

# CCLG Research Advisory Group: Membership requirements and conditions

CCLG aims to ensure that research proposals are assessed objectively and impartially. This document details the terms and conditions within which the RAG operates and sets out the code of conduct within which RAG members are to adhere to. The role of the research advisory group and its members is set out in CCLG's 'Process for awarding new grants' document. This illustrates how the RAG and the activities RAG members may undertake fits in within the overall process of awarding new research funding.

## Code of conduct for RAG members

Members should be aware that the role of advisory board member is advisory. If CCLG has reason to believe a member of the RAG has breached the code of conduct, then he or she may be asked to step down from their RAG role.

As a condition of membership of the RAG, members agree that documents and correspondence relating to applications for funds and funding, and discussion regarding broader CCLG research strategy, are strictly confidential.

- Documents and correspondence should not be discussed with anyone else during the review process. Discussion between RAG members regarding this material should only be for the purpose of the business of RAG meeting.
- Feedback to applicants (successful or unsuccessful) will be provided by CCLG alone, to avoid confusion. RAG members should not, under any circumstances provide feedback to applicants.

## Obligations/conditions for RAG members

CCLG is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and adheres to the five principles of peer review as set out by the AMRC. These principles are embedded into CCLG's process of funding new research grants. At the heart of this process is guidance from experts (peer reviewers) in the paediatric cancer field who are independent from the CCLG administrative functions. Review by an appropriately constituted group is an essential element of the decision-making process. Members of CCLG's research advisory group are expected to adhere to the following conditions:

- **Accountability** - Charities are open and transparent about their peer review procedures and publish details, including the names of the members of scientific advisory board committees or other decision making bodies.
- **Balance** - Scientific advisory committees reflect a fair balance of experience and scientific disciplines.
- **Independent decision making** - The scientific advisory committee is independent of the charity's administrative staff and trustees.
- **Rotation** - Scientific advisory committee members have a fixed term of office and do not have tenure.
- **Impartiality** - Scientific advisory committees include a significant number of non-beneficiaries. There is a conflict of interest policy and potential beneficiaries are not present when decisions are made.

## Use of animals in research

CCLG supports the AMRC position statement on the use of animals in research. In line with AMRC guidance, all members of CCLG's RAG must support this position. Part of the role of the RAG is to assess how applicants have considered the replacement, refinement and reduction of animals in their research proposals. The RAG may also be asked to help advise CCLG about how to support these principles within our research grant funding process. RAG members should familiarise themselves with the AMRC position and its guidance. In particular, members should refer to the ARRIVE guidelines and Responsibility in the use of animals in biosciences research: expectations of the major research council and charitable funding bodies for reporting research using animals. Further information may be found on the CCLG website.

## Conditions of RAG membership

CCLG aims to ensure the RAG is comprised of a range of experts across all disciplines in the paediatric oncology field. CCLG aims to encourage diversity within the group and will seek to avoid discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity or geographical spread.

Details of RAG members will be published online within CCLG's website. On request, RAG members should provide updated information about themselves, their expertise and clinical and research interests. The RAG is independent of the internal administrative functions of CCLG the charity's day-to-day work. The RAG is independent of CCLG's trustees, and membership of the RAG must reflect this. RAG members may also be CCLG Executive members.

The RAG is an advisory group and its purpose is to draw from the expertise of its members to guide CCLG with regards to awarding new research grants. The RAG will present recommendations to the CCLG Executive and Board of Trustees for grants funded through CCLG sources. For schemes where CCLG are managing the process in partnership with other charities, the RAG will provide recommendations to the funding charity's Board of Trustees.

Each RAG member is appointed for a fixed term of office. This is currently three years. Members may serve for up to two consecutive terms, with a total period not exceeding six years. Members may not re-join for three years after retiring from the RAG.

CCLG will actively aim to stagger the membership dates to ensure a degree of continuity for the RAG. The RAG will at any one time have no fewer than 8 members. CCLG's aim is to have a larger number of advisory members to (a) provide greater breadth of expertise to draw on (b) support the development of experience from comparatively less-experienced members of the research community (c) to support the maintaining of experience of CCLGs processes as members naturally reach the end of the appointed fix-term.

The quorum for the RAG is a minimum of four members, and for each meeting it is aimed that at least half of the RAG members are present. RAG members are appointed for a fixed term of office. This is currently three years, with a second term if three years. Members may not re-join for three years after retiring from the RAG. No more than 50% of the RAG may be active grant holders.

RAG members must agree to sign and adhere to the conflict of interest policy. RAG members are asked to re-review this policy each time they are asked to review new applications. RAG members should update CCLG with regards to any changes that might affect this.