

Position Statement

Sponsorship and Commercial Partnerships

Background

ICM engages in a range of partnerships with non-profit agencies, but it also undertakes certain agreements with commercial companies. ICM derives significant-financial, professional, and service benefits—from these arrangements. Companies and partners derive significant reputational benefits from working and/or being associated with ICM and midwives' associations in general.

-It is important to ensure that any commercial partnerships deliver the maximum benefits, while also respecting ICM's values and those of its member midwives' associations. At the same time, it is important that midwives and families get comprehensive, evidence-based information enabling them to make informed choices regarding the use of health-related products.

This statement aims to:

- Determine what kinds of partnerships are acceptable;
- Set guidance for appropriate agreements;
- Ensure that ICM is fairly and properly reimbursed for its costs;
- Maximise ICM's financial well-being;
- Ensure that partner organisations align with ICM's values and mission.

This position statement refers to work in which ICM engages collaboratively with commercial or partner organisations-and work that is carried out by ICM and is funded by external organisations. It includes, but is not limited to, the following range of partnership arrangements:

- Sponsorship (i.e. funding by an external company of all or part of the costs of staff, research, training, publications, meetings, meals, hospitality, hotel and

transport costs, usually in return for overt acknowledgement and branding opportunities);

- Funding (as above, but without the requirement for overt acknowledgement);
- Endorsement (i.e. ICM lending its name to the promotion of specified products or services);
- Conference exhibitions (i.e. external organisations exhibiting at ICM events);
- Advertising (i.e. external organisations advertising in ICM publications);
- Contracted project work;
- Grants, bursaries and prizes.

It is recommended that potential partners are categorised in three bands, reflecting the level at which the partner aligns with ICM's values and mission and is therefore a desirable partner:

Green partners are those where there is little or no PR risk, and where the ICM will not experience problems as a result of the association.

Amber partners are those where some caution may be needed, for a range of reasons; the implications of such an arrangement should be thoroughly considered, and reflected in the written application to proceed (see below).

Red partners are those where significant caution is needed, for example because it is known some Member Associations may have objections to engagement with them. Normally arrangements with these organisations would not be set up, where there is a satisfactory alternative, and where such arrangements are set up, they should be accompanied by written PR plans to anticipate and deal with any negative feedback.

Position

Equitable and responsible commercial partnerships can be of immense benefit, providing vital funds for midwifery, encouraging cross-sectoral skill sharing, and developing commercial investment in health and social welfare. However, such partnerships are primarily a means to an end, and not an end in themselves.

ICM will therefore only enter into partnerships which:

- Directly and substantially contribute towards ICM's strategic directions, and do not contravene or undermine the good standing of the Confederation or the midwifery profession.
- Are consistent with the need for ICM and the midwifery profession to be objective, and to be seen to be objective with regard to midwifery practice.

- Do not bind ICM to associate itself with a product in the event of any new evidence emerging related to its risks, benefits or acceptability.

ICM will endeavour to develop a range of commercial partnerships, in order to ensure that it is not identified solely with one company. Where this is not possible, ICM must make every effort to ensure that its integrity is not compromised by the use the commercial partner makes of the arrangement. All commercial partnerships should be for a finite period, usually for longer than five years. Commercial firms in partnership with ICM may not use the name or logo of ICM for the purpose of marketing their own products without prior agreement.

No commercial arrangement may be developed which might reasonably be seen to compromise ICM's judgement or integrity, or seek to exert preferential consideration.

Recommendations

ICM supports:

- Midwives to reject trade displays of products that do not benefit or adversely affect the health of mothers, infants, young children and their families.
- Midwives to work with government and health care organisations to refuse financial or in-kind incentives for conferences, meetings, and events from manufacturers of breast milk substitutes and other products that do not benefit or adversely affect the health of mothers, -infants and young children.
- Member Associations to work with governments through legislative, regulatory or other suitable measures to ensure ethical commercial activities for health care providers, women and other consumers.

Member associations are urged to develop their own policies and guidance based on this statement.

Related ICM Documents

- ICM. 2014. Core Document. International Code of Ethics for Midwives.
- ICM. 2011. Position Statement. Midwives, Women and Human Rights.
- ICM. 2023. Position Statement. Partnership between Women and Midwives.
- ICM. 2002. Position Statement on Trade Displays (retired)

Other Relevant Documents

- The Lancet Breastfeeding Series (2023).

- WHO/UNICEF. Scope and impact of digital marketing strategies for promoting breastmilk substitutes (2022).
- WHO/UNICEF. International Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes (2009).

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

Reviewed and adopted at Prague Council meeting, 2014

Reviewed, merged with Position Statement on Trade Displays. Adopted at Bali Council Meeting, 2023

Due for review in 2026