

# CHARITY CODE OF ETHICS

## Introduction

---

This code aims to support charities, their governing bodies, and those who work and volunteer in and with them in recognising and resolving ethical issues and conflicts. It sets out the key ethical principles and the supporting actions that charities should take to ensure an ethical approach to their work.

It is intended as an enabling document that draws together and underpins what many charities do already, and what all charities aspire to do.

These principles present a framework for carrying out charitable purposes ethically, regardless of the charity's size, type or area of operation. All charities should proactively champion ethical behaviour and reflect their charitable ethos in every activity they undertake, going beyond legal and regulatory requirements.

This is a key responsibility for those in governance and leadership roles. Governing bodies, staff and volunteers should actively consider the code in order to integrate its principles in their policies and procedures, and consequently in their day-to-day work.

At all stages, charities should:

- ensure the safety of any individual who engages with the charity.
- respect every individual's dignity, privacy and appropriate confidentiality.
- increase and improve diversity in the widest sense.
- support and promote inclusion.

Charities should decide how to develop appropriate policies and procedures for which this code can be used as a reference. They need to decide where responsibility for this should be placed, and how ongoing monitoring is best carried out.

## Definitions and scope

---

Although codes of ethics generally focus on the behaviour of individuals, this code is formulated for an organisational context.

The code consists of statements of overarching principles and standards to guide decision making, good judgement and conduct. It does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how to act in all situations.

Although the code is voluntary, all charities are encouraged to meet the principles of the code, or to explain why they have not done so.

The code is complementary to existing sector codes such as the [Charity Governance Code](#), as well as individual charities' codes or policies. It is not intended to replace their own definitions of values and codes of conduct.

The code is aimed at enabling all charities, no matter their size or type of activity, to be a safe place for anyone who comes into contact with them.

In this document:

- 'beneficiaries' means those who benefit from the charity's work, as defined by the charity's purpose.
- 'staff' includes all those 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.
- A 'charity's purpose' is the reason the charity has been set up, as defined in the charity's article of association.

## The principles

---

Charities and those who work in and with them agree to uphold the following principles throughout their work:

- Beneficiaries first
- Integrity
- Openness
- Right to be safe

By incorporating these principles into strategies, policies and procedures, charities would not only be upholding their fundamental values, but also setting the stage for long term success.

## **Beneficiaries first**

Charities exist to deliver their objectives for the public benefit. The interests of the people and causes they work for should be at the heart of everything they do, whether they are delivering a service or campaigning for change.

This should not lead to an inward-looking approach; sometimes charities will need to balance potentially conflicting interests, for example between beneficiaries and the wider public, including donors.

### **Upholding the principle**

This means charities should:

- be clear who or what their beneficiaries are and state this clearly, ensuring inclusion.
- commit to doing the right thing by individual beneficiaries and the charity's purpose, regardless of whether this might initially have a negative impact on the reputation or operation of the charity or its leadership.
- ensure that the views and experiences of beneficiaries are actively listened to and taken account of as part of how the charity operates, facilitating engagement and communication.
- ensure that all relevant policies and procedures are drawn up with the interests of beneficiaries in mind.

## **Integrity**

Charities and those who volunteer, work in and with them should uphold the highest levels of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times.

### **Upholding the principle**

This means charities should:

- treat everyone with honesty and respect, building open relationships with everyone who comes into contact with the charity, respecting and valuing individual difference.
- ensure they work in a way that reflects their charity's values.
- ensure appropriate systems are in place so that a level of probity exists to guarantee that all decisions are robust, defensible and free from conflict of interest.

- ensure their resources are managed responsibly and their funds are properly protected, applied and accounted for, including policies and procedures to combat the risk of bribery, fraud, and corruption.
- consider their responsibility to ensure their activities do not cause harm to the environment, and contribute to more sustainable practices.

## Openness

Charities should create a culture and space where everyone who comes into contact with the charity, as well as the wider public, can see and understand how they work, how they deal with problems when they arise and how they address complaints in addition to their legal responsibilities.

### Upholding the principle

This means charities should:

- operate a presumption of openness and appropriate transparency; by default, charities should be willing to share information about how they work, ensuring it is accessible to all.
- publish, or, for the very smallest charities, at least make available on request:
  - Annual reports
  - Their approach to safeguarding, bullying and harassment
  - Their complaints procedure
- establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for all their work, both internally and externally where applicable.
- report relevant incidents and share appropriate information with the responsible regulatory bodies, law enforcement and other statutory authorities where required.

## Right to be safe

Every person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with a charity should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment.

All charities have a responsibility to endorse and promote a culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with the charity including through social media.

Charities should also be places where people's wellbeing and mental health are valued and promoted, so that anyone working in the charity or coming into contact with the charity is encouraged to value and invest in their own health and wellbeing at all times.

### **Upholding the principle**

This means charities should:

- ensure that anyone working for, representing or in any way coming into contact with the charity understands the expectations placed upon them.
- stand against and have a clear approach to prevent abuse of trust and power including bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination or victimisation in all their activities, including online activities, and promote a culture that supports the reporting and resolution of allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse of any kind or inappropriate behaviour.
- have training that is relevant and required in expectations of conduct for all staff, volunteers and governing bodies, which is regularly refreshed.
- ensure that anyone who works or comes into contact with the charity has access to proper support and advice if they:
  - experience or witness unacceptable behaviour
  - raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others.