

Section 3 - Procedures

4 minutes read

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These procedures are based on a four-stage process for identifying and managing conflicts of interest.

Stage 1: Convening the Core Group / SCMG

- DSAs are responsible for convening Core Groups / SCMGs. At this point they should be alert to any conflicts of interest in the membership and screen appropriately. DSAs should discuss any identified conflicts with the Chair so that this is addressed immediately.
- If the conflict of interest involves the Chair, this should be treated differently from that of the other members because the latter has more power and authority to affect proceedings. This means that any perceived or actual conflict of the Chair should be addressed, and the decisions about their position in relation to that Core Group / SCMG documented.
- Where the Chair is an Archdeacon and the respondent is a member of clergy that they know in a personal capacity, careful consideration should be given to whether this may lead to an actual or perceived conflict of interest as outlined in Part 1 above. If this occurs, they must be replaced by a different Archdeacon or suitable person.
- Where a DSA is conflicted (whether perceived or actual) they should report this to their line manager immediately.
- Where the Chair identifies a potential, actual, or perceived conflict but they believe that this is manageable, they should share this with the Core Group / SCMG, and it should also be noted in the minutes.

Stage 2: Self-declaration by members

- In connection with an actual or potential conflict of interest, all Church Officers have a responsibility to declare this to the Chair when they are appointed to a Core Group / SCMG.
- In some cases, Church Officers may not know that they are conflicted until the first meeting. They should declare this as soon as they become aware. They should declare all the facts, the nature of the conflict and how it arises to the Chair and/or the DSA.

Stage 3: Conflict of interest and agendas of Core Groups / SCMGs

- A self-declaration of conflict of interest should be on the agenda of every Core Group / SCMG meeting. The Chair should ask members the questions in paragraph 10 below.

Does any member have:

- A familial relationship with the respondent or the person reporting abuse?
- Any close social relationships to the respondent or the person reporting abuse (this also includes godparentships)?
- A current and/or previous professional connection with the respondent or the victim or survivor (this also includes voluntary work)?
- Any financial connections with the respondent or the person reporting abuse? This may also include regular gifts, hospitality or other forms of goodwill, 'acts of kindness' etc?
- Any association with the respondent or the person reporting abuse arising from membership of another group outside the Church e.g. social club, sports club etc.
- Any other connection with the respondent or the person reporting abuse that the Core Group / SCMG should be made aware of.

Stage 4: Managing conflicts of interest

When a conflict of interest is declared or observed, the Chair should ensure that it is recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Potential outcomes of declarations or observations of conflicts of interest

The Chair should then decide whether a) there is a perceived, potential or actual conflict and, if so b) whether it is significant enough to impact on the member's ability to be impartial, objective and fair; and whether they should remain on the Core Group / SCMG.

The options for the Chair to resolve the situation are:

- Member recuses him/herself - the Chair can agree or disagree with the member who is conflicted that they should be recused from the work of the Core Group / SCMG.
- The Chair can remove a member of the Core Group / SCMG who they believe is conflicted (perceived or actual).
- The Chair can ask the conflicted member to continue in a limited role on the Core Group / SCMG if there is a compelling justification in terms of the management of risk. The rationale for such a decision must be documented.
- Where a Core Group / SCMG member will be required to give evidence in court about the issues being addressed, the DSA should get legal advice and check with the police whether their membership of the Core Group / SCMG will compromise the ongoing investigation.

The decision of the Chair, including their reasons for reaching that outcome, should be documented and including in the minutes of the Core Group / SCMG.

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