

THE OSS ETHICS POLICY

The Observatory for Sport in Scotland (OSS) proactively champions ethical behaviour and seeks to reflect and apply our charitable values in any activity we undertake, in addition to meeting our legal and regulatory requirements.

Our staff and volunteers are expected to actively consider the principles set out in this policy and how they can be integrated in all of the OSS work and decision-making. Individuals at every level of the organisation will be held accountable for modelling the behaviours set out by the principles.

When following the principles and in all our work, the OSS seeks to:

- Respect every individual's dignity and rights to privacy and confidentiality;
- Commit to challenging any instances of sexism, gender inequality and other power imbalances that leave some people at risk of harm; and
- Value and improve diversity in our workforce and volunteers.

These principles provide an overarching framework to guide decision-making, good judgement and conduct. They do not provide a set of rules that prescribe how one should act in all situations.

The principles are viewed as a benchmark of good practice, and by reflecting them in its work the Board of the OSS believe the organisation is more likely to maximise the difference it makes and champion its values.

Geoff Aberdein
OSS Chair
February 2021

1. BENEFICIARIES FIRST

Charities have a responsibility to carry out their purposes for the public benefit. The interests of the OSS beneficiaries and the causes we work lie at the heart of everything the OSS, and those who work and volunteer in and with the OSS, do.

UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE

This means that the OSS is:

- Clear what our purpose is and who or what our beneficiaries are.
- Carry out our purpose to provide the greatest benefit to our beneficiaries and our cause, regardless of whether this might initially have a negative impact on the reputation or operation of the OSS or its leadership.
- When working with beneficiaries, ensure that their views and experiences are actively listened to and taken account of as part of how the OSS operates, facilitating engagement and communication.
- Ensure all policies and procedures are drawn up with beneficiary interests in mind.

2. INTEGRITY

Those who work and volunteer with the OSS should uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times.

UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE

This means that the OSS:

- Ensures appropriate systems are in place to help guarantee that all decisions are robust, defensible and free from conflicts of interest.
- Considers the effect of activities conducted in private life on the reputation of the charity and of charities generally.
- Ensures our resources are managed responsibly and funds are properly protected, applied and accounted for, including policies and procedures to combat the risk of bribery, fraud, corruption and extortion.
- Exercises due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of commercial partners and individuals, to seek support or collaboration from those with ethical values that are consistent with those of the charity.
- Is sensitive to the impact of our activities on the natural and human environment by:
 - a. making responsible use of our resources;
 - b. adopting sustainable working practices; and
 - c. undertaking initiatives to promote environmental responsibility.

3. OPENNESS

The OSS seeks to create a culture and space where donors and supporters, as well as the wider public, can see and understand how we work, how we deal with problems when they arise and how we spend their funds.

UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE

This means that the OSS:

- Operates a presumption of openness and transparency; subject to complying with existing legal and regulatory requirements, the OSS is willing to share information about how we work, and ensure it is easily accessible.
- Publish, or at least make available on request:
 - a. annual reports, including explaining how the OSS purpose is being fulfilled;
 - b. the OSS approach to safeguarding, bullying and harassment;
 - c. the OSS complaints procedure; and
 - d. the OSS whistleblowing policy.
- Establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for all their work, both internally and externally where applicable.

4. RIGHT TO BE SAFE

Every person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with the OSS should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel they are in a safe and supportive environment. We seek to create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who works for, volunteers with, or comes into contact with the OSS.

We value and promote the mental health and wellbeing of all staff and volunteers, and encourage all who come into contact with the OSS to value and invest in their own health and wellbeing.

UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE

This means the OSS:

- Stands against and has clear approach to prevent abuse of trust and power, including bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination or victimisation in all activities.
- Creates a culture that supports the reporting and resolution of allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse of any kind or inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensures that anyone working or volunteering for the OSS understands the expectations placed upon them, and provide the relevant training to support them in meeting their responsibilities.
- Ensures that anyone who works or volunteers in the OSS has access to proper support and advice if they:
 - a. experience or witness unacceptable behaviour
 - b. raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others
 - c. don't feel safe

5. RESEARCH

The OSS maintains the highest level of integrity in all its research whether carried out directly or commissioned through others. OSS respects the rights and dignity of participants in its research and the legitimate interests of stakeholders such as funders, institutions, sponsors and society at large.

UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE

This means the OSS:

- Ensures that all its research activities, whatever the purpose, are conducted in a transparent manner and that these activities comply with privacy ethics and data protection rules.
- Ensures that participants are provided with appropriate information to allow informed consent to be given, at the point that they agree to participate.
- Ensures that participants in its research are informed about any recording, monitoring or observation at recruitment and at the beginning of a data collection activity.
- Ensures that participants give their permission to take part in a data collection exercise, before proceeding with the activity.
- Ensures that a participant's right to withdraw from a project at any stage is respected.
- Takes reasonable action to ensure that all records are held, transferred and processed securely in accordance with relevant data retention policies and or/contractual obligations.
- Ensures that the anonymity of participants is preserved unless participants have given their informed consent for their details to be revealed or for attributable comments to be passed on.
- Complies with reasonable requests to make available to anyone the information necessary to assess the validity of any published findings from a project.

ANNEX

THE CHARITY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND EXISTING VOLUNTARY CODES

The OSS Ethical Policy is intended as complementary to existing sector codes such as Scotland's Governance Code for the Third Sector (<https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/trustee-duties/good-governance/>).

The principles are not a substitute for charities' own codes of conduct.

The principles should also be read in conjunction with other codes and standards, such as the government's codes of conduct for suppliers and grant recipients.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplier-code-of-conduct>.

GLOSSARY

"Beneficiaries" are intended as those who benefit from the OSS work, as defined by the charity's mission and purpose.

"Staff" include all individuals employed by the OSS and those working through contractors and third-party agencies.

"A volunteer" is anyone who spends time, unpaid, doing something that furthers the charity's purpose.

"The charity's purpose" is the reason that the OSS has been set up, namely to inform, influence and support stakeholders and communities to increase and widen participation in all forms of sport activity, and arrest the physical and mental health crisis enveloping Scotland in the 21st century.

"Research" is defined as any form of disciplined enquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory.

"Research ethics" refers to the moral principles guiding research from its inception through to completion and publication of results.