



Code of Conduct Policy (including Conflict of Interest).

1. WHAT IS A CODE OF CONDUCT?

The Steering Group has responsibility for all actions carried out by Just Say Members. As a result the conduct of the Steering Group Members, and any other individual parent carers who are acting on behalf of the Just Say, should give our partners and funders confidence. **All individuals covered by the Code of Conduct need to show integrity; ensure actions are transparent and avoid any suggestion of improper influence. There must be no abuse of authority in our actions.**

All Steering Group Members and any paid workers are required to uphold the spirit, as well as the wording, of this Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct includes the findings of **the Nolan Committee** on “Standards in Public Life” and goes beyond these. The term we and us have been used throughout to show that the Code of Conduct applies to the Steering Group and parent carers equally.

2. FINDINGS OF THE NOLAN COMMITTEE

The seven principles of public life identified by the Nolan Committee guide the content of our Code of Conduct.

- **Selflessness:** take decisions in terms of Just Say values and mission and not to gain financial or material benefits for ourselves, our family and friends other than in the case of universal benefit.
- **Integrity:** not place ourselves under obligations to individuals or organisations that might influence us in the performance of our duties.
- **Objectivity:** to ensure that we represent, at all times, a range of disability, Special Educational Needs, cultures, social backgrounds and geographical areas.
- **Accountability:** accept accountability for our decisions and actions to Just Say Members, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders, and submit ourselves to appropriate scrutiny.
- **Openness:** be open about all decisions and actions that we take. Where required give reasons for our decisions.
- **Honesty:** declare private interests relating to our duties and take steps to resolve conflicts arising in a way that protects Just Say’s reputation, values, and mission.
- **Leadership:** promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

- 3.1 This covers circumstances where an individual (or their close relative) could in theory receive a **personal or business benefit** (other than Honorarium/Salary and expenses) as a consequence of Just Say activity. There are two main examples where a benefit could occur:
 - 3.1.1. A Duality of Interest. Where the circumstances could potentially bring about some personal or business gain;
 - 3.1.2 A Conflict of Interest. Where a Just Say interest and a personal, business, or other Voluntary Sector interest occurs over the same matter.
- 3.2 Both types of interest must be disclosed. The Co-Chairs are responsible to ensure that annually members complete a **Declaration of Interests Form**. These forms will be held in a register that is open to public scrutiny.
- 3.3 Members are obliged to declare any new interests (over and above those stated on the annual Declaration) at the beginning of any meeting organised by Just Say and this will be minuted. Attendees at the meeting will be asked if they would like to discuss the conflict-of-interest issue further, and the member in question may be asked to leave the meeting while this discussion takes place.
- 3.4 Upon conclusion of the discussion, the Co-Chairs will summarise the points raised, and any decisions made will be minuted. If there is split opinion, Steering Group members present in the meeting will be invited to vote. In the event of a hung vote one of the Co-Chair's will have the final say. The member in question will then be informed of the outcome and must abide by the decision reached.
- 3.5 A member with a declared interest will not be allowed to vote on any item to which their conflict of interest relates, nor will their attendance count towards a quorum at the meeting in question. The member will not normally be asked to leave the meeting while the item in question is being discussed but may be asked to withdraw if the Co-Chairs consider that their presence may unduly influence the outcome of a decision.

4. AIMS AND VALUES

- 4.1 Our work and reputation relies on us upholding and promoting Just Say's aims and values.
- 4.2 We should all work to the same aims and uphold the same values. We are required to incorporate these in our conduct in relation to Just Say.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 Just Say is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in every area. Our aim is that everyone should be treated fairly and be equally respected and represented. The aim is to ensure that Just Say reflects the population of Barking & Dagenham.

6. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

- 6.1 Just Say's work may take it into the political arena but we must ensure that we demonstrate our non-political nature, and are impartial about party politics. When making any political representation, Just Say must clearly be seen as presenting a balanced case in support of Just Say's key objectives.
- 6.2 Members and paid workers can engage in political activities, including standing for election to public office, as long as it is legal to do so. However, participation will be entirely on their own behalf and their political opinions will not represent the Just Say position.
- 6.3 The officers will discuss conflicts of interest issues when a Just Say member is considering standing for election as an officer or in a local representative role, including on grant panels and/or tenders. The officers' decision is final and must be complied with.
- 6.4 The forum will not engage in active lobbying or campaigning -as this is outside the remit of the DfE parent participation grant funding.

7. HOSPITALITY

- 7.1 We may not solicit hospitality. Occasional modest hospitality is allowed.
- 7.2 Hospitality must always be recorded in the register held by the host (Sycamore Trust UK). Anyone who has received hospitality must record this in the register as soon as practicable.

8. PERSONAL CONDUCT

- 8.1 As a representative of parent carers in Barking & Dagenham , the Steering Group Member Role has clear responsibilities and requirements in relation to personal conduct and expects any member who represents the Forum to strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of our wider membership, and partners whom we work with. This also applies to any paid workers.

- 8.2 Individuals must not bring the Just Say into disrepute while acting in their representative capacity. **As a Steering Group member, your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public.** You should be aware that your actions in both your public and private life might have an adverse impact on your own role, and Just Say.
- 8.3 As a representative of the Just Say or as a paid worker you must ensure that in your conduct and activity you:
- Conduct yourself appropriately for the duty or function that you are carrying out or attending, which includes treating all of those you come into contact with courteously and with dignity and respect.
 - Only carry out those activities as agreed with the Steering Group
 - Respect diversity and different cultures and values.
 - Are honest and trustworthy;
 - Communicate in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way;
 - Respect confidential information and do not share any information that is confidential outside of the Steering Group
 - Are reliable and dependable or provide clear information to the Co-Chairs if you are experiencing challenges that may prevent you from being so.
 - Ensure that the views of parent carers are fully and accurately represented. Whilst personal experience may inform this, you must not rely entirely on own experiences, views and judgements, but be fully representative of the wider membership.
 - Honour work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explaining why to the Co-Chairs and/or other Steering Group members as appropriate
 - Do not use your position within Just Say to lobby or advocate on behalf of yourself or another parent carer to the council officers or other statutory services
 - Declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice
 - Not behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to be a representative of other parent carers
- 8.4 Steering Group members or paid workers must inform the Co-Chairs about any personal difficulties that might affect their ability to exercise their responsibilities appropriately. We are expected to work in partnership at the highest level with the local authority, health and statutory bodies, any personal circumstance which may pose a conflict for individuals, and therefore for the organisation must be declared to the Co-Chairs immediately

The following are examples of types of circumstances

- Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed a crime

- Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children and / or vulnerable adults.
- Any significant challenge between individuals and Government agencies (e.g., where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship with a central or local Government Department)
- Other similar circumstances

8.5 In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the Steering Group member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand. It is felt necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both the Just Say and the individual involved. For a paid worker there will be discussion about the ability to continue in the role.

8.6 Consideration will be given as to how the roles and responsibilities of that individual will be covered in their absence, and whether a temporary replacement should be sought.

8.7 In the event that the investigation involves one of the Co -Chairs, then the investigation will be conducted by the other Co-Chair and a member of the Steering Group. Their findings, conclusion and decision are final and must be complied with. Advice can be sought from the Contact Regional Advisor.

9. GENERAL

9.1 Where our personal conduct may be viewed as conflicting with the work of Just Say , we are required to disclose details to the Co -Chairs and enter details on the Declaration of Interest form . Advice on any matter in this Code of Conduct should be sought from the Co-Chairs .

9.2 In any case of uncertainty, we should always seek advice and make a record of this.

9.3 We should carry out our responsibilities in accordance with Just Say's policies and procedures.

9.4 All of us represent Just Say.

10. FAILURE TO FOLLOW CODE OF CONDUCT

10.1 We should recognise that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may damage Just Say and will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

10.2 In the event of an alleged breach of the Code, any investigation or action will be initiated by the Co -Chairs. Based on the outcome of the investigation, a range of actions may be taken ranging from seeking appropriate training and support for the individual member, to asking them to permanently step down, depending on the severity and impact of any alleged breach.

10.3 This may result in the termination of any paid worker's contract.

This Policy was agreed by the

Just Say Steering Group on:

8.2.23.

Present Donna, Jaime , Rebecca, Emma ,
Mmataz & Khadija .

Advisory BW (Associate).

To be Reviewed :

October 2024.

Linked documents:

- Declaration of Interest Forms to be completed annually by each member of the Steering Group- and kept in a confidential file.
- Sycamore Trust to hold a Hospitality Register.
- Any paid workers to have signed Letters of Engagement.