

1. General

Scoliosis Association UK (SAUK) is committed to ensuring the potential for conflicts of interest is minimised. The purpose of this policy is to outline where conflicts, perceived, real or otherwise may arise and to ensure our processes are as objective as possible. SAUK recognises that individuals involved in the grant process may be involved in a variety of organisations or projects that may create a real perceived or potential conflict of interest.

This policy relates to those involved in the grant process, the Grants Committee, the trustees, and those who assist SAUK on an ad hoc basis as peer reviewers.

2. Declaration of Interests

a. Any persons covered by this policy, as defined in the first section (general) must declare any disclosable external interest on their appointment to the charity, and annually thereafter. A register of interests will be kept up to date by the charity administration.

b. Interests should be disclosed by such individuals that have:

- A close business, personal or professional relationship with the applicant or lead researcher of a grant application
- An application submitted in the same round of grants
- Submitted an application or received an award in the past three years with an applicant or lead applicant.
- Published a research paper with an applicant or lead applicant in the last three years

Interests which should be disclosed by individuals are:

- Any close business, personal or professional relationship with the applicant or lead researcher of a grant application
- Any equity interests (if worth £10,000 or more, or more than 1% of the total issued capital) in enterprises with involvement in pharmaceuticals, healthcare, biotech or related areas, or in any other enterprise that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of the charity
- Any other interests which they feel may be a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of the charity. This includes interests held by the panel members' spouse or children.

3. Managing Conflict of Interest

- a. Scoliosis Association UK requires that each person covered by this policy bear a responsibility in disclosing if they are conflicted in a manner covered in section 2.
- b. During the grant process panel members or those involved in the grant process must declare any interest and withdraw from consideration of that application. In which case, SAUK will not send any grant documents pertaining to that grant to that individual. The individual shall not be privy to any information pertaining to the application including any discussions. Records of conflicts of interests shall be kept confidentially by the Chief Executive of SAUK.
- c. Discussions of a grant application between trustees or the Grants Committee which occur outside a committee meeting should be declared to the Chair of the Grants Committee
- d. If a trustee or Grants Committee member (including serving trustees) is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the Grants Committee Chair. They may subsequently be asked by the chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.
- e. Trustees or Grants Committee members who could be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant

(e.g. they are funded or applying for funding on a similar project to the proposal under discussion) or have collaborated or published with the proposal applicant within the past three years, or work in the same institution, should declare an interest and may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that application, or may be allowed to stay, but not vote on the application.

4. Resolution of Conflicts of Interest

SAUK recognises that the majority of conflicts or potential conflicts will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long term restrictions on an individual's ability to work for the charity or to sit on its committees.

In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position within the charity. Where such a situation relates to a member of the Grants Committee, the matter will be discussed by the Chair of the committee together with the Chair of Council. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the committee as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.

- a. In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the Grants Committee Chair, who will decide on a course of action.
- b. If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of a funding panel, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair of the Grants Committee.