

## Governing Board

# Code of Conduct for Trustees

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## 1. Introduction

Those who serve on the Governing Board are trustees of a UK charity and have responsibilities both under UK company law as directors and under UK charity law. As part of this, each Governing Board Member (“Trustee”) is asked to agree to abide by the Code of Conduct which is set out in this document and to sign the Trustee’s Declaration accordingly. This is to be read in conjunction with the Articles of Association of the Charity.

A copy of the Code of Conduct will be made available at the front of all Governing Board agendas.

## 2. Purpose of the Code

The Code aims to define the standards expected of Cochrane’s Trustees in order to ensure that:

- The organisation is effective, open and accountable;
- The highest standards of integrity and stewardship are achieved; and
- The working relationship with any staff and advisers is productive and supportive.

## 3. Code of Conduct

### 3.1 Selflessness

Trustees have a general duty to act with probity and prudence in the best interest of the charity as a whole. They should not act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family, their friends, or the organisation they come from.

### 3.2 Integrity

The charity’s Trustees should conduct themselves in a manner which does not damage or undermine the reputation of the organisation or its staff. More specifically they:

- Should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their role;
- Must avoid actual impropriety and any appearance of improper behaviour;
- Should adhere to the Board Expenses Policy and avoid accepting gifts and hospitality that might reasonably be thought to influence their judgement, and any gift or hospitality received in any connection to the charity over the value of £50 GBP should be declared to the Board.

### 3.3 Objectivity

In carrying out their role, including making appointments, awarding contracts,

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recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, or transacting other business, the Trustees should ensure that decisions are made solely on merit.

In arriving at decisions in areas where they do not have expertise themselves, the Trustees should consider appropriate professional advice.

### 3.4 Accountability

The Trustees:

- Have a duty to comply with constitutional and legal requirements and to adhere to official organisational policies and best practice in such a way as to preserve confidence in the charity;
- Are accountable to the organisation's members and other stakeholders for their decisions, the effectiveness of the Board, and the performance of the organisation.

### 3.5 Openness

The Trustees should comply with Cochrane's Data Protection Policy and ensure that confidential information and material, including material about individuals, is handled in accordance with due care; so that it remains confidential.

In addition, they should be as open as possible about their decisions and the actions that they take. As far as possible, they should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider interest clearly demands.

### 3.6 Honesty

The Trustees have a duty to avoid any conflict of interest so far as is reasonably practicable and adhere to Cochrane's Conflict of Interest policies. In particular, they must make known any interest in any matter under discussion which:

- Creates either a real danger of bias (that is, the interest affects him/her, or a member of his/her family, or friends, or organisation, more than the generality affected by the decision); or,

- Which might reasonably cause others to think it could influence the decision.
- He/she should declare the nature of the interest and withdraw from the room and not participate in discussion and decision making, unless the remaining Trustees agree otherwise.

### 3.7 Leadership

The Trustees must:

- Promote and support the principles of leadership by example and adhere to Cochrane's Charter of Good Management Practice;
- Attend all meetings regularly (unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so), ensuring they prepare for and contribute appropriately and effectively, and avoid dominating the contributions of others;
- Bring a fair and open-minded view to all discussions of the Board, maintaining a respectful balance between speaking and listening, treating different views with respect, and ensuring that all decisions are made in the charity's best interests;
- Respect the authority of the Co-Chairs of the Board, and the chair of any meeting;
- Having given delegated authority to any of their number or to any staff, be careful - individually and collectively - not to undermine it by word or action.
- Accept and respect the difference in roles between the Board and staff, ensuring that the honorary officers, the Board and staff work effectively and cohesively for the benefit of the organisation, and develop a mutually supportive and loyal relationship;
- Respect the roles of staff, and of management arrangements in the staff team, avoiding any actions that might undermine such arrangements;
- Abide by any equal opportunities, diversity, health and safety, bullying and harassment policies and any other policies agreed by the Board;

- Maintain respectful, collegial and courteous relationships with contacts established in the Board member role;
- When speaking or writing as a Board member, ensure comments reflect current organisational policy even when they might be at variance with personal views;
- When speaking privately (that is, when speaking not as a Board member) adhere to the Spokesperson Policy and make great efforts to uphold the reputation of the charity and those who work in it.

## 4. Breaches of the Code

In cases where there is a concern that a Trustee has breached this Code, the matter will be reviewed by the Co-Chairs, or a Co-Chair and another Trustee, or two Trustees appointed by the Co-Chairs. They will make a recommendation to the Board. (If a concern has been raised about a Co-Chair, the review will be undertaken by the other Co-Chair and another Trustee).

The Board will decide whether to discuss the recommendation in closed session. Any sanctions will be determined by the Board, up to and including requiring the Trustee concerned to resign from the Board. The Trustee will accept the decision of the Board in such cases.

Charities Act 2006 from acting as a charity Trustee.

- I undertake to fulfil my responsibilities and duties as a Trustee of the charity in good faith and in accordance with the law and within the charity's objects, mission and values.
- I do not have any financial or other interests in conflict with those of the charity (either in person or through family or friends or business connections) except those that I have formally notified in a conflict of interest statement.
- I will make known any interest in any matter under discussion which creates either a real danger of bias (that is, the interest affects me, or a member of my family, or friends, or organisation, more than the generality affected by the decision); or which might reasonably cause others to think it could influence the decision, and withdraw from the room and not participate in discussion or decision making, unless the remaining Trustees agree otherwise.
- I will abide by the Code of Conduct for Trustees of the charity.
- In the event of my breaching this Code I am prepared to accept sanction as determined by the Board.

## 5. Trustee's Declaration

I declare that:

- I am over age 18.
- I am not an undischarged bankrupt.
- I have not previously been removed from Trusteeship of a UK or overseas charity by a court or charity commission.
- I am not under a disqualification order under the UK Company Directors' Disqualification Act 1986 or an overseas equivalent.
- I am, in the light of the above, not disqualified by section 72 of the UK Charities Act 1993 as amended by the UK

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_