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Policy on Declaration of Competing Interests

SIGN is committed to open declaration of competing interests in all its activities.

Accordingly, all persons involved in the development of SIGN guidelines are requested to declare all competing interests on the enclosed form, to be returned to the Programme Lead at the SIGN Executive within one month of receipt. (The Programme Lead is the equivalent of the Standards Officer, defined in the Clinical Standards in Public Life, Note of Registers of Interest for Devolved Public Bodies¹ as the employee of a devolved public body who is appointed by the body to set up, maintain and make available for public inspection the register of interests.)

Competing interests are defined as any interest of the person, their partners or close relatives (personal) or their department/employer/business (non-personal) which may potentially influence the content, including recommendations, of SIGN guidelines. For clarity, the interest of partners or close relatives is restricted to employment in, or share holdings in, healthcare organisations.

Competing interests include financial and non-financial interests.

Financial interests include:

- Any gifts or hospitality received
- Remuneration from being:
 - employed or self employed (including current post, all consultancies or other fee paid work commissioned by commercial healthcare organisations)
 - the holder of an office
 - the director of a corporate body
 - a partner in a firm
 - involved in undertaking a trade, profession, vocation or any other work
- Any allowance received in relation to membership of any organisation
- The name (and registered name if different) of any applicable employer, self employment, partners, undertaking or organisation
- The nature and regularity of the work that is remunerated
- The name of the directorship and the nature of the applicable business
- A description (but not the value) of shares or securities in a company, undertaking or organisation that may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work or operation of SIGN (ie all bodies involved in health care).

Non-financial interests include:

- A description of such interests as may be significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work or operation of SIGN, including without prejudice any membership of or office in:
 - Other public bodies
 - Clubs, societies and organisations
 - Trades unions; and
 - Voluntary organisations

¹ Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act 2000. Codes of Conduct for Board Members. Annex (available on www.scotland.gov.uk)

Competing interests may be specific or non-specific. Specific interests are those relevant to the topic/remit of an individual SIGN guideline. Non-specific interests are other interests, which are still relevant to the work of SIGN.

The relevant time period for declaration of interests is the year prior to the declaration, and the year following the declaration.

Declaration of interest forms will be circulated as follows:

- SIGN Council members and deputies (on appointment or annual request 1 December, return by 31 January)
- SIGN Executive members (on appointment or annual request 1 December, return by 31 January)
 - All members of SIGN subcommittees and speakers at SIGN events
 - All Guideline Development Group (GDG) members
 - At start of guideline development
 - at National meeting/consultation stage
 - at peer review
 - At time of circulation of final draft
 - All peer reviewers (at time of letter of invitation)
 - Advisors to SIGN (annually as above)
 - All who submit proposals to SIGN.

If, during the course of any SIGN meeting, an individual becomes aware of a potential competing interest, it should be declared at that time. This includes members of the audience who make comments from the floor during open meetings.

Written declarations of competing interests will be monitored by chairs of meetings of:

- SIGN Council
- SIGN Executive Senior Management Team
- SIGN Subcommittees
 - Strategy Group
 - Guideline Programme Advisory Group
 - Methodology Group
- GDG meetings.

Written declarations of competing interests for speakers at National Open Meetings will be monitored by the relevant Programme Manager.

Where the level of declared interest could be seen to limit the independence of the individual, such individuals will not chair any SIGN meetings. Eligibility for GDG membership or peer review will be considered by the SIGN Senior Management Team on the basis of balance of risks and benefits and availability of alternative members or reviewers.

The SIGN Programme Lead will hold all declarations of competing interests. These are available made available in summary on the SIGN website.

This policy will be regularly reviewed and audited by the SIGN Strategy group.