

Research Advisory Committee: Terms of Reference

1. Remit

- 1.1 The Board of Trustees of Cerebra establish the strategy and policies of the charity and ensure the effective and equitable use of the charity's resources in pursuit of its objectives.
- 1.2 The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) provides advice to Cerebra as to whether individual research grant applications merit charity funding. This involves considering the comments of peer and lay reviewers in making a judgement as to the quality and relevance of each grant application in line with Cerebra's research strategy. The RAC also evaluates the current research projects Cerebra is funding.
- 1.3 The committee will operate in accordance with these General Terms of Reference, or any other specific Supplementary Terms of Reference.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The committee must ensure the maintenance of an internationally competitive research portfolio, which is targeted to the fulfilment of Cerebra's mission, by:
 - Recommending allocation of resources on the basis of scientific excellence and relevance to Cerebra's research strategy.
 - Providing peer review of the highest international standards and engaging the appropriate additional expertise in the assessment of applications and evaluation of funded research programmes.
 - Ensuring that all research is conducted to the highest ethical standards, complies with all relevant regulations and guidelines, and is conducted in an environment which supports the highest standards of research governance.
 - Reviewing progress reports, as appropriate.
 - Proactively identifying and bringing to the attention of Cerebra new funding opportunities and new areas where Cerebra funding could make a significant impact.
 - Identifying and bringing to the attention of Cerebra opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, including joint funding opportunities.
 - Providing scientific advice to inform the development of Cerebra's research strategy
- 2.2 RAC reviews individual research grant applications (a schematic of the funding approval process can be found in Appendix B) and makes recommendations for research funding to the Board of Trustees based on their quality and scientific merit.

- 2.3 RAC is expected to ensure its recommendations have a direct benefit to people affected by brain conditions and make effective use of charitable funds and work within Cerebra's policies, plans and budgets.
- 2.4 Committee members must at all times observe the highest standards of propriety involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity within the context of the 'Seven principles of public life' set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see Appendix A).
- 2.5 Committee members have a duty to bring an independent judgement to bear on all issues considered at meetings. On appointment they must undertake to comply at all times with these Terms of Reference, act in good faith and in the best interests of the charity.
- 2.6 Unless specifically stated otherwise, committee members are appointed as individuals to fulfil the role of the committee, not as representatives of their particular profession, employer or interest group, and have a duty to act in the interests of Cerebra.
- 2.7 All members should regard it as part of their role to:
 - ensure that the committee has the opportunity to consider contrary scientific views before a decision is taken
 - share in the general responsibility to consider the wider relevance of their decisions to the field of Cerebra's research
- 2.8 These Terms of Reference should be read alongside the RAC Code of Conduct.

3. Membership

- 3.1 RAC is formed of 4-8 scientific experts responsible for making recommendations for Cerebra research funding to the trustee board.
- 3.2 Membership of the committee will be approved by the Cerebra trustees.
- 3.3 The Chair of the committee will be appointed by Cerebra Trustees.
- 3.4 Membership of the committee is for three years, renewable for a further three years. A maximum term of six years will be observed.
- 3.5 Current Cerebra grant holders and grant applicants are eligible to be on the committee, but need to comply with Cerebra's conflict of interest policy.
- 3.6 A maximum of two members should be from the same institution.
- 3.7 The Committee Chair and Cerebra Chair of trustees are responsible for ensuring that there is adequate expertise at a meeting to evaluate each proposal and it is at their discretion to postpone a proposal or committee meeting if necessary.
- 3.8 Where a lack of expertise has been identified, the Committee may co-opt experts on an ad-hoc, time limited basis where appropriate.
- 3.9 Cerebra staff may attend meetings at the charity's discretion.
- 3.10 Cerebra Trustees are not part of the committee, but the Chair of trustees, or his/her appointee, can be in attendance at meetings.

4. Role of the Chair

- 4.1 The Chair has responsibility for ensuring that RAC is an effective and accountable body, and for providing effective strategic leadership in matters such as:
- encouraging high standards of propriety;
 - ensuring that the full range of scientific opinion, including contrary scientific views are appropriately taken into account;
 - ensuring that any significant diversity of opinion among committee members is fully explored and discussed and if it cannot be reconciled is accurately reflected in the minutes;
 - ensuring that committee members act in accordance with these Terms of Reference.
- 4.2 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the views of people affected by brain conditions, as reported by the lay review of the RSN, are taken into account in all discussions about research grant applications.
- 4.3 The Chair will be expected to fulfil the following criteria:
- commitment to the aims and values of Cerebra;
 - research experience either in clinical practice (including the allied health professions) or in a university;
 - at least a seven year publication record;
 - success in obtaining research grants / awards;
 - experience of chairing groups;
 - good communication and interpersonal skills;
- 4.4 The Chair position is for three years, renewable for a further three years. A maximum term of six years will be observed.

5. Recruitment and role of committee members

- 5.1 Cerebra will issue an open call for applications through its website and newsletter.
- 5.2 Cerebra will assess applications and invite selected applicants to become members of the committee.
- 5.3 Committee members will be expected to review individual applications, evaluate current research projects funded by Cerebra, attend meetings/teleconferences and provide written comments and feedback for applicants.
- 5.4 Committee members must consider the views of people affected by brain conditions, as reported by the lay review of the RSN, in all discussions about research grant applications and evaluations.
- 5.5 Committee members will be expected to fulfil the following criteria:
- commitment to the aims and values of Cerebra;
 - research experience either in clinical practice (including the allied health professions) or in a university;
 - at least a three year publication record;
 - success in obtaining research grants / awards;
 - willingness to devote the necessary time and effort.

6. Meetings/Teleconferences

- 6.1 Dates for meetings, teleconferences and interviews will be set at least in advance by Cerebra staff in consultation with the Committee Chair.
- 6.2 The agenda for each meeting, teleconference or interview will consist of the shortlisted applications and will be circulated by Cerebra staff. Applications and reviews will be available for committee members at least two weeks in advance.
- 6.3 With the support of the Cerebra office, the committee will operate mechanisms for recording members' interests and for dealing with potential conflicts of interest during the conduct of their business.
- 6.4 Funding meetings will be minuted in full and notes will be taken for teleconferences by a Cerebra member of staff, minutes will be approved by the chair prior to being circulated.
- 6.5 The quorum for a committee meeting is three members. A committee member who is participating in the meeting by electronic means is present for the purposes of determining quorum.
- 6.6 Decisions shall be made by a show of hands and a majority basis. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have a casting vote.
- 6.7 In the absence of the appointed Chair, the committee members will elect an alternate Chair for the duration of the meeting.
- 6.8 Meetings will be attended by a limited number of staff and other representatives of Cerebra, at the discretion of the charity.

7. Conflicts of interest

- 7.1 The high standards of integrity expected by the members of the charity and the wider public require RAC members to avoid situations in which their duties and other interests conflict or where there could be a suspicion of conflict.
- 7.2 When asked to review a proposal, members need to consider whether there are any potential conflicts of interest and if so inform Cerebra as soon as possible.
- 7.3 Before each meeting / teleconference, or when asked to review an application, Cerebra staff will ask committee members to declare conflicts of interest. Conflicted members will not take part in the review process of the application, or contribute comments.
- 7.4 RAC members must read Cerebra's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- 7.5 If the Chair has a conflict of interest he or she will not attend the meeting and an alternative chair will be appointed from the committee for that one meeting.
- 7.6 Conflicted members will not contribute to recommendations or decisions affecting the application during ranking.
- 7.7 The minutes of a meeting will record decisions about conflicts of interests and any withdrawals for particular items. It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that this procedure is followed.

- 7.8 An individual who is concerned about another's potential or actual conflicts of interest should raise the issues with the Chair (in private, if possible).

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 The committees' deliberations and decision-making are confidential to allow free and frank expression of opinions, to protect the confidence of referees and individuals and to avoid premature disclosure of intentions.
- 8.2 RAC members must agree to treat as confidential all correspondence and documents sent by Cerebra (members might be receiving pre-publication, or confidential information, or proprietary information owned by the applicants).
- 8.3 Confidential information should be used solely for the purpose of assessing the relevant research or application under review, on behalf of Cerebra.
- 8.4 RAC members will not, without written consent from both Cerebra and the applicant, disclose confidential information to any third party or use confidential information for any purpose other than the purpose described in paragraph 8.3 above. This clause does not apply to any information already in the public domain prior to its disclosure via Cerebra.
- 8.5 Papers and minutes must not be disseminated or discussed outside of the review process and should be kept secure and appropriately disposed of after the review process is complete.
- 8.6 Cerebra will not use comments provided by committee members for any purpose other than is necessary for the peer review/funding process.
- 8.7 Cerebra will only release anonymised committee comments to applicants.
- 8.8 A list of committee members and professional affiliations (where applicable) is publicly available on the charity's website. Further details of committee members will only be provided following permission from the member.
- 8.9 Under freedom of information legislation, applicants may have access to their own application files on request. Therefore, all written material used to evaluate an application may be made available to the applicants. The identity of the reviewers will not be revealed to the applicants.

9. Communication of decisions

- 9.1 Only the Chief Executive, or those members of Cerebra's staff authorised to act on his behalf, may communicate funding decisions.
- 9.2 In reporting the outcome of funding grants, care will be taken to keep confidential any part played in discussion by individual members, to maintain the convention that any decision is the collective responsibility of the whole committee and to safeguard the anonymity of any referees.

10. Expenses

- I 0.1 All reasonable travel and subsistence costs incurred by members in the completion of their duties as RAC members shall be reimbursed by the charity in accordance with its Expense Policy.

I 1. Member support

- I 1.1 The Research team can assist with any enquiries. Please contact Georgia Mappa GeorgiaM@cerebra.org.uk who will act as secretary to the committee.

I 2. Review

- I 2.1 Terms of Reference will be reviewed as needed and, it is intended, at least once every three years, and notify members of amendments.

Appendix A

The Seven Principles of Public Life – The Nolan Principles

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Appendix B

Cerebra's funding approval process

