



CODE OF ETHICS

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Code of Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

The reputation of any organisation depends on the conduct and efficiency of its entire staff. Each of which has a responsibility to perform our duties within the limits of laid-down procedures and training. Actions outside these limits could have legal implications for the patient and us.

To the public and purchasers, the Trust represents the personal attention which staff gives to their patients and customers. The highest standards of integrity are essential to merit the trust of patients and the respect of other services and the public.

In the Trust, integrity means being trusted to work efficiently without constant supervision and having high personal standards. These include appropriate conduct to patients, appropriate conduct to others, including colleagues and other Trust employees, a sense of responsibility, honesty, self discipline, loyalty and self-presentation.

All staff are public servants and our manners, conduct and actions represent and uphold the good name of the Trust.

To help each one of us maintain these high standards, a Code of Ethics has been written which will underpin the way we view our work and our role. It is designed to give guidance to individuals in their daily work and provide a framework for communication in any situation, which causes concern.

It is important that everyone is fully committed to this Code in order to eliminate any conflict of interest or area of uncertainty, thereby ensuring that we can all work effectively and openly to the benefit of patients and the Trust.

The Quality Systems Manual, Service Orders, Policies, and Procedures, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality, Practice of Openness, etc, currently in use within the Trust will complement the content of this policy. Therefore, all employees should also refer to these documents for more detailed clarification on any ethical issues. Where doubt still exists, please refer to your Line Manager.

Other Procedures, i.e. Complaints, Grievance, and Disciplinary should be used as appropriate.

POLICY STATEMENT

Many of us are in daily contact, directly or indirectly, with members of the public and outside organisations. It is important that we should all reflect the highest standards of integrity and personal conduct in any matter, which involves the Trust.

It is the intention of the Trust that we should develop and maintain professionalism and integrity in all activities and dealings of the Trust, while demonstrating concern and respect for the individual and organisation alike.

The following standards of conduct and procedures have been established to safeguard each member of staff, the patient, the client and the organisation

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUST

The Trust is responsible for ensuring that it has a relevant and up to date Code of Ethics, which is brought to the attention of all its employees and that procedures are put in place to ensure its effectiveness.

In addition, the Trust is responsible for all employees being made aware of the consequences and warnings against corruption, favouritism and rewards in respect of the work carried out by employees of the Trust in the course of their Trust work.

Public sector bodies, which include the NHS, must be impartial, open and honest in the conduct of their business. Their employees should remain beyond suspicion. It is the responsibility of the Trust to ensure that it agrees and monitors proper and lawful principles of business conduct as well as principles of conduct for the individual.

To this end, the Trust is responsible for:

- ❑ the identification and communication of relevant policies, practices and information;
- ❑ taking full account of the needs, pressures, and problems of others, both within the organisation and in their dealings with general public;
- ❑ reviewing the organisation's structures and procedures as to their suitability for achieving effective communication with all employees;
- ❑ ensuring that each member of the Trust is aware of their responsibilities, areas of authority and accountability in their dealings with each other;
- ❑ awareness of the effects of the media/press and establishing a good working relationship to ensure that the Trust is always presented correctly, as a professional, caring, organisation.
- ❑ responding positively to requests from the Public for information.
- ❑ registering Declarations of Interest.

The trust has a responsibility, under the Patients Charter, to ensure that the religious, spiritual and cultural beliefs of patients and employees are respected. It must endeavour to provide for these needs where possible, consulting local community and religious organisations if necessary. All employees will receive advice and guidance on these issues.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL

It is the responsibility of each person to ensure that you are not placed in a situation which risks, or appears to risk, conflict between your private interests and your Trust duties. This is primary responsibility applies to each person whether you commit Trust resources directly or indirectly.

As Trust staff, you are expected to:

- ensure that the interest of patient or client remains paramount at all times;
- be impartial and honest in the conduct of your official business;
- use public funds entrusted to you to the best advantage of the Trust, always ensuring true value for money;
- declare all cases where a close relative or associate, has a controlling and/or significant financial interest in a business (including a private company, public sector organisation, other NHS employer and any other health care and/or voluntary organisation), or in any other activity or pursuit, which may compete for any contract to supply either goods or services to the employing authority.
- declare any employment outside of the Ambulance Service.

As Trust staff you are expected NOT to:

- abuse your official position for personal gain or to benefit your family or friends;
- seek to advantage or further private business or other interests in the course of your official duties;
- engage in outside employment which may conflict with your Trust work or be detrimental to it;
- seek or accept preferential rates or benefits in kind for private transactions carried out with companies which you have had, or may have official dealings on behalf of the Trust (this does not apply to concessionary agreements negotiated with companies by the Trust, or by recognised employee interests on behalf of all employees);
- accept gifts offered by contractors or other, e.g., at Christmas time. Gifts that may arrive are to be declared in accordance with Standing Financial Instructions.
- accept hospitality or entertainment of a nature that the Trust would not normally be likely to offer in return.

Under the Prevention of Corruption Acts, 1906 and 1916, it is an offence for any member of staff to:

- ❑ accept any inducement, reward, gift, money or consideration for doing, or refraining from doing anything, in his or her official capacity, or corruptly showing favour or disfavour in the handling of contracts

Offences under these Acts are liable to prosecution and may also lead to a loss of your employment rights and superannuation rights.

As Trust employees you have an obligation to safeguard all confidential information which you have access and must ensure that it is not divulged to any unauthorised person or persons, including members of public, patients, or the media/press.

As Trust staff you must not divulge to any unauthorised person:

- ❑ information about individual patients or clients, which is under all circumstances confidential;
- ❑ information relating to individual staff records, details of contract prices and terms and to the Service in general;
- ❑ internal information of a “commercial-in-confidence” nature, where its disclosure would prejudice the principle of a purchasing system based on fair competition, whether private competitors or other NHS/Trust providers are concerned;
- ❑ information given in the Quality Systems Manual, Service Orders or circulars which are confidential and restricted information.
- ❑ Service Orders, circulars etc. without the written expressed permission of the Chief Executive.

Breaches of confidence will result in disciplinary action.

Each of should also be aware that, regardless of any disciplinary action taken, a breach of confidence could also result in a civil action for damages.

All Trust staff have a right and duty to raise with their employer any matters of concern they may have about Trust issues concerned with the delivery of care or services to a patient or client. A confidential “Hot Line” telephone number (Mailbox 0999) is available to Staff for this purpose.

Every Trust Manager has a duty to ensure that Trust staff are easily able to express their concerns through all levels of management and that staff concerns are dealt with thoroughly and fairly. Managers should take concerns seriously, consider them fully and sympathetically, and, where appropriate, seek advice from Senior Management, whilst recognising that raising a concern can be a difficult experience for some staff.

TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS

Fair and open competition between prospective contractors or suppliers for Trust/NHS contracts is a requirement of NHS Standing Orders and of EC Directives on Public Purchasing for Works and Supplies. This means that:

- ❑ no private, public or voluntary organisation or company may be given any advantage over its competitors. This applies to all potential competitors, whether or not there has been a previous relationship or contract;
- ❑ each new contract should be awarded solely on merit;
- ❑ no special favour should be shown to current/former employees, or their close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them. Care must be taken to ensure that the selection process is impartial and that employees who are known to have an interest play no part in the selection;
- ❑ any contractor, supplier or others seeking favoured treatment in consideration of any benefit or hospitality should be reported to the Director of Finance & Business Development.

All advertising should take place through controlled and approved procedures in order to protect the Trust's current and future business interests and its' standard of integrity, i.e.

- ❑ recruitment advertising will take account of employment legislation and should promote the Trust's positive images as an equal opportunities employer;
- ❑ business advertising will only be undertaken after due consideration. Any advertising of itself should be honest and in line with public expectation and patient care;
- ❑ business advertising of a third party or its product should be undertaken where the business complements the Trust's service and would be acceptable to patients, clients and the public.
- ❑ organisations using our name to raise advertising for their own purpose must be referred to the Ethics Committee prior to any agreements being reached.

Any forms of sponsorship offered to the Trust or its staff will only be accepted where considered ethical or relevant to the benefit of the Trust and the communities it serves and provided that acceptance will not compromise purchasing decisions.

All employees of the Trust must declare offers of sponsorship and seek permission from their manager in advance of acceptance or refusal.

Fund raising of a direct or indirect nature should never be detrimental to the main purpose of the Trust's services or its principles. In all cases, accurate records must be kept of funds raised and expenses incurred and on no account should employees be made to feel that they have to participate in such events.

Internal fund raising projects for the Trust or for other charitable organisations include:

- ❑ all projects, activities (such as social events), raffles etc, either by station or the Trust as a whole.

Approval must be sought and obtained by the appropriate manager, who will clear it with senior management if necessary.

External fund raising projects for the Trust or for the supply of services include:

- ❑ fund raising by others outside the Trust, either individuals or a group;
- ❑ fund raising by employees outside the Trust;
- ❑ advertising with a portion allocated to ambulance funds;
- ❑ demonstrations and displays with a collection taken.

Approval must be sought and obtained through the Public Relations Manager, who will clear it with Senior Management, the Charitable Funds Committee or the Board, whichever is appropriate.

A clear definition must be made between charitable events and commercial enterprise as, in both cases; money is being collected for the use of the Trust and its services.