

Process for declaring interests and dealing with conflicts of interest

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1. Scope

As a matter of good governance, it is important for HQIP to demonstrate probity in the way it conducts its business. An important part of this commitment is the requirement to demonstrate objectivity and integrity as well as the effective stewardship of public funds. The identification and management of any declarations and then potential conflicts of interest is an important part of ensuring the high standards required to protect HQIP's reputation and organisational standing and to assure its Board of Trustees.

This document is written for the HQIP Board, Chair, executive and non-executive directors of the Board, the members of HQIP advisory bodies, the experts who assist advisory bodies, HQIP employees and those organisations that provide HQIP with the data, information and advice relating to commissioned activity and reported outputs / outcomes. This document describes the:

- Circumstances in which people should declare an interest that might conflict, or be perceived to conflict, with their duties and responsibility to HQIP.
- Process and provides guidance on what interests need to be declared, who needs to declare them, when and what actions should be taken to manage declarations and avoid conflicts of interest influencing the conduct of HQIP's business.

This document has taken into account and where possible aligned with other agencies' relevant policy and process documents and legal requirements including:

- The Charities Act
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/4/contents/enacted/data.htm>
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Policy on declaring and managing interests for NICE advisory committees
<https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/Who-we-are/Policies-and-procedures/declaration-of-interests-policy.pdf>
- NHSE Standards of Business Conduct Policy
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/standards-of-business-conduct-policy/>

It is acknowledged that members of the HQIP Board, advisory bodies and employees have a good understanding of healthcare work, including healthcare industries, professional bodies (for example Royal Colleges), professional associations, universities, the NHS, advocacy groups with a primary focus on health or public health, and private healthcare organisations. To avoid public concern that financial or other interests might prejudice the advice provided to HQIP, processes should be transparent and freely available for public scrutiny on the HQIP website. This principle also applies to those whose services are procured to support HQIP deliver its core function as part of HQIP's commitment to secure best value.

Because HQIP places such reliance on the work undertaken by its employees, as well as advisory bodies and external bodies that it commissions to produce work, it is essential that standards are applied to all in declaring and assessing the importance of potential COI.

Having identified a conflict of interest, those responsible for the administration of this process must act in the best interests of the work or business under consideration. This means that they must consider the issue of the conflict of interest so that any potential effect on decision making is eliminated. How they prevent the conflict from affecting decision making will depend on the specific circumstances.

This is achieved by having a formal process that ensures that interests are routinely declared as part of HQIP business activity. The declaration is then considered against the types of interests outlined in this process document and appropriate action is taken and recorded.

All interests should be declared if, in the view of a reasonable person, they are relevant, or could be perceived to be relevant, to the HQIP work in question.

If in doubt, all interests should be declared. If there is uncertainty about whether an interest should be declared, please seek advice from the person who requested your declaration.

2. Applying the process

Who reviews and considers the declarations?

All declarations of interest will be considered by the Chair and Associate Director or in the absence of the Chair, the Operations Director and Associate Director to determine whether a conflict of interest exists, and if so, what action should be taken. This should be done in advance of the meeting, and anyone judged to have a conflict of interest should be notified well in advance of the meeting of the action required.

The HQIP CEO and Chair of the HQIP Board of Trustees may act as final arbiters if there is uncertainty or unresolvable disagreement over the classification and relevant action linked to a declaration of interest.

When should interests be declared?:

- Declared annually for all HQIP employees, Trust Board, Executive & / or Advisory Boards, and contractors (thereafter any NEW DOI should be requested and declared as a standing agenda item at each meeting).
- Declared in advance of the meeting for expert and / or new advisors / members / personnel who will not have submitted an annual return (i.e. people undertaking work on an irregular basis).
- Declared at the meeting. Even though only a short period of time elapses between seeking declarations and reviewing these, the Chair of the meeting should also ask for any new declarations since submission at the meeting. For this reason, the Chair and Associate Director should always have the declaration of interest policy available in the meeting itself to deal with any last-minute conflicts (i.e. agree an action). Hopefully last-minute conflicts would be rare given all should be declared in advance of the meeting.
- All HQIP meetings - DOI should be a standing agenda item at all HQIP meetings.

Table 1 sets out when it is necessary to declare an interest.

Table 1			
Who	On appointment	Annual	DOI at meetings
HQIP Board of Trustees	Yes	Yes	Yes
HQIP employees (including secondees)	Yes	Yes	Yes
HQIP agency workers and contractors on temporary contracts or employed through an agency to work for HQIP	Yes	Yes	Yes
HQIP advisory bodies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Expert advisors	Yes	Not relevant	Yes
Anyone providing advice to HQIP (both in a paid or unpaid capacity)	Yes	Yes or on a one off basis	Yes

Declarations should be considered in light of risk to the programme or activity under consideration and the broader reputational risk to HQIP. Where there is any doubt, this may be best determined by considering how the interest may be perceived by a member of the public.

All those involved in delivering HQIP business should consider carefully if they have an interest in which they are engaged that might unduly influence their judgement and objectivity. Particular care should be taken if the interest declared involves any payment or inducement from the commercial sector or if there is any reputational interest related to positions held in other organisations. Similarly, publications authored or publically expressed opinion on the issue or business under review should be considered.

Types of interest

This process document is intended as a guide to the kinds of interests that should be declared.

Interests can be specific or non-specific and financial or non-financial. Financial interests can be personal (direct) or non-personal (indirect). An interest is considered 'specific' if it is related directly

to the matter, work programme or service under consideration. An interest is 'non-specific' if it does not relate directly to the matter, work programme or service under discussion.

Definitions of financial and non-financial interests are provided in table 2.

Table 2	
FINANCIAL	Anything of monetary value, including payments for services, equity interests, including stocks, stock options or other ownership interests and intellectual property rights, including patents and copyrights and royalties arising from such interests
Personal financial interest	Where there is or appears to be opportunity for personal financial gain or financial gain to a direct family member.
Non personal financial interest	Where there is close association with another person or organisation that either (a) has received finances from a relevant company or organisation, or (b) has financial interest and could benefit from a decision the person is involved in making through their participation in an HQIP group/meeting. This would include instances where there is a payment or other benefit to a department, organisation or charity in which the individual is employed or a Trustee, but does not receive any funds personally.
NON FINANCIAL	
Personal non financial interest	Where there is opinion on the matter, work programme or service under consideration or where personal relationships exist linked to the

	matter
Non-personal non-financial interest	Where there is close association with another person or organisation that has non-financial interest and could benefit from a decision the person is involved in making through their participation in an HQIP group/meeting.

Who should declare

This process applies to anyone providing advice, inspecting, commissioning and / or providing services to HQIP (whether paid or unpaid), or any individuals considered by HQIP to be subject to this policy.

It will be the responsibility of each individual to maintain the accuracy and timeliness of their declaration and to notify the relevant contact in HQIP of any changes. HQIP may ask for further detail if clarification is required.

There is a conflict of interest when an individual’s ability to apply judgement or act in the work of HQIP is, or could be perceived to be, impaired or influenced by one of their interests.

Table 3 sets out the type of declaration and the action required.

Table 3	
Type of interest	Action
FINANCIAL	
Personal financial specific interest	Declare and withdraw from activity and engagement. May respond to enquiries if approved by senior HQIP lead ¹
Personal financial non- specific interest	Declare. Activity and engagement unaffected
Non personal specific financial interest	Declare. The response to declared interests will

¹ This is the Director of Operations or an Associate Director

	depend on a person's role within the group/meeting (for example, chair, advisor, participant) and what is being considered by the group/meeting.
NON FINANCIAL	
Personal specific non financial	<p><u>Non-Procurement Decisions</u></p> <p>Declare. Activity and engagement unaffected unless, exceptionally, the Chair rules otherwise</p>
	<p><u>Procurement Decisions</u></p> <p>Declare and withdraw from activity and engagement. May respond to enquiries if approved by senior HQIP lead ¹ and at Chair's discretion</p>

In relation to the Personal Specific Non-Financial type of interest, actions are separated by whether the activity being undertaken relates to procurement decision making or not. Even non-financial declarations can constitute a conflict of interest for which appropriate action is required. For example, in relation to personal specific non-financial procurement decision an individual may hold an advisory position on a bidder's Board / Steering group but not be remunerated for this. This relationship would constitute a conflict of interest and they would not be able to participate in scoring and evaluating bids.

3.Declaration of interest register

A DOI register will be kept updated and each HQIP work stream has agreed micro-process documents regarding the operationalisation and enactment of the processes outlined in this document. Completed forms are saved on HQIP servers indefinitely for business purposes.

Information about any interests declared under this document will be made available on request to the HQIP CEO.

4. Review Date

This process should be reviewed for update annually but may be reviewed earlier if required.

Next review: June 2024