

# CCLG Research Advisory Group: Membership requirements and conditions

CCLG is committed to ensuring that research proposals are assessed objectively and impartially. This document outlines the terms and conditions under which the Research Advisory Group (RAG) operates and sets out the code of conduct that all RAG members are expected to follow.

The full role and responsibilities of the RAG and its members are defined in CCLG's Research Grant Awards Process document. This provides a clear overview of how the RAG contributes to the process of awarding new research funding and the specific activities undertaken by its members.

## Code of conduct for RAG members

RAG members are appointed to provide independent expert advice to CCLG on research funding matters. As such, the following code of conduct applies:

- If CCLG has reason to believe that a RAG member has breached this code of conduct, the individual may be asked to step down from their role.
- As a condition of membership, confidentiality is paramount. All documents, correspondence, and discussions relating to funding applications or the broader CCLG research strategy must be treated as strictly confidential.

Confidentiality Requirements:

- Documents and correspondence must not be shared or discussed with anyone outside the RAG during the review process.
- Discussions between RAG members about application materials must be limited to official RAG business (e.g., during meetings or preparatory discussions arranged by CCLG).
- All feedback to applicants—whether successful or unsuccessful—will be communicated solely by CCLG.
- RAG members must not provide direct feedback to applicants unless explicitly requested to do so by CCLG (e.g., to clarify reviewer comments).

This code ensures consistency, protects applicant confidentiality, and supports the integrity of the funding review process.

## Obligations and conditions for RAG members

CCLG is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and is committed to upholding the six principles of peer review outlined by the AMRC. These principles are embedded in CCLG's grant funding process and help to ensure all research decisions are made with integrity, independence, and transparency.

As part of their role, members of the Research Advisory Group (RAG) are expected to adhere to the following obligations:

- **Proportionality** - Charities must ensure the review process is 'fit for purpose' with reviews proportionate to both the size and scale of the award and the expertise sought sufficient and relevant to provide effective review. Charities must seek additional review for applications where there is a lack of expertise on a particular subject area on any research review committees or among in-depth reviewers used by the charity, or where the funding requested is substantial in relation to the charity's research spend.
- **Independence** - Charities must take account of advice provided by experts who are independent of the charity's administrative staff and trustees.

- **Diversity** - Charities must seek recommendations from a range of experts with relevant knowledge or experience, who appropriately reflect the views of a range of stakeholders. Charities must also consider the diversity of experts involved in the review process in terms of location, career stage, gender and ethnicity or other factors as appropriate.
- **Rotation** - Charities must rotate the experts involved in decision making to ensure they are regularly incorporating fresh ideas and new perspectives into their expert review processes. This allows charities to incorporate the views of a range of individuals, including those who may not have been otherwise represented. It also allows charities to change the membership of their research review committee(s) as appropriate and required to meet their research strategy.
- **Impartiality** - Charities must publish and adhere to a conflicts of interest policy, specific to research funding. This policy must clearly articulate the types of conflicts that may arise in research funding contexts and specify the actions that conflicted committee members should take so that they are not able to influence funding decisions. Additionally, where research funding is awarded to trustees of the charity, this must be done according to the Charity Commission rules in Annex 1, AMRC's conflicts of interest guide, and the charity's governing documents (e.g. articles of association) must permit this.
- **Transparency** - Charities must publish their research strategy and expert review process online so that external audiences can see the rigorous methods used to make research funding decisions, including the names of the experts involved in the decision-making process. It is important that charity funders share transparently how and why animals are used in research. When funding research involving animals, charities must consider the 3Rs through expert review.

By following these principles, RAG members help uphold the integrity and credibility of CCLG's research funding decisions, ensuring that they are scientifically sound, fair, and aligned with CCLG's mission to improve outcomes for children and young people with cancer.

## Use of animals in research

CCLG fully supports the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) position statement on the use of animals in research. All members of the Research Advisory Group (RAG) are required to uphold and support this position as part of their role in the grant review process.

In accordance with AMRC guidance:

- Applicants must demonstrate how they have addressed the principles of the 3Rs: Replacement, Refinement, and Reduction of animal use in their research proposals.
- RAG members are responsible for assessing the extent to which these principles have been appropriately considered and implemented in grant applications.
- The RAG may also be called upon to advise CCLG on how best to support and strengthen these principles across our research grant processes and funding policy.

RAG members are expected to familiarise themselves with the following key resources:

- The AMRC position statement on the use of animals in research
- The ARRIVE Guidelines (Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments)
- Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Biosciences Research – expectations of the major research councils and charitable funders

These documents provide important context for ethical review and are essential reading for all RAG members. Further resources and links to these guidelines are available on the CCLG website.

## Conditions of RAG membership

CCLG aims to ensure that the Research Advisory Group (RAG) reflects a broad range of expertise across all disciplines within the field of children and young people's cancer. We are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion and seek to avoid discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, geographical location, or other factors.

Details of RAG members will be made publicly available via the CCLG website. Members are expected to provide updated information upon request, including their areas of expertise and current clinical and research interests.

The RAG operates independently of CCLG's administrative staff and day-to-day functions. It is also independent of the charity's Board of Trustees, though some RAG members may also serve on the CCLG Executive, provided appropriate governance is maintained.

The RAG serves in an advisory capacity, providing expert recommendations regarding the funding of new research grants. These recommendations are submitted to:

- The CCLG Executive and Board of Trustees, for grants funded through internal sources (including Special Named Funds).
- The Trustees of external partner charities, for grants managed by CCLG on behalf of other organisations.

#### **Membership and Quorum**

- The quorum for any RAG meeting is a minimum of five members.
- Given the range of grant schemes managed by CCLG, different subsets of RAG members may be invited to participate in specific funding rounds, based on their expertise and the scale of the scheme.

#### **Term of Office**

- RAG members are appointed for a fixed term of six years, comprised of two three-year terms.
- Members are generally required to wait three years before rejoining the RAG. However, exceptions may be made in the case of legacy members, who may be retained in a limited capacity where specialist expertise is essential.
- Members may request a temporary pause in their participation due to parental leave, personal circumstances, or career-related reasons.
- CCLG actively seeks to stagger term dates to maintain continuity and institutional knowledge.

#### **Size and Composition**

- The RAG will consist of no fewer than eight members at any given time.
- CCLG aims to maintain a larger pool of advisory members to:
  - Ensure a wide breadth of expertise to facilitate CCLG with managing a broad range of different types of grant schemes for children and young people's cancer research
  - Support the development of early-career researchers within the review process.
  - Maintain institutional continuity as terms expire.

#### **Grant Holding and Conflicts of Interest**

- While we aim for no more than half of RAG members to be current grant holders, the proportion of active RAG members holding CCLG grants remains small relative to the number of grants and their value in the overall portfolio.
- All RAG members must agree to and abide by CCLG's conflict of interest policy and grant review code of conduct.
- Members are asked to reconfirm adherence to these policies prior to each review cycle and must update CCLG about any changes that may affect their eligibility or impartiality.

### **Reviewing the RAG membership requirements and conditions**

CCLG will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every three years.

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