

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF MHRN-C BUSINESS AND DECLARATION OF RELEVANT INTERESTS**

**The Code of Practice for members of the MHRN-C Adoptions Committee sets out the basis on which the members should seek to carry out their responsibilities. The Code is based on the principles of public service, which apply to all public bodies.**

### **1. Confidentiality**

All papers for the Committee must be treated in confidence\*. This is particularly important as these papers may disclose information which is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 (which replaced the 1984 Act).

### **2. Communication of decisions**

Only the MHRN-C Director, or staff authorised to act on her behalf, may communicate decisions taken by the Committee. In passing on such decisions special care is taken to keep confidential the part played in the discussion by individual members and to maintain the principle that any decision is the collective responsibility of the Committee.

### **3. Transparency**

In the interests of openness and transparency, the MHRN-C publishes details of all funded projects adopted by the Network on the website once applicants have been notified, by the office, of decisions made.

### **4. Security and eventual destruction of papers**

All Committee members are expected to observe the requirement for confidentiality and to keep secure papers that come to them in their official capacity. When their term of office finishes, members are asked to make sure that all papers are destroyed.

### **5. MHRN-C Adoptions Committee Policy on Declaration of Interests**

All who advise and make judgments on MHRN-C business and/or members of MHRN-C bodies (e.g. Adoptions Committee) need to be aware of MHRN-C Policy on Declaration of Interests and declare interests appropriately.

The revised MHRN-C Declaration of Interest Policy is attached for information ([annex 1](#))

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\* The “MHRN-C: IN CONFIDENCE” marking on all papers implies a need for discretion.

## **6. Revised Declaration of Relevant Interests**

All who advise and make judgments on MHRN-C business and/or members of MHRN-C Committees are therefore required, on taking up their appointments, to declare any private, professional or commercial interest which might conceivably give rise to conflict of interest. Individuals are also required to declare at meetings if they have a significant interest in an item being discussed, if the item concerns their academic department/, or if the discussion involves a close colleague. The decision on whether a member needs to withdraw from the discussion lies then with the Chairman.

## **9. Annexes**

Annex 1      MHRN-C Policy on Declaration of Interests

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## **MHRN-C Policy on Declaration of Interests**

### **Introduction**

1. This policy sets out principles for minimising and managing potential conflicts of interest for those involved in MHRN-C business.
2. In setting out its policy on declarations of interest, MHRN-C aims to achieve effective management of conflicts of interest without over-prescriptive regulation.

### **Objectives of the policy**

3. To ensure best practice by:
  - Ensuring that those individuals covered by the policy make decisions free from bias;
  - Guarding against conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of the positions held by individuals;
  - Protecting the MHRN-C and those individuals covered by the policy against impropriety, or the appearance of impropriety, including reputation risk.

### **Individuals covered by the policy**

4. All who advise and make judgments on MHRN-C business and/or members of MHRN-C Committees. E.g. Adoptions Committee.

### **How to declare interests**

5. On appointment to an MHRN-C body individuals will be asked to read and comply with this policy.
6. Any changes to circumstances or new interests should be declared to the MHRN-C office as soon as practicably possible.
7. Declarations may also need to be made during meetings (see para 18-21 below).

### **Declaration of Interests**

8. Individuals involved in MHRN-C business (see para 1) are required, by common law, to declare any private, professional, political, commercial, academic or other interest that may conflict with MHRN-C interests, or which might be seen by reasonable members of the public to influence or bias judgment when discussing or reaching decisions.
9. Only current interests need be declared, but it is possible that on occasion a past interest will or could influence present behaviour, in which case such an interest also needs to be declared.
10. Conflicts of interest may arise from:
  - Close links with, or interest in, a particular Institution from which an application is being considered (e.g. employment or academic collaborations);
  - A non-pecuniary interest where a member has other interests that might be thought to influence them, either wittingly or unwittingly in the matter under discussion;

- Personal or family interest in an organisation or issue which comes before MHRN-C with regard to both pecuniary (from connections with bodies which have a direct financial interest, or from being a business partner, or being employed by a person with such an interest) and non-pecuniary (any benefit or favour “in kind” including arising from membership of clubs or other organisations) interests. Family interests should encompass immediate family or household (i.e. personal partners, parents, children [adult or minor], brothers, sisters and the personal partners of these). Individuals should declare any *known* interest; they do not have to make any special request for this information from family members, but they must declare the interest once they become aware of it. In declaring a family interest, individuals do not need to identify (i.e. name) the family member.

### **Resolution of declarations of interest**

11. For individuals who are members of MHRN-C bodies - potential conflicts of interest highlighted by declarations of interest will normally be resolved through the individual concerned not participating in the relevant discussions and in any subsequent decisions, and having restricted access to information.

### **Declarations of interest at meetings**

12. Members are required to declare any interests at the meeting.

13. The Chair will advise on action to be taken to resolve any conflict of interest that becomes apparent at a meeting. Depending on the nature and degree of interest, the Chair will decide whether the individual should leave the room for a particular item, or remain but take no part in the discussion.

14. Committee Members are required to be vigilant in raising any conflicts as soon as they become aware of them so that appropriate action can be taken to manage this. If there is any doubt, members should consult with the Chair or the Office for advice.

15. Actions taken in relation to declarations of interest will be recorded in the minutes.

### **Raising concerns about the conflicts of interests of other individuals**

16. An individual who is concerned about another individual's potential or actual conflicts of interest should raise the issues with the Chair or secretariat (in private, if possible). This includes issues concerning MHRN-C staff.

### **Review**

17. This policy will be reviewed every year.