

# PROFESSIONAL CODE



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## INTRODUCTION

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This is a professional code for all employed and contracted medicine and science practitioner members of staff of the English Institute of Sport (EIS) , Sport Wales Institute (SWI) , Sport Northern Ireland Sports Institute (SINI) and the sportscotland Institute of Sport (SIS), collectively referred to as the Home Country Sports Institutes (HCSI).

It aims to provide clear guidance on the standards of professional conduct that are expected of all practitioners and sets out obligations and guidelines related to how they are expected to go about their work with athletes, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and colleagues.

It is not a substitute for any professional code that already exists in those disciplines but serves to provide guidance on how staff should conduct themselves where they have no professional code and to complement professional codes where they do exist. It should also complement existing Codes of Conduct in place within the HCSI.

This code does not seek to cover areas of research, nor the full scope of WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) compliance as this is covered under separate codes, nor does it form part of any employment contract with an employer or contract with a hirer.

It is strongly recommended that this HCSI professional code be shared with NGBs of sport with whom employed and contracted practitioners work so that professional responsibilities are understood by both parties at the start of service agreements.

THE CODE USES THE TERMS:

- **'YOU MUST'** as an overriding duty or principle
- **'YOU SHOULD'** is an explanation of how you will meet that principle or how you should proceed when there are factors outside your control.

The code will be reviewed annually and it is recommended that reference is made to its contents, assessing staff adherence and understanding of its content, during the appraisal process.

I am grateful to all my colleagues in the HCSIs who have made valuable comments and contributions to the content of this code.

Dr Rod Jaques

Director of Medical Services, English Institute of Sport  
May 2017

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## PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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### YOU MUST

- Make the athlete's health and welfare your primary and overriding concern.
- Maintain the highest standards of service provision.
- Work within the limits of your professional competence and refer to senior colleagues and/or other professionals when in doubt.
- Provide services without discrimination on grounds of age, gender, sexual, cultural, ethnic, disability, lifestyle or religious preference.
- Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
- Ensure that you have appropriate professional and/or institutional indemnity when providing services both in the UK and when abroad.
- Keep clear, accurate, legible and contemporaneous records in the appropriate paper or electronic formats.
- Familiarise yourself with your employment contract, understanding all aspects of the role, seek clarification before signing on areas of concern.
- When travelling abroad with athletes and teams observe international regulations regarding your temporary working practice and use of professional equipment for your usual professional duties.

### YOU SHOULD

- Familiarise yourself with your legal obligations when dealing with children or vulnerable adults, this includes escalating concerns around any form of abuse.
- Familiarise yourself with the methods of escalating concerns about the health or welfare of athletes, potential or real doping infringements, inappropriate conduct of Institute or non-Institute staff and sports rules violations.
- Be aware of how you alert internal and external regulatory authorities concerning these matters and your duties around safeguarding and whistleblowing reporting.
- Be aware of the current national and international regulations on anti-doping in sport. You should not assist, support or ignore practices, policies or procedures that enhance athletic performance or which contravene the national or international doping regulations.
- Participate in an annual work appraisal and present all evidence in a factually accurate format, including any untoward events that took place during the year. Some staff are also subject to an external professional appraisal, the outcome of this must be made known to your employer.
- Develop the skills, attitudes and practices of a competent teacher if you are involved in the education of staff or students. Make yourself aware of any governance structures under which you should operate in education.
- Only engage with the media in areas of your discipline in which you have knowledge and expertise, and usually in collaboration with your HCSI media communications department.
- When asked to communicate with the media, provide information that is factually correct, balanced and acknowledges uncertainty when appropriate. Consent must be obtained beforehand if named athlete data is to be used.
- Not usually provide professional advice or treatment to Institute or non-Institute staff for whom you have no contractual remit, unless in an emergency. Then at the earliest opportunity transfer professional input to appropriate others.
- Endeavour to recognise when fatigue, stress, physical or mental illness may affect your professional duties, seek advice and comply with that advice.
- Declare any relationship with third parties which may influence the content of your presentation at conferences or scientific meetings. Acknowledge all contributions to your presentation openly.

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## DEALING WITH ATHLETES

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### YOU MUST

- Respect the athlete's right to self-determination when recommending a service.
- Not abuse your professional position to make financial, sexual or improper emotional relationships with an athlete.
- Ensure that a decision to participate in a sport, where that participation involves a high level of risk, is freely made by the athlete. You should however raise professional concerns when appropriate.
- When testing an athlete to assess sports performance, or fitness to perform, explain clearly to the athlete the potential risks in a language and manner that they understand and allow them time to consider their choices.
- When providing a service to an athlete under 16 years of age seek consent from their parent or legal guardian.
- Not unreasonably deny an athlete's request to see any paper or electronic records on them. By law everyone has the right to apply for access to records that contain their information under the Data Protection Act 1998. The athlete has the right to request information which is factually incorrect to be modified.
- Not exploit athlete's vulnerability or lack of medical or science knowledge when offering services.

### YOU SHOULD

- Be aware that you are not obliged to provide a service if you believe this will not be in your athlete's best interest.
  - Discourage athletes from utilizing unproven interventions, training methods, equipment, if you believe it could cause them injury or illness.
  - Where possible share any evidence on proposed interventions, treatments or rehabilitation complications with an athlete so far as it is currently understood.
  - When you believe the athlete lacks capacity to consent either through maturity or mental capacity, seek guidance from senior colleagues and defer the service until such clarity exists.
  - Be open and honest with athletes and NGBs when things go wrong. You should act immediately to put matters right and explain fully to all parties the circumstances leading up to the event.
  - If language barriers exist make use of a trained interpreter to ensure effective communication or appropriate facilities to assist athletes with visual, hearing or learning disability.
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## DEALING WITH NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES


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The specific nature of the relationship that exists between employed or contracted practitioners, an NGB and an athlete does have the potential to present challenges around competing priorities. This may lead practitioners to conclude that meeting the obligations of one does so at the cost of potentially neglecting the other. Where these situations have the potential to arise, it is best that problems are discussed in advance, amongst key members of both the NGB and service personnel (including technical line managers) so that protocols are put in place that meet both professional requirements and service delivery. Where difficulties are still foreseen these need to be escalated in accordance with the relevant HCSI's published escalation process.

### YOU MUST

- Obtain consent from an athlete before disclosure of their information to a third party (this is separate from the contractual consent given by the athlete to the NGB).
- Discuss with your senior colleagues if you believe you face a circumstance, within such contractual consent, that leads you to believe the athlete's rights or ethics are being compromised.
- When discussing fitness to train and compete on behalf of an athlete, work within your knowledge area.
- Understand the regulations of the sport in which you are working (eg equipment type, equipment modifications, weight categories, NGB regulations on competing and returning to compete after injury/illness).
- Understand the sports specific, in-competition, rules covering when support staff can enter and leave the field of play and where treatment can take place.
- Make it clear to the athlete what role you are playing in a service to them, this may be different to a previous role you have had with the athlete – for instance in an assessment of fitness to compete the athlete must be fully informed that this is an assessment-only role. In this instance then you must act in good faith with the NGB that you represent and you should explain to the athlete that you may not be acting in the athlete's best interest.
- Discuss with the NGB how services should be delivered in high pressure situations (e.g. in competition) understanding that these situations may limit the ability of the athlete to understand the full ramifications of their actions. This service primary aim is preserving the health and wellbeing of the athlete. It should include rehearsing and formalising the criteria for removal of athlete from competition.

### YOU SHOULD

- When dealing with an athlete / teams not seek inappropriate endorsement in order to gain professional or personal gain.
  - Seek professional legal advice if your provision of service to an NGB forces you to breach your professional code or ethics.
  - When travelling abroad adhere to the NGB's social media policy and socialising guidelines.
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## DEALING WITH COLLEAGUES

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### YOU MUST

- Work with colleagues in a way which best serves the interests of the athlete.
- Work collaboratively with all members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT).
- If the athlete requests service provision by another member of staff, and if that is possible under the provision of services, facilitate good hand over of that athlete's current status.
- Be honest and objective when conducting or responding to appraisal information.
- Make sure all staff for whom you are responsible are properly supervised and work within their area of competence.

### YOU SHOULD

- Protect athletes and the reputation of your HCSI when you believe a colleagues' conduct or performance falls below the required standard, by using the published escalation routes of your HCSI informing the appropriate authorities.
- Respect the views of other members of the MDT in public and avoid unbalanced criticism of colleagues by impugning their professional or personal reputations



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## SAFETY AND QUALITY

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### YOU MUST

- Ensure that the environment that you are working in is fit for purpose to apply your skills and where applicable meets the standards of any external organisation with a regulatory authority in this area.
- If you consider the athlete's safety to be compromised by the facilities, equipment, access to medical care or organisational provision, report this using the published escalation routes of the NGB and then your HCSI. You must record your concerns and the steps you have taken to resolve them.
- Insure that an athlete can dress/undress in a suitable private space and ensure that a chaperone can be made available to them on request.
- When collecting biological material ensure that you have the correct facilities in place before such collection and that the material is handled and labelled correctly. Be aware of the legal requirements of collection and storage of biological material.
- Where you may have a conflict of interest in a service provision (i.e. a research grant from a supplement manufacturer which claims to improve performance) you must clearly state this with an athlete.
- Provide evidence based medicine and science advice, and where little or no evidence exists, explain this clearly to an athlete.
- If providing your athlete with a prescription, ensure the prescription complies with current General Medical Council regulations. If you are dispensing medication, you must ensure the athlete is provided with clear written instructions on the use of the medication.
- If administering medication, ensure the athlete has given you appropriate consent to do so and you are administering the medication in accordance with safe clinical practice, ensuring access to basic life support equipment when appropriate.

### YOU SHOULD

- If an athlete or NGB complains about inadequate service provision provide a prompt, open, constructive and honest response, and if appropriate an apology. A practitioner, either employed or contracted, should not allow an athlete's or NGB's complaint to adversely affect their quality of service provision.
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**LOTTERY FUNDED**

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