



SP-UK

SUICIDE PREVENTION UK

Suicide Prevention UK

Conflicts Of Interest

2024

Introduction and Purpose

Conflicts of interest affect charities of all types and sizes. They can lead to decisions that are not in the best interests of the charity and which are invalid or open to challenge. Conflicts of interest can also damage a charity's reputation or public trust and confidence in charities generally. These harmful effects can be prevented when individual trustees can identify conflicts of interest and the trustee body can act to prevent them from affecting their decision-making.

This policy gives guidance to Suicide Prevention UK (SPUK), its trustees, staff and other stakeholders on managing potential conflicts of interest and helps them recognise and deal with conflicts of interest issues, as well as to understand their responsibilities.

Scope

This policy applies to any individuals associated with Suicide Prevention UK, particularly its trustees and staff.

Terminology and Definitions

In general terms, a **conflict of interest** exists when an organisation or an individual has competing interests, which might impair its or their ability to make objective, unbiased decisions.

There are 2 common types of conflict of interest: financial conflicts and loyalty conflicts.

Financial conflicts happen when a trustee, or person or organisation connected to them, could get money or something else of value from a trustee's decision. (They do not include a trustee's expenses – for example, for going to a charity meeting.)

Loyalty conflicts are not about money or other trustee benefits. They happen when, for other reasons, a trustee might not be able to make decisions that are best for the charity. For example, there can be a conflict because the trustee's responsibility (or loyalty) to the other organisation or person could compete with their responsibility to the charity.

(The Charity Commission, November 2020)

Conflicts of Interest – Our Objectives

Our core objectives in potential Conflict of Interest scenarios are:

- To reduce the risk of conflicts of interest occurring so as to protect our charity, staff and those we aim to serve.
- To ensure we have full visibility of any reported conflict of interest and its associated factors.
- To ensure we analyse the factors of any conflict of interest and perform objective reporting.
- To communicate with affected parties immediately and professionally with no bias if a conflict of interest issue is raised.
- To perform any corrective and preventative actions to ensure any conflicts of interest are contained, including recording incidents and changing processes and procedures in the unlikely event a conflict of interest situation occurs.

Responsibilities

All trustees have a legal duty to act only in the best interests of their charity. The Charity Commission expects them to take appropriate steps in line with this guidance to ensure that they can do this.

All trustees are responsible for:

- Reading and abiding by the following Charity Commission guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflicts-of-interest-a-guide-for-charity-trustees-cc29/conflicts-of-interest-a-guide-for-charity-trustees>
- Declaring conflicts of interest which affect them.
- Having strong systems in place so that they are able to identify conflicts of interest at an early stage.
- Make their decisions only in the best interests of the charity.
- Formally recording any conflicts of interest and how they were handled.
- If they prepare accruals accounts, disclosing any trustee benefits in the charity's accounts.

Reporting Conflicts of Interest

All trustees should complete a Register of Interests of trustees on an annual basis, be alert to any other possible conflicts of interest and advise the Chair as soon as they arise.

Should staff or SPUK stakeholders become aware of a potential conflict of interest, they should report it to the trustees. Their names can be found here: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5155330/trustees>

Managing Conflicts of Interest

Having a conflict of interest doesn't always mean a trustee shouldn't be involved in decision-making. However, it's the duty of the Board to make sure conflicts are managed properly so decisions taken by the Board are balanced and not influenced by private interests.

Conflicts of interest is to be a standard agenda item at the beginning of each Board and committee meeting to allow the opportunity for declaration of any actual or potential interest in any of the items on that agenda.

When a trustee declares a conflict of interest, the Board should collectively agree on how to manage this, in line with this policy and Charity Commission guidance.

If the conflict is low risk, and the trustee is able to meaningfully contribute, the Board may choose to note the interest of that trustee formally in the minutes but allow them to participate in the discussion. The trustee may be excluded from any voting that takes place.

If the conflict is high risk, and the trustee is unable to participate without being influenced (or if it might be seen that way by an outside observer), the Board should ask the trustee to step away from the discussion.

Where a conflict regularly prevents a trustee from participating in decision-making, the Board should consider reviewing that trustee's position and making sure they're still able to carry out their role. If they're not able to fully contribute, they may be asked to step down.

Meeting Minutes Guidance

The Commission expects the charity's written records to document any conflicts of interest and how the trustees have dealt with them. The usual way to record the trustees' decisions is in the minutes of their meetings.

Where there is a conflict of interest, the trustees should ensure that the written record of the decision shows:

- the nature of the conflict
- which trustee or trustees were affected
- whether any conflicts of interest were declared in advance
- an outline of the discussion
- whether anyone withdrew from the discussion
- how the trustees took the decision in the best interests of the charity

Recording decisions in this way helps trustees to show that they have acted properly and complied with their duties.

Policy Date: August 2022

Review Date: August 2024

Next Review: April 2025

Dated and Signed by the Chair and Founder of Suicide Prevention UK: