

CODE OF BUSINESS CONDUCT FOR THE DIRECTORS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF CLARE COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE CLG

(CCCC).

Introduction

The present document constitutes the Code of Business Conduct for the Directors and Board Members of Clare County Childcare Committee CLG (CCCC).

This Code has been prepared via a participative approach, and has been approved by the Board taking into account the implications of the Ethics in Public Office Act.

The document outlines the general principles that govern the operation of the Board of Clare County Childcare Committee CLG. In general, the following Code sets out the basic objectives of the Board including:

- The establishment of an agreed set of ethical principles;
- The promotion and maintenance of confidence and trust;
- The presentation of development or acceptance of unethical practice

The document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of guidelines and will be subject to review on an annual basis. It is not foreseen that any guidelines contained in this document will cause difficulties to the Directors/Board members, as the CCCC Board has always operated with the highest standard of integrity and professionalism. CCCC will take all necessary measures to ensure that the Code of Conduct receives the widest possible publicity. A copy will be given to existing and new members of the Board and the document will also be made available on the CCCC website.

Directors will be required to indicate in writing that they have received and understood the document. Breaches of the code may result in the Director ceasing to be a member of the Board.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES The principles, which underpin the general ethos of this code, are set out below:

Loyalty The Directors/Board members shall acknowledge the responsibility to be loyal to CCCC's aims and objectives and be committed to its activities, while mindful that the organisation itself must take into account the interests of lead departments, beneficiaries and the public; The Board should acknowledge the duty to conform to the highest standards of business ethics.

Integrity The Board have a commitment to act ethically and honestly; The Board will ensure that the accounts/reports accurately reflect their business performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading; The Board will not use CCCC resources or time for personal gain, for the benefit of persons/organisations unconnected with the body or its activities or for the benefit of competitors;

The Board will disclose any outside employment/business interests in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of the body.

Disclosure of Interests In compliance with the Ethics in Public Office, each Director/Board member will, on an annual basis, at the AGM furnish a statement of interest to the Secretary of CCCC.

This statement should include details relating to his/her employment and all other business interests including shareholdings, professional relationships etc., which could involve a conflict of interest or could materially influence the member in relation to the performance of his/her functions as a member of the Board. Any interests of a member's family of which he/she could be expected to be reasonably aware or a person or body connected with the member which could involve a conflict of interest or could materially influence the member in the performance of his/her functions should also be disclosed.

For this purpose, persons and bodies connected with a member should include:

- (a) a spouse, parent, brother, sister, child or step-child;
- (b) a body corporate with which the member is associated;
- (c) a person acting as the trustee of any trust, the beneficiaries of which include the member or the persons at (a) above or the body corporate at (b) above; and
- (d) a person acting as a partner of the member or of any person or body who, by virtue of (a) – (c) above, is connected with the member.

Each member should furnish to the Secretary details of business interests of which he/she becomes aware during the course of his/her directorship; Where it is relevant in any matter which arises, the member should be required to indicate to the Secretary the employment and any other business interests of all persons connected with him/her, as defined above;

If a member has a doubt as to whether this Code requires the disclosure of an interest of his/her own or of a connected person, that member should consult the Chairperson; Details of the above interests will be kept by the Secretary in a confidential register and will be updated on an annual basis. Changes in the interim should be notified to the Secretary as soon as possible. Only the Chairperson, Secretary and Chief Executive of the body will have access to the register;

Should a matter relating to the interests of the Chairperson arise, he/she will depute the Deputy Chairperson or another Director to chair the Board meeting and will absent

himself/herself when the Board is deliberating or deciding on a matter in which the Chairperson, or a person or body connected with the Chairperson, has an interest;

Board or Company documents on any case that relate to any dealings with the above interests will not be made available to the member concerned prior to a decision being taken. (Such documents will be taken to include those relating to cases involving competitors to the above interests). Decisions once taken will be notified to the member; As it is recognised that the interests of a Board member and persons connected with him/her can change at short notice, a Board member should, in cases where he/she receives documents relating to his/her interests or of those connected with him/her, return the documents to the Secretary at the earliest opportunity;

A Director/Board member should absent himself/herself when the Board is deliberating or deciding on matters in which that member (other than in his/her capacity as a member of the Board) or a person or body connected with the member has an interest. In such cases a separate record (to which the Board member would not have access) will be maintained;

Where a question arises as to whether or not a case relates to the interests of a Director/Board member or a person or body connected with that Director/Board member the Chairperson of the Board will determine the question.

Information The Board of CCCC will conduct its activities in a confidential and objective manner;

The Directors/Board members will support the Management and employees of CCCC for the provision of access to general information relating to the body's activities in a way that is open and that enhances its accountability to the general public; Directors have a commitment not to acquire information or business secrets by improper means;

Members of the Board are not permitted to disclose any confidential information obtained while performing or as a result of performing any activities on behalf of CCCC. The above requirements do not apply to information already in the public domain or in the possession of the person prior to undertaking the activities;

The Directors/Board members will comply with relevant statutory provisions (e.g. Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act); Based on the latter, they will respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by CCCC excepting where there is an overriding requirement (eg Child Safeguarding, there may be other factors such as fraud etc that might need to be considered) to share such sensitive information with relevant authorities. This would constitute material such as: -

Commercially sensitive information (including but not limited to future plans or details of major organisational or other changes such as restructuring); -

Personal information; and - Information received in confidence by CCCC

Directors/Board Members will observe appropriate prior consultation procedures with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest;

Former Directors/Board members should treat commercial information received while acting in that capacity as confidential.

Legal Obligations

Directors of State bodies incorporated under the Companies Acts have duties under these Acts and it is the responsibility of each Director to act in conformity with the applicable provisions of those Acts;

The Board will fulfil all regulatory and statutory obligations imposed on CCCC;

The Board of CCCC shall act according to law and apply the rules and procedures laid down in Irish and relevant European legislation. The Board shall take due care that decisions which affect the rights or interests of individuals have a basis in law and that their content complies with the law;

Where individual Board members become aware of non-compliance with any legal obligation, they should immediately bring this to the attention of their fellow Board members with a view to having the matter rectified;

Directors/Board Members shall comply with CCCC tendering and purchasing policies, as well as comply with prescribed levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure.

Board Operation

Directors/Board members should use their reasonable endeavours to attend every Board meeting;

The Board should meet at least 6 times a year, retain full and effective control over the body and monitor the executive management and performance of CCCC;

A Director/Board member who absents himself/ herself from three consecutive Board meetings without special leave of absence from the Board of Directors shall cease to be a member of the company. This is the understanding that the Director will be notified in advance of this taking effect;

A member who wishes to resign from the Company may do so by letter addressed to the Secretary and with effect from the receipt of such letter by the company, such member shall cease to be a Board member.

At each Annual General Meeting, one quarter of the Directors of the company shall be required to retire with effect from the end of the meeting.

The Directors to retire in every year shall be those who have been longest in office since their last appointment and as between persons who become directors on the same date, those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree amongst themselves) be determined by lot.

Retiring Directors shall be eligible for re-nomination and appointment.

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business of the directors may be fixed by the Directors, and unless so fixed shall be one third, plus one of those entitled to attend the meeting. The Board should have a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved to it for decision to ensure that the direction and control of the body is firmly in its hands. This schedule includes the following:

- Significant acquisitions, disposals and assets of the body
- Major investments and capital projects, delegated authority levels, treasury policy and risk management policies;
- Approval of terms of major contracts;
- Approval of annual budgets and corporate plans;
- Production of annual reports and accounts;
- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of performance of Manager;
- Amendments to pension benefits of Manager and staff.

The collective responsibility and authority of the Board should be safeguarded. Excessive influence on Board decision-making by individual members should be avoided, while allowing Board members opportunity fully to contribute to Board deliberations;

Fairness

The Directors/Board members are committed to fairness in all business dealings and will value and treat all clients equally;

Directors must comply with employment equality and equal status legislation;

When taking decisions, the Board of CCCC shall ensure that the principle of equality of treatment is respected. The Board shall in particular avoid any unjustified discrimination based on gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the travelling community;

CCCC is an equal opportunities employer and requires that staff appointments are made based upon demonstrably objective criteria and that recruitment procedures are always adhered to.

Impartiality and Independence

It is recognised that each Director/Board member has been nominated by a particular representative body to represent its interests. Notwithstanding this, when taking decisions CCCC Directors/Board members must always act in the interest of the Company as a whole and not in the interest of only a section of the members of the Board.

The Board shall be impartial and independent. They shall abstain from any preferential treatment on any grounds whatsoever;

They shall not be guided by any inappropriate influences of whatever kind, including political influences, or by personal interests;

When taking decisions, Directors/Board members shall take into consideration the relevant factors and give each of them its proper weight in the decision, whilst excluding any irrelevant element from consideration.

Absence of Abuse of Power

Director's powers shall be exercised solely for the purposes for which they have been conferred. Directors shall in particular avoid using those powers for purposes which have no basis in the law or which are not motivated by any public interest.

Hospitality

Directors/Board Members shall avoid the giving or receiving of corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment or benefits which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgement on business transactions;

CCCC Board members may not approach any business with which they have contact through their official duties seeking sponsorship or support for any club, association, trade union or other organisation;

It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules covering the acceptance of hospitality in all possible circumstances. The overriding concern is that the actions of CCCC Board members be above suspicion and not give rise to any conflict of interest, and that their dealings with commercial and other interests should bear the closest possible scrutiny. It is accepted that Board members should not be put in a position where they cannot accept what are regarded as normal courtesies in business relationships. That being said, in their contacts with outside organisations or persons, every care must be taken by CCCC Board members to ensure that their acceptance of hospitality does not influence them, and could not reasonably be seen to influence them, in discharging their official functions.

The following general guidelines provide a framework within which decisions in this area can be made: - No objection would normally be taken to the acceptance of what is regarded as routine hospitality, the most obvious example being a business lunch. What may be regarded as "routine" for this purpose will depend on a number of factors such as the value of the hospitality offered, the frequency of offers, whether there is an element of reciprocity and the circumstances in which it is offered (for example whether it is offered by a company to all its

customers or is directed at specific customers or potential customers). Certain types of hospitality (for example involving travelling abroad or holiday weekends) should not be regarded as routine. - Board members should not accept offers of hospitality which go beyond the routine practices referred to above, except where acceptance of such an offer can be clearly shown to be in the interest of CCCC and has been approved by other Board members.

Work/External Environment

The Board will place the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of CCCC employees; they will ensure that public concerns are taken into consideration and will endeavor to minimise any detrimental impact of the operations on the environment.

Responsibility

Prior to the AGM the Chairperson of the Board will ensure the following is circulated to all members:

- Code of Business Conduct to all Directors/Board Members
- The Agreement of the Code of Business Conduct and a Disclosure of Interest

The Directors/Board Members must complete the agreement of the code which acknowledges their receipt of the code and understanding of same. A Disclosure of Interest must also be completed by all members and returned to the Secretary at the AGM. Conflict of Interest will be a standing agenda item at all Board Meetings, giving Members an opportunity to disclose any Conflict prior to the discussion of agenda items.

Review

The Directors should review annually the effectiveness of the body’s system of internal controls, including financial, operational and compliance controls;

The Directors have a commitment to review the Code of Conduct on an annual basis.

	Name	Position
Approved by		
Approved By		
Date		
Review Date		

Updated February 2024

To be reviewed 2025

Clare County Childcare Committee CLG