could influence your actions, speeches or decision-making. If in doubt, you may consult with the Standards Commission.

Category Five: Shares and Securities

You have a registerable interest where you have an interest in shares which constitute a holding in a company or organisation which may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work and operation of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. You are not required to register the value of such interests.

The test to be applied when considering appropriateness of registration is to ask whether a member of the public acting reasonably might consider any interests in shares and securities could potentially affect your responsibilities to the organisation to which you are appointed and to the public, or could influence your actions, speeches or decision-making. If in doubt, you may consult with the Standards Commission.

Category Six: Non-Financial Interests

You may also have a registerable interest if you have non-financial interests which may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work and operation of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. It is important that relevant interests such as membership or holding office in other public bodies, clubs, societies and organisations such as trades unions and voluntary organisations, are registered and described.

The test to be applied when considering appropriateness of registration is to ask whether a member of the public acting reasonably might consider any non-financial interest could potentially affect your responsibilities to the organisation to which you are appointed and to the public, or could influence your actions, speeches or decision-making. If in doubt, you may consult with the Standards Commission.

5 Declaration of Interests

Introduction

The key principles of the Code, especially those in relation to integrity, honesty and openness, are given further practical effect by the requirement for you to declare certain interests in proceedings of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. Together with the rules on registration of interests, this ensures transparency of your interests which might influence, or be thought to influence, your actions.

Public bodies inevitably have dealings with a wide variety of organisations and individuals and this Code indicates the circumstances in which a business or personal interest must be declared. Public confidence in the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and its members depends on it being clearly understood that decisions are taken in the public interest and not for any other reason.

In considering whether to make a declaration in any proceedings, you must consider not only whether you will be influenced but whether anybody else would think that you might be influenced by the interest. You must keep in mind that the test is whether a member of the public, acting reasonably, might think that a particular interest could influence you.

If you feel that, in the context of the matter being considered, your involvement is neither capable of being viewed as more significant than that of an ordinary member of the public, nor likely to be perceived by the public as wrong, you may continue to attend the meeting and participate in both discussion and voting. The relevant interest must however be declared. It is your responsibility to judge whether an interest is sufficiently relevant to particular proceedings to require a declaration and you are advised to err on the side of caution. You may also seek advice from the Standards Commission.

At the time Board Members' interests are declared, they should be recorded in the Board minutes. The minutes containing information about the interests of Board Members should be drawn to the attention of the Board's internal and external auditors. Any changes should also be declared within 4 weeks of the change occurring and recorded in the Board minutes.

Any remuneration, compensation or allowances payable to a Chairperson or other non-executive Member by virtue of paragraph 4 of Part I, or paragraph 13 of Part II, of Schedule I of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act of 1978 or any amendment thereof, shall not be treated as a pecuniary interest for the purpose of these Standing Orders.

Interests which Require Declaration

Interests which require to be declared may be financial or non-financial. They may or may not be interests which are registerable under this Code. Most of the interests to be declared will be your personal interests but, on occasion, you will have to consider whether the interests of other persons require you to make a declaration.

Shares and Securities

Any financial interest which is registerable must be declared. You may have to declare interests in shares and securities, over and above those registerable under category five of section 4 of this Code. You may, for example, in the course of employment or self-employment, be engaged in providing professional advice to a person whose interests are a component of a matter to be dealt with by a Board.

You have a declarable interest where an interest becomes of direct relevance to a matter before the body on which you serve and you have shares comprised in the share capital of a company or other body and the nominal value of the shares is:

- (i) greater than 1% of the issued share capital of the company or other body; or
- (ii) greater than £25,000.

You are required to declare the name of the company only, not the size or nature of the holding.

Houses, Land and Buildings

Any interest in houses, land and buildings which is registerable under category four of section 4 of this Code must be declared, as well as any similar interests which arise as a result of specific discussions or operations of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

Non-Financial Interests

If you have a registered non-financial interest under category six of section 4 of this Code you have recognised that it is significant. There is therefore a very strong presumption that this interest will be declared where there is any link between a matter which requires your attention as a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and the registered interest. Non-financial interests include membership or holding office in other public bodies, clubs, societies, trade unions and organisations including voluntary organisations. They become declarable if and when members of the public might reasonably think they could influence your actions, speeches or votes in the decisions of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

You may serve on other bodies as a result of express nomination or appointment by the State Hospitals Board for Scotland or otherwise by virtue of being a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. You must always remember the public interest points towards transparency particularly where there is a possible divergence of interest between different public authorities.

You will also have other private and personal interests and may serve, or be associated with, bodies, societies and organisations as a result of your private and personal interests and not because of your role as a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland. In the context of any particular matter you will have to decide whether to declare a non-financial interest. You should declare an interest unless you believe that, in the particular circumstances, the interest is irrelevant or without significance. In reaching a view you should consider whether the interest (whether taking the form of association or the holding of office) would be seen by a member of the public acting reasonably in a different light because it is the interest of a person who is a member as opposed to the interest of an ordinary member of the public.

Interests of Other Persons

The Code requires only your interests to be registered. You may, however, have to consider whether you should declare an interest in regard to the financial interests of your spouse or cohabitee which are known to you. You may have to give similar consideration to any known non-financial interest of a spouse or cohabitee. You have to ask yourself whether a member of the public acting reasonably would regard these interests as effectively the same as your interests in the sense of potential effect on your responsibilities as a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

The interests known to you, both financial and non-financial, of relatives and close friends may have to be declared. This Code does not attempt the task of defining “relative” or “friend”. The key principle is the need for transparency in regard to any interest which might (regardless of the precise description of relationship) be objectively regarded by a member of the public, acting reasonably, as potentially affecting your responsibilities as a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

Making a Declaration

You must consider at the earliest stage possible whether you have an interest to declare in relation to any matter which is to be considered. You should consider whether agendas for meetings raise any issue of declaration of interest. Your declaration of interest must be made as soon as practicable at a meeting where that interest arises. If you do identify the need for a declaration of interest only when a particular matter is being discussed you must declare the interest as soon as you realise it is necessary.

The oral statement of declaration of interest should identify the item or items of business to which it relates. The statement should begin with the words “I declare an interest”. The statement must be sufficiently informative to enable those at the meeting to understand the nature of your interest but need not give a detailed description of the interest.

A “Declaration of Interests Form” is required to be completed on an annual basis.

Effect of Declaration

Declaring a financial interest has the effect of prohibiting any participation in discussion and voting. A declaration of a non-financial interest involves a further exercise of judgement on your part. You must consider the relationship between the interests which have been declared and the particular matter to be considered and relevant individual circumstances surrounding the particular matter.

In the final analysis the conclusive test is whether, in the particular circumstances of the item of business, and knowing all the relevant facts, a member of the public acting reasonably would consider that you might be influenced by the interest in your role as a member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and that it would therefore be wrong to take part in any discussion or decision-making.

If you, in conscience, believe that your continued presence would not fall foul of this objective test, then declaring an interest will not preclude your involvement in discussion or voting. If you are not confident about the application of this objective yardstick, you must play no part in discussion and must leave the meeting room until discussion of the particular item is concluded.

Dispensations

In very limited circumstances dispensations can be granted by the Standards Commission in relation to the existence of financial and non-financial interests which would otherwise prohibit you from taking part and voting on matters coming before your public body and its committees. Applications for dispensations will be considered by the Standards Commission and should be made as soon as possible in order to allow proper consideration of the application in advance of meetings where dispensation is sought. You should not take part in the consideration of the matter in question until the application has been granted.

6 Lobbying and Access to Members of Public Bodies

In order for the State Hospitals Board for Scotland to fulfil its commitment to being open and accessible, it needs to encourage participation by organisations and individuals in the decision-making process. Clearly however, the desire to involve the public and other interest groups in the decision-making process must take account of the need to ensure transparency and probity in the way in which the State Hospitals Board for Scotland conducts its business.

You will need to be able to consider evidence and arguments advanced by a wide range of organisations and individuals in order to perform your duties effectively. Some of these organisations and individuals will make their views known directly to individual members. The rules in this Code set out how you should conduct yourself in your contacts with those who would seek to influence you. They are designed to encourage proper interaction between members of public bodies, those they represent and interest groups.

Rules and Guidance

You must not, in relation to contact with any person or organisation who lobbies, do anything which contravenes this Code of Conduct or any other relevant rule of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland or any statutory provision.

You must not, in relation to contact with any person or organisation who lobbies, act in any way which could bring discredit upon the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

The public must be assured that no person or organisation will gain better access to, or treatment by, you as a result of employing a company or individual to lobby on a fee basis on their behalf. You must not, therefore, offer or accord any preferential access or treatment to those lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients compared with that which you accord any other person or organisation who lobbies or approaches you. Nor should those lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients be given to understand that preferential access or treatment, compared to that accorded to any other person or organisation, might be forthcoming from another member of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

Before taking any action as a result of being lobbied, you should seek to satisfy yourself about the identity of the person or organisation who is lobbying and the motive for lobbying. You may choose to act in response to a person or organisation lobbying on a fee basis on behalf of clients but it is important that you know the basis on which you are being lobbied in order to ensure that any action taken in connection with the lobbyist complies with the standards set out in this Code.

You should not accept any paid work

(a) which would involve you lobbying on behalf of any person or organisation or any clients of a person or organisation.

(b) to provide services as a strategist, adviser or consultant, for example, advising on how to influence the State Hospitals Board for Scotland and its members. This does not prohibit you from being remunerated for activity which may arise because of, or relate to, membership of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland, such as journalism or broadcasting, or involvement in representative or presentational work, such as participation in delegations, conferences or other events.

If you have concerns about the approach or methods used by any person or organisation in their contacts with you, you must seek the guidance of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

The Members Model Code should be read in conjunction with Standing Financial Instructions of the State Hospitals Board for Scotland.

7 Training and Development of Members

The Chairperson of the Board is responsible for ensuring that all executive and non-executive Members make a full contribution to the Board's affairs and must, in consequence, determine the training and development needs of Members and ensure that any gaps in knowledge or experience are resolved.