

Managing Conflicts of Interest at Meetings

1. A “conflict of interest” is defined as a “set of circumstances by which a reasonable person would consider that an individual’s ability to apply judgement or act, in the context of delivering commissioning, or assuring taxpayer funded health and care services is, or could be, impaired or influenced by another interest they hold”.
2. An individual does not need to exploit their position or obtain an actual benefit, financial or otherwise, for a conflict of interest to occur. In fact, a perception of wrongdoing, impaired judgement, or undue influence can be as detrimental as any of them actually occurring. It is important to manage these perceived conflicts in order to maintain public trust.
3. Conflicts of interest include:
 - Financial interests: where an individual may get direct financial benefits from the consequences of a commissioning decision.
 - Non-financial professional interests: where an individual may obtain a non-financial professional benefit from the consequences of a commissioning decision, such as increasing their reputation or status or promoting their professional career.
 - Non-financial personal interests: where an individual may benefit personally in ways which are not directly linked to their professional career and do not give rise to a direct financial benefit.
 - Indirect interests: where an individual has a close association with an individual who has a financial interest, a non-financial professional interest or a non-financial personal interest in a commissioning decision.

The above categories are not exhaustive and each situation must be considered on a case by case basis.

4. In advance of any meeting of the Committee, consideration will be given as to whether conflicts of interest are likely to arise in relation to any agenda item and how they should be managed. This may include steps to be taken prior to the meeting, such as ensuring that supporting papers for a particular agenda item are not sent to conflicted individuals.
5. At the beginning of each formal meeting, Committee members and co-opted advisors will be required to declare any interests that relate specifically to a particular issue under consideration. If the existence of an interest becomes apparent during a meeting, then this must be declared at the point at which it arises. Any such declaration will be formally recorded in the minutes for the meeting.

6. The Chair of the Committee (or Deputy Chair in their absence, or where the Chair of the Committee is conflicted) will determine how declared interests should be managed, which is likely to involve one the following actions:
- Requiring the individual to withdraw from the meeting for that part of the discussion if the conflict could be seen as detrimental to the Committee's decision-making arrangements.
 - Allowing the individual to participate in the discussion, but not the decision-making process.
 - Allowing full participation in discussion and the decision-making process, as the potential conflict is not perceived to be material or detrimental to the Committee's decision-making arrangements.