

# Doncaster and District Family History Society

## Executive Committee (Trustees) Code of Conduct

### **1 - General**

Trustees of Doncaster & District Family History Society **must:**

- a) Act with probity, due prudence and should take and consider professional advice on anything in which the Trustees do not have expertise themselves.
- b) Administer the Society and all its assets in the interest of current, potential, and future beneficiaries, making all decisions on the objective merits of the case and strictly within the terms of the Society's constitution.
- c) Hold themselves accountable to all the Society's stakeholders including the public for their decisions, the performance of the executive committee and the performance of the organisation. They must submit themselves for scrutiny appropriate to their role.
- d) Not gain financial or other material benefit for themselves, their families, or their friends from the Society except where legally authorised. Nor must Trustees attempt to use their status as Trustees to gain advantage within the Society. Trustees should ensure that they abide by written policies on the claiming of expenses.
- e) Not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individual organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- f) Conduct themselves in a manner which does not damage or undermine the reputation of the Society or its volunteers members or (if relevant) staff individually or collectively and should not take part in any activity which is in conflict with the objects of the Society or which might damage the reputation of the Society.
- g) Make decisions together and take joint responsibility for them. The extent to which any one Trustee or a small group of Trustees is empowered to speak for or act on behalf of the Society or the executive committee must (subject to any specific constitutional rules) be a matter for all Trustees to decide together. Such decisions must be recorded.

### **2 - Responsibilities:**

Trustees of the Society **must:**

- a) Formulate and review regularly the Society's objectives and strategy with appropriate help and advice.
- b) Ensure that the Society complies with regulatory and statutory requirements and exercise overall control over the Society's financial affairs with the assistance of appropriate professional advisers. In addition to compliance with statutory requirements, have a commitment to the development and implementation of good practice.

- c) Be familiar with, and keep under regular review, the rules and constitution of the Society. Any changes must be made in accordance with constitutional and legal requirements.
- d) Endeavour to maintain links and keep in touch by regular contact with the Society to allow them to develop a good working knowledge of the Society and to give them credibility.
- e) Attend as many of the Society's public events as possible.

### **3 - Meetings of Trustees:**

Trustees of the Society **must:**

- a) Strive to attend all meetings, ensuring they prepare for and contribute appropriately and effectively. If attendance is proving problematic, a Trustee should request leave of absence.
- b) Bring a fair and open minded view to all discussions and ensure that all decisions are made in the best interests of the Society and in accordance with the Society's constitution.
- c) Aim to foresee and avoid any conflict of interest. Where one arises, a Trustee must at once declare their interest and absent themselves from any discussion or vote taken on the matter by the other Trustees. Any transaction under which the Trustee will benefit either directly or indirectly must have proper legal authority.
- d) Ensure that confidential information or material (relating to volunteers, members, staff, consultants, commercial or business bodies, etc) provided to, or discussed at executive committee meetings remains confidential, within the confines of the meeting, and is managed according to relevant legislation.
- e) Be as open as possible about the decisions they take, giving reasons where appropriate and restricting information only when wider interests require it.
- f) Develop and ensure the maintenance of a properly constituted, balanced and competent executive committee, including clear procedures for selection, training, retirement and, if necessary, removal of Trustees.

### **4 - Trustees' Reports and Papers:**

Note that:

- a) All executive committee papers are the property of the Trustees. It is their responsibility collectively to decide whether these should be made available to a wider audience.
- b) Whilst the executive committee aims to conduct its business openly, it is inevitable that some matters must remain confidential, and Trustees must ensure that such papers are kept securely

## **5 - Disagreements:**

Should a Trustee have a disagreement on any matter relating to the business or activities of the Society the following procedure will be followed:

- a) The disagreement should be raised informally with the Chair or through normal procedures at an executive committee (or Board) meeting.
- b) If a satisfactory conclusion cannot be reached, or in matters of a more serious nature, the Chair may appoint a group of Trustees to review the situation. The Trustee raising the issue may be accompanied by a friend to any meeting called by this group.
- c) The matter should be concluded verbally or in writing with a report and recommendations to the executive committee (or Board). In exceptional circumstances, the executive committee (or Board) may recommend the appointment of an independent mediator.

## **6 - Relations with Volunteers, members, consultants, and staff:**

- a) Volunteers, members of the FHS, consultants and staff and Trustees are expected to deal with each other with courtesy and respect.
- b) Trustees must ensure there is a clear understanding of the scope of authority delegated to volunteers, members, consultants, and staff.
- c) Policies and strategies agreed by Trustees should be expressed in unambiguous and practical terms, so that the volunteers, members, consultants, and staff are clear what they need to do. Directions given to the volunteers, members, consultants, and staff should come from the executive committee (or Board) as a whole.
- d) Trustees should act fairly and in accordance with good employment and equal opportunities legislation and principles, in making decisions affecting staff.
- e) Trustees must understand, accept, and respect the difference in roles between the executive committee (or Board), as the executive body responsible for governance and oversight; and consultants and staff as managers, taking executive decisions within their delegated powers; and must ensure that they all work effectively and cohesively for the benefit of the FHS.
- f) Having given the delegated authority, Trustees should be careful, individually, and collectively, neither to undermine this authority by word or action nor to interfere with the day-to-day running of the FHS. If a Trustee has concerns about the performance of a consultant or member of staff, this should be raised with the Chair who will discuss the matter with any other appropriate officer or member of staff.
- g) Any Trustee having concerns about possible financial irregularities within the FHS should contact the Chair immediately.

## **7 - Conclusion:**

The standards contained in this Code demonstrate the commitment expected from the Trustees (executive committee members) of the Doncaster & District Family History Society.

Consistent with the resources available and the primary focus on delivering services, the volunteers, members, consultants, and staff will support Trustees in fulfilling their duties on behalf of the Society and **will:**

- a) Provide timely and relevant information to allow Trustees to govern well. New Trustees will be offered induction and appropriate training and all Trustees will be offered briefings to enable them to develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Society.
- b) Provide Trustees with advice from external professional experts when necessary.
- c) Work with Trustees to ensure that they fulfil their statutory and legal responsibilities.
- d) Invest the necessary resources in order to help support and develop good governance.
- e) Reimburse Trustees' out-of-pocket expenses reasonably incurred in the course of their duties as Trustees.

This code of conduct was adopted by D&DFHS Executive Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

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