

# UK Biobank Ethics And Governance Council

## Conflicts Policy

### A. Preamble

1. This policy sets out principles for managing potential and actual conflicts of interest affecting individuals appointed to the UK Biobank Ethics and Governance Council ("EGC").
2. The EGC's policy on conflicts of interest takes into account applicable legal requirements, the complex nature of the UK Biobank project and the need to maintain public confidence in the UK Biobank project by encouraging transparency in its operations wherever possible. The aim of this policy is to achieve effective management of conflicts of interest without over prescriptive regulation.
3. The EGC has established a register of discloseable interests ("the Disclosure Register") in order to assist in the achievement of the policy objectives described in paragraph B. A summary of the information held within the Disclosure Register will be available to the public on demand and in due course may be published on the internet.
4. Whilst the EGC has endeavoured to identify the main potential conflicts of interest that may arise for individuals covered by this policy, it is impossible to foresee every eventuality. Therefore, the EGC expects all individuals to whom it applies to comply with the spirit of this policy as well as the letter, noting that the appearance of conflicts can be as harmful as the actuality. Where there is doubt about whether or not interests are relevant, individuals should err on the side of caution and declare such interests.
5. Day to day queries on the policy should be addressed in the first instance to the EGC Secretary.
6. The EGC Secretary can be contacted via the Wellcome Trust at 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.

### B. Objectives of the Policy

1. To promote transparency;

2. To protect the EGC against conflicts of interest that may be detrimental to its aims and objectives, by ensuring that, as far as possible, individuals covered by the policy make decisions free from any external influences, either personal or fiduciary;
3. To protect the EGC and its Members from accusations of impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.

### **C Disclosure of Interests**

1. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare all of his or her discloseable interests, as described in paragraph D, including all consultancies or appointments and relevant equity holdings. Declarations must be made on taking up an appointment with the EGC or at such time as a discloseable interest arises. Subsequently, the individual will be asked to confirm his or her discloseable interests once a year. Declarations will be made using a disclosure form available from the EGC Secretary. A copy of the disclosure form is also attached.
2. It is the responsibility of each person to whom this policy applies to ensure complete disclosure of all activities and interests covered by this policy (at the time such an activity or interest arises), and any other matters that they believe might influence, or be perceived to influence, their judgement. If an individual is in doubt as to whether to declare a particular activity or interest, the activity or interest should be declared.
3. The responsibility remains at all times with individuals to take steps to deal with any conflict of interest, or potential conflict of interest, as set out within this policy.

### **D Interests to be disclosed**

#### Involvement with UK Biobank Limited and the UK Biobank project

1. Each person to whom this policy applies must disclose details of any involvement with UK Biobank Limited or the UK Biobank project including membership of the Board of UK Biobank Limited or any committee of the Board, any involvement with a Regional Collaborating Centre and any involvement in any application for access to the UK Biobank Resource.

#### Relationships with the Funders of the UK Biobank project

2. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare all relationships with the Wellcome Trust, the MRC, the Department of Health and the Scottish Executive (“the Funders”) and any organisation established or controlled by any such body. This

includes appointments to panels, advisory groups and boards established or run by the Funders. Any grants received from the Funders within the last 2 years must also be declared.

#### Equity holdings and business interests

3. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare any interest, however small, that he or she has in the share capital of any company (whether or not publicly listed), including options over such share capital, if that company is involved in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, biosciences, healthcare or similar activities. Declarations should include investments managed or controlled by each such person on behalf of family members or others.

4. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare any interest he or she has as a partner or proprietor in any business involved in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, biosciences, healthcare or similar activities.

5. It is not necessary to declare interests in investments managed on a wholly discretionary basis by third parties, which may include certain Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), investment trusts, life assurance funds or unit trusts, unless the declarant considers that members of the public might reasonably think such interests could influence the judgements he or she is likely to be called upon to make as an EGC Member.

6. The EGC acknowledges that in certain other cases (for example, in the case of investments made through an entity such as a limited partnership) an individual may not have immediate knowledge of investments made by that entity, even though the interest is immediately attributed to him or her. In such cases, the individual should make disclosure at such time as he or she receives the necessary information from the entity in question.

#### Principal employment, consultancies and other appointments

7. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare his or her principal employment (if any) and all consultancies and other external appointments held by him or her. All paid and unpaid directorships, charitable trusteeships and positions within universities, funding bodies, government departments and agencies should be declared. In the interests of openness, individuals should declare full details of the remuneration and benefits received for each consultancy and appointment though such details are not required in respect of principal employment.

Any other relevant interests

8. Each person to whom this policy applies must declare any other interest which, in his or her opinion, members of the public might reasonably think could influence the judgements that person is likely to be called upon to make as part of the activities of the EGC. Such interests may include membership of a political party or pressure group.

Spouses, partners and children

9. The requirement to make declarations of relevant interests under this section D extends to the interests of spouses or partners except that consultancies held by a spouse or partner need only be declared where the annual remuneration in respect thereof (including benefits in kind) is worth in excess of £5000. The requirement to make declarations under paragraphs D3 and D4 extends to the interests of children under the age of 18.

## **E The Disclosure Register**

1. All disclosed interests will be noted in the Disclosure Register maintained centrally by the EGC Secretary. A summary of the information disclosed and noted in the Disclosure Register will be made available to the public on demand and may in due course be published via the internet.

2. Information noted in the Disclosure Register will be brought to the attention of the Chair of the EGC, and may, if the individual concerned so requests or the Chair thinks appropriate, be drawn to the attention of fellow Members of the EGC. If the individual concerned is the Chair then the relevant information will be disclosed to another Member designated to deal with conflicts in such circumstance on the same basis.

3. Individuals may request that certain of their interests not be publicly disclosed. A decision on such a request will be taken by the Chair of the EGC or, if the individual concerned is the Chair, by another Member designated to deal with the decision in such circumstance. The EGC reserves the right to restrict public disclosure of certain interests in exceptional circumstances.

4. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy, the EGC reserves the right to provide declared information to the Charity Commission, the Funders and (if required to do so by law or regulation) to any other governmental or regulatory bodies.

5. Any person disclosing information to the EGC under this policy is deemed to have consented to public disclosure of such information for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **F Resolution of Identified Conflicts**

1. Potential conflicts of interest highlighted by declarations of interest made under this policy will normally be resolved by the EGC being informed of the potential conflicts, in order to maintain transparency.

2. On some occasions it may be appropriate for the individual concerned to be excluded from joining in making a decision or the formation of a Council view, without restricting his or her participation in any relevant discussion.

3. In more significant circumstances it may be necessary to restrict the relevant individual's access to information and/or his or her participation in the discussion.

4. Individuals must absent themselves from the relevant part of any meeting where a proposal with which they are connected (e.g. an application for access to the Resource) is discussed. For this purpose an individual will be deemed to be connected with a proposal if the proposal is submitted by him or her or on his or her behalf, whether jointly or alone, or by any business partner of his or her's, or if he or she is a member or employee of a company, university or other body or institution by whom (or on whose behalf) the proposal is submitted.

5. In addition, individuals must absent themselves from the relevant part of any meeting where matters concerning their discloseable interests are discussed and may not take part in any decisions taken relevant to such interests.

6. If necessary an individual may as a last resort be asked to give up the particular interest declared.

7. If there is any dispute as to whether or not an individual is connected with a proposal for the purposes of paragraph F4, the decision of the Chair (or other designated person) will be final.

8. The resolution of any potential conflict is a matter for the Chair of the EGC. If the individual concerned is the Chair then the relevant decision will be taken by another Member designated to deal with conflicts in such circumstance.

### **G Dissemination of the Policy**

1. This policy will be made available to the public upon request and will be available on the internet.

### **H Extension of the Policy**

1. This policy may be extended to other bodies, working groups or individuals if the EGC believes that this is relevant.

### **I Review**

1. This policy will be reviewed by the EGC at least every 5 years.