



HOPE For Paediatric Epilepsy
L O N D O N

[Document title]



HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London

Trustee Code of Conduct

Purpose

This code of conduct provides trustees with guidelines as to the standards and behaviours that HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London expects from the board of trustees (individually and collectively) when acting on behalf of, or representing, the charity.

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with:

- the Charity Commission's Guidance on 'The Essential Trustee' CC3 booklet
- any statement of expectations issued by the charity
- the charity's governing document
- the charity's policy and procedures covering conflicts of interest, anti-money laundering and anti-bribery, the declaration, acceptance and refusal of gifts and hospitality
- the charity's mission, vision and values.

Why we have a code of conduct

The board of HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London has ultimate responsibility for all actions carried out by the trustees, advisors and volunteers throughout the charity's activities. This responsibility includes the stewardship of charitable resources and the provision of the services it offers.

The board of trustees is therefore determined to ensure the organisation inspires confidence and trust amongst its beneficiaries, members, supporters, and funders by demonstrating integrity and avoiding any potential or real situations of undue bias or influence in the decision-making of the charity and in dealings with volunteers.

The governing document of HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London makes provision for the election of trustees, practice and procedure of trustee decision-making, and ultimately the removal of trustees. This code of conduct complements the charity's governing document.

Appointment and tenure



The board of trustees comprises elected individuals. There is no term of office set for individual trustees, but re-election occurs annually at the charity's AGM barring objections if the trustee wishes to continue in their role. A trustee must not be disqualified from acting as such in order to stand for election or appointment.

The board of trustees should represent the interests of all the charity's beneficiaries and members. The trustee owes his/her duty to the charity and not to any individual, organisation or constituency that appointed them.

Induction and training

In order for trustees to be effective in performing their legal duties and responsibilities, it is essential that individual trustees, and the board as a whole, are aware of the nature of the work of the charity and its operating environment including the roles of volunteers.

In order to prepare and support trustees, HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London will provide a comprehensive welcome pack including information about the charity and information from the Charity Commission. Individual trustees are invited to speak to the chairman about any further information or training needs.

Trustees will be kept up to date with any updates from the Charity Commission or other related regulatory bodies.

Role and function of trustees

The charity will provide trustees with guidance outlining their specific role and responsibilities. In fulfilling their general roles and responsibilities individual trustees must:

- adhere to the charity's rules and policies, including the governing document, any standing orders and bye-laws, and support its charitable objects
- act in the best interests of the charity at all times, taking professional advice where necessary
- contribute to the work of the board of trustees in order for it to fulfil its role and functions as defined in the governing document and legislation
- recognise that their role is a collective one and that any task or function delegated to an individual trustee or trustee committee does not relieve the other trustees of the responsibility for that task or function
- support and assist the chair, where applicable.

Conflicts of interest

The board of trustees has a legal obligation to act in the best interests of HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London, and in accordance with the charity's governing document, and to avoid situations where there may be a potential, real or perceived, conflict of interest.



Trustees should not exert any influence to garner any preferential treatment for themselves or their family, or other connected persons or organisations (refer to conflict of interest policy). Trustees should be aware of, and act in accordance with, the charity's policy and procedures on identifying and managing conflicts of interest.

Upon appointment, and at least annually, trustees are required to complete a declaration of interest form. This document must be updated when a material change occurs. A register of interests will be maintained by the charity secretary, and will be made available to the public, in line with the charity's conflicts of interest policy.

Failure by a trustee to declare an interest, real or perceived, could result in the complaints process being instigated by the charity. Depending on the circumstances and severity of the conflict, this may result in the trustee being removed from office.

Standards of conduct

Trustees are required to adhere to the highest standards of conduct in the performance of their duties. This code of conduct respects and endorses the seven principles of public life promulgated by the Nolan Committee and all trustees are expected to perform their duties in accordance with them. The seven principles are:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness
- honesty
- leadership.

In addition, the charity requires trustees to perform their duties in accordance with the vision, mission and values of the organisation. Trustees are encouraged to:

- value fellow trustees, even when there are differences in opinion
- be mindful of conduct which could be deemed to be unfair or discriminatory
- conduct themselves in a manner which reflects positively on the charity when attending external meetings or any other events.

All trustees are expected to understand, agree and promote the charity's equal opportunities policy in every area of their work. The board's activities should not prejudice any part of the community on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, nationality, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. Any actual or perceived prejudicial action, views or comments shall be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaints procedure and could result in the trustee being removed from office.



Stakeholder engagement

Trustees are accountable to a range of interested parties for their actions and as such decision-making and governance issues should be as transparent as possible, except for when confidentiality is required or there is likely to be a breach of the charity's data protection policy.

Trustees are accountable to those in connection to the charity. In order to demonstrate their accountability to the charity's wider community and the Charity Commission, trustees are encouraged to attend events and provide opportunities to meet, talk and listen to those involved if possible, in order to best understand their views and concerns.

Trustees should be fully aware of their representative functions and should not become personally involved in those operational matters that should rightly be handled by another designated person as detailed in the charity's policy. Trustees are advised to act as a conduit for forwarding public comments and concerns where appropriate, when presented with a complaint from a concerned party.

Visiting the charity

In fulfilling their core duties and responsibilities, trustees can join trustee meetings remotely. Trustees are encouraged to come to support sessions to fully understand how HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London operates.

Personal visits to the charity, or volunteer activity or participation in fundraising events that is not related to the trustee role is not covered by this procedure but trustees must abide by the rules of the event.

Expenses

The position of trustee is unremunerated, though reasonable out-of-pocket expenses are paid and there is reimbursement for costs incurred on behalf of the charity such as postage for example.

Further information about expenses can be gained by speaking directly to the chair.

Trustees must not receive any financial or non-financial benefit that is not explicitly authorised by the governing document or the Charity Commission.



Meetings

Trustees have a responsibility to attend meetings of the board. When this is not possible they should submit an apology to the chair or charity secretary in advance of the meeting. Trustees are expected to attend for the duration of each meeting where possible.

If a trustee wants to submit an item for inclusion in the board's agenda, they should forward their request to the charity secretary in good time before the meeting. Late items of an urgent nature may be added to the list of any other business, at the discretion of the chair, in discussion with the charity secretary.

Meetings of the board shall be held in private, and in accordance with HOPE for Paediatric Epilepsy: London meeting etiquette. The board of trustees may decide to invite other individuals to all or part of a meeting to discuss a particular item. All due consideration will be given to ensure that any confidential or sensitive items remain as such. Such invitations will be agreed by the chairman and facilitated by the charity secretary.

Mediation

A mediation process is available to the board, and individual trustees, for use when there has been a breakdown of communication or trust between the trustees and charity management. Further information should be requested from the chairman or charity secretary.

Before the mediation process is instigated, the chair, vice chair and complainant should have met in an attempt to resolve the matter.

Confidentiality

All trustees are required to respect the confidentiality of the information they are exposed to as a result of their membership of the board of trustees. All trustees, when dealing with difficult and confidential issues, are required to act with discretion and care in the performance of their role.

Trustees should only speak to the media with the express permission of the chair. In situations concerning potential whistleblowing matters, trustees are encouraged to adhere to the charity's whistleblowing policy to resolve the matter, in the first instance.

Any allegations of breaches of confidentiality will be investigated under the complaints policy and could result in the removal of any trustee involved in such a breach, in accordance with the governing document.



Ceasing to be a trustee

Trustees must continue to comply with the qualifications required to hold a trustee position throughout their period of tenure, as defined in the trustee eligibility declaration. Any changes that would render the trustee ineligible to serve must be forwarded to the charity secretary.

Trustees may resign their office by writing to the chair. Depending on the reasons and circumstances of the resignation, the chairman may decide to formally record those particulars in the minutes of the next board meeting.

The confidentiality requirements referred to above continue to apply after the trustee leaves office.

Code non-compliance

In addition to this code of conduct, a complaints policy operates to cover allegations made against trustees that appear to breach the spirit of the code or specific conditions of service. Ideally any penalties for non-compliance would never need to be applied.

Non-compliance with the code of conduct may result in action being taken as follows:

- where misconduct takes place, the chair may be authorised to take such action as may be immediately required, including the exclusion of the person concerned from a meeting
- where such misconduct is alleged, it shall be open to the board of trustees to decide, by simple majority of those in attendance, to lay a formal charge of misconduct. In such instances it will be the responsibility of the board to:
 - inform the trustee in writing of the nature of the allegation of the breach, detailing the specific action or behaviour considered to be detrimental to the charity, and inviting and considering their response within a defined timescale
 - inviting the trustee to address the board in person if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily through correspondence
 - deciding, by simple majority of those present and voting, whether to uphold the charge of the breach and conduct detrimental to the charity
 - impose such sanctions as shall be deemed appropriate. Sanctions will range from the issuing of a written warning as to the trustee's future conduct and consequences, and the removal of the trustee from office
- where the board cannot agree on a course of action in a situation that is deemed detrimental to the charity, the charity has the power to remove the trustee.



Trustee Code of Conduct

Registered Charity Number: 1192441

Further information regarding any aspects of this code of conduct can be requested from the charity secretary.

Adapted from The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators Guidance Note, Specimen code of Conduct for Charity Trustees by Louise Miller (Trustee) – November 2022
Checked and reviewed by Dr Nadine Gurr (Chair) – November 2022
Next review date: November 2023