

Exeter Dispensary Charity (Exeter Dispensary)

Conflicts of interest policy *(This policy applies to trustees and volunteers)*

Why we have a policy

Trustees have a legal obligation to act in the best interests of the Exeter Dispensary, and in accordance with our governing document, and to avoid situations where there may be a potential conflict of interest. Volunteers have similar obligations.

Conflicts of interests may arise where an individual's personal or family interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of Exeter Dispensary. Such conflicts may create problems; they can:

- inhibit free discussion
- result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the charity
- risk the impression that Exeter Dispensary has acted improperly.

The aim of this policy is to protect both Exeter Dispensary and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety.

The declaration of interests

Accordingly, we are asking trustees and volunteers to declare their interests, and any gifts or hospitality offered and received in connection with their role in the charity. A declaration of interests form is provided for this purpose, listing the types of interest you should declare.

These interests include not only your own but if appropriate those of immediate family members, connected persons or other close personal connections. There is a definition in the Companies Act 2006 of "connected persons" and this is included in the form. Please note it includes the director or trustee's spouse, civil partner, any person with whom the director or trustee lives as a partner in an enduring family relationship, a child or stepchild of the director or trustee, a child or stepchild of a director or trustee's partner (if living with the director or trustee and under the age of 18), or the director or trustee's parents).

To be effective, the declaration of interests needs to be updated at least annually, and when any material changes occur.

If you are not sure what to declare, or whether/when your declaration needs to be updated, please err on the side of caution. If you would like to discuss this issue, please contact the Chair or Secretary for confidential guidance.

This register of interests shall be used to record all gifts of a value over £50 and hospitality over £50 received by the trustees and volunteers.

Interests and gifts will be recorded on the charity's register of interests, which will be maintained by the Secretary.

Data protection

The information provided will be processed in accordance with data protection principles as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. Data will be processed only to ensure that trustees and volunteers act in the best interests of the charity. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

What to do if you face a conflict of interest

If you believe you have a perceived or real conflict of interest you should:

- declare the interest at the earliest opportunity
- withdraw from discussions and decisions relating to the conflict.

The Secretary should take special care to ensure that minutes or other documents relating to the item presenting a conflict are appropriately redacted for the person facing the conflict. A balance needs to be made to ensure that the person still receives sufficient information about the activities of the charity generally without disclosing such sensitive information that could place the individual in an untenable position.

If you are user of Exeter Dispensary's services, or the carer of someone who uses those services, you should not be involved in decisions that directly affect the service that you, or the person you care for, receive(s). You should declare your interest at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from any subsequent discussion, unless expressly invited to remain in order to provide information. In this case you may not participate in, or influence, the decision or any vote on the matter. You will not be counted in the quorum for that part of the meeting and must withdraw from the meeting during any vote on the conflicted item.

There are situations where you may participate in discussions from which you could indirectly benefit, for example where the benefits are universal to all users, or where your benefit is minimal. This action will be agreed by the chair and minuted accordingly.

If you fail to declare an interest that is known to the Secretary and/or the chair of the board the Chair or Secretary will declare that interest.

Decisions taken where a trustee or Volunteer has an interest

In the event of the board having to decide upon a question in which a trustee or volunteer has an interest, all decisions will be made by vote, with a simple majority required. A quorum must be present for the discussion and decision; interested parties will not be counted when deciding whether the meeting is quorate.

Interested board members may not vote on matters affecting their own interests

All decisions under a conflict of interest will be recorded by the Secretary and reported in the minutes of the meeting. The report will record

- the nature and extent of the conflict
- an outline of the discussion
- the actions taken to manage the conflict.

Where a trustee benefits from the decision, this will be reported in the annual report and accounts in accordance with the current Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

All payments or benefits in kind to trustees will be reported in the charity's accounts and annual report, with amounts for each trustee listed for the year in question.

Where one of Exeter Dispensary's volunteers is connected to a party involved in the supply of a service or product to the charity, this information will be fully disclosed in the annual report and accounts.

Independent external moderation will be used where conflicts cannot be resolved through the usual procedures.

Managing contracts

If you have a conflict of interest, you must not be involved in managing or monitoring a contract in which you have an interest. Monitoring arrangements for such contracts will include provisions for an independent challenge of bills and invoices, and termination of the contract if the relationship is unsatisfactory.

Signed.....Chair

Dated 19 March 2024

(To be reviewed in March 2025)