

19 January 2016

Michael McMahon MSP
Convener
Public Petitions Committee

By email: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Dear Mr McMahon

Petition PE01493: A Sunshine Act for Scotland

As Chair of the Council of the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) I wish to put on record the current position regarding declaration of interests of members of guideline groups. This is in response to written submissions relating to petition PE01493 'A Sunshine Act for Scotland'.

In the petitioner letter of 20 November 2015, it is stated that. "At least fifty separate SIGN guidelines, all currently in operation, have no records of the financial interests of those tasked to draw up the guidelines".

SIGN has a Declaration of Competing Interests policy which is regularly updated in line with current practice. Prior to 2011, all guideline members made declarations of interests, and these were available on request to anyone who wished to see them for one year after publication, after which they were stored off site for three years and then destroyed along with other paperwork relating to the guideline. There are currently 35 guidelines in this category. All of these guidelines note that while that the declaration of interest governance may not be in line with current policy, they were in line with the policy at the time of publication. As these guidelines are updated they will be subjected to the current policy.

Subsequent to March 2011 all declarations of interests are made available, along with the guideline, on the SIGN website, and will be retained permanently. There are 20 guidelines in this category.

In 2016 six guidelines will be withdrawn and a similar number of new guidelines or updated guidelines will be published. As a result both the number and proportion of our guidelines meeting our current policy will rapidly increase.

We are therefore in a position to reassure the Committee and the public that we have an active, transparent, up to date, and evolving Declaration of Competing Interests policy.

Yours sincerely,

Professor John Kinsella
Chair

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