

UK Council on Deafness

Code of Conduct and Ethical Principles

1. Introduction

When we say “we” “our” or “us” we are referring to all UKCoD trustees/SIG members, staff and our deaf organisational members and individuals as part of our network.

Glossary:

Beneficiaries are intended as those who benefit from the charity’s work, as defined by the charity’s purpose.

Staff include all individuals employed by charities and those working through contractors and third-party agencies.

A volunteer is anyone who spends time, unpaid, doing something that furthers the charity’s purpose.

UKCoD’s Ethical Principles set standards that are often higher than those required by law. However, the Principles cannot override the legal obligations of charity trustees and those who work in charities. Reference to the principles to inform the development and review of policies and procedures will support UKCoD in recognising and resolving ethical issues and achieving best practice.

The Charity Ethical Principles are intended as complementary to existing sector codes such as the Charity Governance Code.

All stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on the principles in their work and decision-making as a benchmark of good practice, and by reflecting them in our work we will be likely to maximise the difference it makes and champion values which are: Beneficiaries First, Integrity, Openness and the Right to be Safe which are reflected in the Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding policy. The principles should read in conjunction with the Code, other policies and other governing documents.

The Code of Conduct is based on UKCoD’s purpose and a core set of shared values and sets out a common framework around how we are expected to behave and to do the right thing. Knowing and understanding the Code is a fundamental part of who we are as trustees/SIG members and employees, and what we stand for which is for the wellbeing of deaf people in the UK.

We depend on each other to be mindful of our ethical responsibilities. Our Code of Conduct reflects the significant changes in our world, the very nature of our work as trusted professionals to understand how to continue to behave ethically in the face of changes. The Code is one of many tools we have as professionals to help guide our behaviour, and is intended to be a framework, not a rulebook. It cannot, and does not, cover every situation that might be encountered but rather seeks to embed our values into our day-to-day behaviours and ethical decision making. We are all an important part of this effort. Each of us has a part to play in living and upholding the behaviours outlined in this Code. We rely on each other to understand and adhere to all professional behaviours and standards, and apply them consistently. We collaborate on every level, and we help each other build skills in doing the right thing.

- https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/ethics/Charity-Ethical-Principles.pdf

If we come across a situation that is inconsistent with our Code, we speak up. We value the courage it takes to raise concerns. Investigations into allegations of misconduct are handled discretely and with sensitivity and we do not tolerate retaliation. When in doubt or facing a dilemma, we ask for help. There are local and network resources available to help us to maintain and foster UKCoD's robust ethical culture.

The Code is not meant to provide specific guidance on every situation where we might need to answer the question, "What is the right thing to do?" Instead, it is principle-based guidance that helps us think about difficult questions, promotes consultation, and encourages us to speak up if we have concerns.

This Code describes a common set of expectations for our conduct, a key element of which is that we abide by applicable laws and regulations. UKCoD's policies and supplemental guidance complement the principles embodied in this Code.

2. Spirit of cooperation

When working with our volunteer members and staff to build trust and solve important problems, we:

Act with Integrity

- Speak up for what is right, especially when it feels difficult;
- Expect and deliver the highest quality outcomes;
- Make decisions and act as if our personal reputations were at stake.

Make a difference

- Stay informed and ask questions about the future of the world we live in to support our members and the deaf communities we all work for;
- Create impact with our colleagues, our clients and society through our actions;
- Respond with agility to the ever-changing environment in which we operate.

Care

- Make the effort to understand every individual and what matters to them;
- Recognise the value that each person contributes;
- Support others to grow and work in the way that brings out their best.

Work together

- Collaborate and share relationships, ideas and knowledge beyond boundaries;

- Seek and integrate a diverse range of perspectives, people and ideas;
- Give and ask for feedback to improve ourselves and others.

Reimagine the possible

- Dare to challenge the status quo and try new things;
- Innovate, test and learn from failure;
- Have an open mind to the possibilities in every idea.

Diversity

There is strength and value in diversity of thought and experience. Diversity of perspectives is critical to innovation. We listen to each other, we succeed when we collaborate, engage in dialogue, and respectfully debate issues. Pulling together our ideas and collective knowledge is fundamental to our ability to innovate and ultimately to our success.

Trust is key to this collaboration, as it helps us to more effectively work with each other and serve our members. Trust begins with each of us treating each other with care, courtesy, dignity, fairness, and respect.

We provide a safe working environment free of abusive, violent, threatening, underhand or other disruptive behaviour. We do not tolerate harassment, discrimination, bullying, or disrespectful behaviour as these behaviours undermine the integrity of our relationships. We respect and encourage open dialogue, to create a climate for frank and honest discussions.

We value the diversity of our workforce and our volunteers on the Board and in SIGs. We promote a culture that cares about and fosters innovation, professional growth, career development, workplace flexibility and work/life balance. We encourage continual learning being open-minded and creating opportunities to support development to innovate and solve important problems.

3. Political activity

We participate in the dialogue to help shape legislation and regulation in a manner that upholds the public interest and our purpose for the wellbeing of deaf people. We work with government and professional authorities in a respectful and forthright manner. Contacts on behalf of UKCoD with government and professional authorities are by trustees' combined agreement as to designated volunteers and staff who liaise with outside networks and stakeholders.

We respond promptly to governmental and professional authorities' requests for information, as required by applicable law and professional obligations. We encourage and support involvement in community activities. We do not represent our personal political affiliations or views as those of UKCoD's, and we comply with applicable reporting requirements.

We aim to gain the trust of our stakeholders by showing care, openness and honesty and focusing relentlessly on ethics and quality. Since we are accountable for decisions and actions to members and other stakeholders and must be open to scrutiny.

We help solve important social problems in our deaf communities by contributing our professional expertise and collaborating with other organisations to achieve maximum results.

We respect the limits of our planet and adopt a preventative approach to minimise the environmental impacts of our charity.

4. Speak up

Speaking up is an essential first step to action. For any allegation, complaint, or concern, we investigate and address the situation in an appropriate way using our policies as guides to complying with legislation.

UKCoD is committed to caring for and protecting our staff and volunteers against retaliation. Anybody who violates the Code of Conduct or policies and procedures will be held accountable. Those of us in the reporting line are responsible for addressing issues that are brought to our attention. If anyone directs or approves violations, or has knowledge of them and does not promptly move to correct them, he or she will be held accountable. We are all responsible for cooperating during the investigation process, and for answering questions truthfully, accurately, completely, and with integrity. Failure to cooperate may result in disciplinary measures. We are committed to the spirit of cooperation among our networks.

All involved in UKCoD's governance should refer to the Governance Code (August 2012) currently under revision. Why these qualities matter should be self-evident.

<https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/front-page>

5. Transparency

Members of the Board/ SIG members have a general duty to act in the best interest of the whole organisation, including subscribing members and other stakeholders. We should not gain financially or from other material benefits for ourselves, families, friends, or any organisation in which we are involved.

We should be as open as possible about decisions and action taken and be able to give reasons for them. At the same time we should ensure that confidential material is handled with due care and restrict information only when the wider interest demands.

6. Conflict of Interest

As trustees we have a legal duty to act only in the best interests of our charity. The Charity Commission expects us to take appropriate steps in line with its guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflicts-of-interest-a-guide-for-charity-trustees-cc29/conflicts-of-interest-a-guide-for-charity-trustees>

There are two common types of conflict of interest:

Financial conflicts

These conflicts happen when a trustee/SIG member, or person or organisation connected to them, could get money or something else of value from a decision. We should also not place ourselves under any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence in the performance of our duty: we should avoid accepting gifts and hospitality that might reasonably be thought to influence judgement. They do not include expenses.

Loyalty conflicts

They happen when, for other reasons, a trustee/SIG member might not be able to make decisions that are best for the charity, e.g. if the charity's decision involves a person or organisation linked to a volunteer. The organisation appointed us but the trustee's responsibility (or loyalty) to the other organisation or person could compete with our responsibility to the charity.

For more detailed information refer to UKCoD's Conflict of Interest policy.

**Agreed by the UKCoD Board on the Board meeting held on 24.02.2021;
Approved and minuted.**