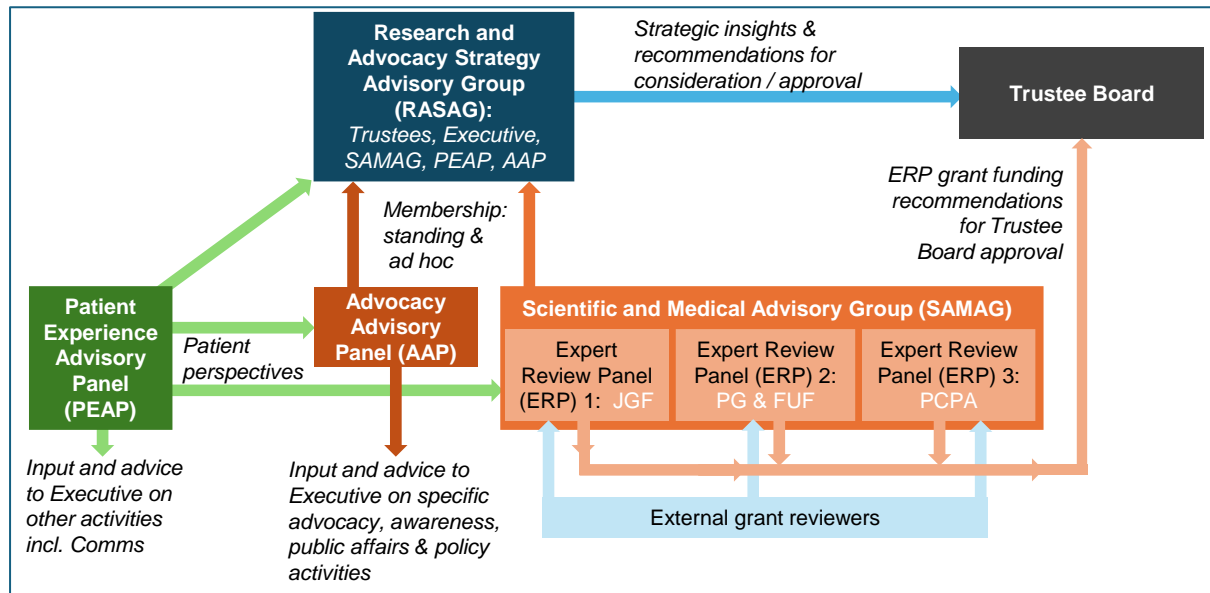


Terms of Reference and Policies for Leukaemia UK's Scientific and Medical Advisory Group and its Expert Review Panels

July 2024

1. Background

The structure and governance of independent, volunteer expert advice at Leukaemia UK is summarised below:



- i. The **Scientific and Medical Advisory Group (SAMAG)** is the collective name for its constituent **Expert Review Panels (ERPs)** which are governed by these Terms of Reference. SAMAG will not normally meet or work as a Group and will not require a standing Chair. Members of SAMAG may be offered opportunities and training to be external, expert volunteer spokespeople for Leukaemia UK.
- ii. The **Advocacy Advisory Panel (AAP)** provides expert insight and advice around Leukaemia UK's other charitable activities in advocacy, awareness, public affairs and policy. AAP has its own Terms of Reference.
- iii. The **Research and Advocacy Strategy Advisory Group (RASAG)** provides strategic insight and advice around Leukaemia UK's charitable activities, and comprises Chairs / Deputies of SAMAG Panels, representation from AAP, PEAP, LUK's Executive and Trustee Board
- iv. The **Patient Experience Advisory Panel (PEAP)** provides patient perspectives on all aspects of Leukaemia UK's charitable activities, including through SAMAG Panels and the Research and Advocacy Strategy Advisory Group (RASAG)
- v. **External grant reviewers** provide external expert reviews to complement and inform the Expert Review Panels in their recommendations
- vi. Leukaemia UK's **Executive** in this context comprises the CEO and Research & Advocacy Directorate
- vii. Leukaemia UK's **Trustee Board** make decisions about the use of charity's funds and its overall strategy

2. Terms of Reference for Leukaemia UK's Scientific and Medical Advisory Group's Expert Review Panels (ERP)

2.1. Introduction

Leukaemia UK is a registered charity with a vision to stop leukaemia devastating lives. The charity is committed to funding innovative research of the highest scientific quality by offering grants to exceptional researchers.

Leukaemia UK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities and follows its guidance on expert review: <https://www.amrc.org.uk/listing/category/amrcs-principles-of-expert-review> and its six principles: proportionality, independence, diversity, rotation, impartiality and transparency.

As part of Leukaemia UK's expert review process all research funding proposals must be reviewed by independent reviewers comprising:

- i. at least five members of the appropriate Leukaemia UK Expert Review Panel
- ii. at least two External grant reviewers
- iii. at least one representative from the Leukaemia UK Patient Experience Advisory Panel.

Recommendations for funding are decided at a meeting where a quorum of Expert Review Panel members are present, including members of Leukaemia UK secretariat as observers.

All Expert Review Panels will operate in accordance with these Terms of Reference.

2.2. Terms of Reference

This document sets out the key responsibilities and membership requirements for the Expert Review Panels (ERPs) assisting Leukaemia UK with the evaluation of research funding applications to the charity. This document should be understood in conjunction with the Leukaemia UK Expert Review Policy, Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy, which all ERP members must sign when they start their role.

The ERPs include, without limitation:

- The John Goldman Fellowship (JGF) Expert Review Panel
- The Project Grant and JGF Follow-up Fund Expert Review Panel
- The Patient Care Pioneer Award (PCPA) Expert Review Panel
- *Other specific review panels as required*

2.2.1. Remit

- *Expert review:* to provide transparent, impartial and independent expert review of the quality of the funding applications received for that particular ERP's funding scheme
- *Recommendation:* to make recommendations for funding to Leukaemia UK's Board of Trustees for research projects that are within the ERP's remit, to enable the Board to make informed decisions about spending the charity's funds, and what further due diligence might be required before grants are made

- *When required:*
 - to advise on appropriate terms and conditions that should be attached to grants
 - to consider annual reports from grant recipients and to advise Leukaemia UK on the progress/quality of the work undertaken using Leukaemia UK's funds. For example, in the case of multiple year grants, to advise Leukaemia UK on whether Leukaemia UK should consider unlocking further funding

2.2.2. Membership

Each Expert Review Panel will comprise at least six members

Criteria

- Expert Review Panel Members will be appointed by Leukaemia UK's Director of Research & Advocacy and the appropriate ERP Chair, on the basis of:
 - Proven academic expertise, knowledge, experience and credibility in fields of research relevant to the particular ERP, as demonstrated by a track record of publications and grant funding
 - A distribution of academic affiliations which, where possible, avoids more than two members from the same academic institution being on any one ERP
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion criteria, including gender balance. Where possible, ERP membership should reflect diversity across protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010, as amended
 - Willingness, availability and commitment to partake fully in the ERP's work
- To minimise travel costs, the majority of ERP members will be based in the UK
- Leukaemia UK's Board of Trustees is not required to approve the appointment of new ERP members, but it must approve the appointment of ERP Chairs
- ERPs should comprise a significant number of members not in receipt of research funding from Leukaemia UK
- Current Leukaemia UK Trustees cannot be members of an ERP

Terms

- Members will be appointed either as:
 - Full standing members (the majority) or
 - *Ad hoc* members invited if required for a specific meeting according to the range of funding applications to be considered in a particular funding round
- Full standing membership is for an initial term of three years, renewable once only for a further three years. Former ERP members are eligible to be re-appointed after a break of three years of absence from any Leukaemia UK ERP
- If an ERP member becomes ERP Chair, or the ERP Chair steps down from being Chair, before their term is complete, they can 're-start' their six years of service, so long as they do not serve for more than nine years in total across both roles

- ERP members will, by definition, comprise Leukaemia UK's Scientific and Medical Advisory Group (SAMAG) and be listed as such on Leukaemia UK's website and in annual reports. To minimise the time demands being made of volunteers, it is unlikely that individuals will be members of more than one SAMAG Panel

Expectations of members

- Reading and adherence to the requirements of the Leukaemia UK Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy

2.2.3. Chairs

- Each Expert Review Panel will have a Chair, invited by Leukaemia UK's Director of Research & Advocacy following approval by the charity's Board of Trustees
- Chairs will normally be expected to have been members of a Leukaemia UK ERP for at least two years
- The Chair will:
 - Work with Leukaemia UK's Research and Advocacy Directorate to agree the process for grant review in a particular round and set the agenda for ERP meetings
 - Work with Leukaemia UK's Research and Advocacy Directorate to ensure that there is adequate expertise at an ERP meeting to evaluate each proposal, and it is at the Chair's discretion to postpone consideration of a proposal if necessary. Where a lack of expertise has been identified, the ERP may co-opt experts on an ad-hoc, time-limited basis where appropriate
 - Support the enforcement of the Leukaemia UK Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Chair ERP meetings fairly, inclusively, respectfully and effectively; incorporating the views of the Patient Representative(s) and reflecting the majority view of the Panel, arbitrating where there may be differences of opinion, and exercising a 'casting vote' if required
 - Present the funding recommendations of the ERP to Leukaemia UK's Board of Trustees
 - Nominate a Deputy if required due to absence or conflict of interest during the Panel's reviewing activities (see below)
 - Be invited to contribute to Leukaemia UK's Research and Advocacy Strategy Advisory Group
- Being the Chair of an ERP is considered a separate role from being a regular member of that ERP
- The ERP need not have a fixed Deputy Chair but, where one is appointed, they will be based at a different institution from the Chair, and will generally act as chair of the ERP meeting(s) on any matters where the Chair has a conflict of interest. The Deputy Chair will serve in the role of Deputy Chair according to their ERP membership term, where applicable

2.2.4. Ways of working

- ERPs will meet as often as is required by the funding schedule and as specified in the published review process for that particular ERP's funding scheme. Meeting secretariat will be provided by Leukaemia UK
- A quorum for an ERP meeting is five members or 50%, whichever is higher. A member who is participating in the meeting remotely by electronic means is present for the purposes of quorum
- Staff of Leukaemia UK may attend meetings in an ex-officio capacity.
- The ERP will establish a scored, priority rank ordering for funding applications, with a cut-off point to separate applications which are deemed potentially fundable with sufficient budget from applications which are non-fundable, irrespective of budget
- Leukaemia UK will prepare written summaries of ERP outcomes and recommendations for the Board. These summaries will be approved by the ERP Chair or Deputy, who will then present the recommendations to Leukaemia UK's Board. If the ERP Chair or a nominated Deputy is not able to attend the relevant section of the designated Board meeting, then Leukaemia UK's Director of Research and Advocacy will present the ERP's recommendations. The Board will make the final decision on awards based on the ERP's recommendations and the budget available
- After the Board meeting and outcomes are known, Leukaemia UK may provide written feedback to unsuccessful applicants if requested, which may require additional input from the ERP Chair or Deputy

2.2.5. Expenses

- All SAMAG members are unpaid volunteers, although they may claim reasonable out of pocket expenses and will be reimbursed in line with Leukaemia UK's financial procedures

2.2.6. Review

- Leukaemia UK will endeavour to review these Terms of Reference, if necessary, every two years

3. Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Leukaemia UK's Scientific and Medical Advisory Group's Expert Review Panels

3.1. Overview

Leukaemia UK's Conflict of Interest policy relates to any Expert Review Panel or other committee set up to assess proposals for funding. Members of Leukaemia UK's Board of Trustees adhere to the same principles, which are embodied in the governance of the Charity. A register of interests is kept and signed by all those concerned; it is updated every two years and/or more regularly, as required.

The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect the charity and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its volunteer advisors might interfere with their ability to work towards the pursuit of the charity's objectives.

3.2. Expert Review process

Leukaemia UK aims to ensure that all research proposals are assessed impartially and objectively. All applications are reviewed by an independent Expert Review Panel (ERP), consisting of at least five members. As part of its commitment to the impartiality and integrity of the review process Leukaemia UK has set down a code of conduct, as listed below. If Leukaemia UK has reason to believe that a member of an ERP has breached the code of conduct, they may be asked to step down as an ERP member.

3.3. Code of conduct

3.3.1. General: Expert Review Panel members will:

- Work to ensure that all research proposals are assessed thoroughly, fairly, impartially and objectively
- Make reasonable efforts to ensure that their reviewing commitments can be met, and if not, provide as much notice as possible to Leukaemia UK to find alternative reviewers
- Conduct themselves professionally, and will treat other ERP members, Patient Representatives and Leukaemia UK Staff and their views with courtesy and respect
- Respect the agreed process and the authority of the ERP Chair or their Deputy in this process
- Inform Leukaemia UK straightway if (i) there are any previously upheld allegations of bullying, harassment or other serious misconduct against them from their current or former employer(s), or (ii) their employer is formally investigating any allegations of bullying, harassment or other serious misconduct against them, as well as the outcome of that investigation. If such allegations are upheld in either case, the Panel member will be required to resign from any Leukaemia UK Panels or volunteer work

3.3.2. Confidentiality: As a condition of participation reviewers agree that documents and correspondence relating to applications for funds and funding are strictly confidential and therefore:

- Should not be disseminated

- Should not be discussed with anyone else during review, or either before or after the review/decision meeting. No discussion should occur between panel members except during the decision meeting
- Should a reviewer have a vested interest (organisational, collaborative, personal or other) in the outcome of a grant application they should declare it. The reviewer must not assess the application or take part in any discussions with regard to a funding decision
- Feedback to applicants (successful or unsuccessful) will be provided by Leukaemia UK only to avoid confusion. Expert Review Panel members should not, under any circumstances, provide feedback directly to an applicant
- Any hard copy printouts should be kept secure and disposed of securely after the decision has been reached
- Reviewers have a right to expect that their comments will be treated in confidence by both Leukaemia UK staff and other members of the ERP
- Any feedback to funding applicants will be anonymised. While membership of Leukaemia UK's Expert Review Panels will be publicly available, the identity of reviewers in relation to specific grants will be kept confidential

3.4. Conflict of Interest Policy

3.4.1. Purpose

Leukaemia UK aims to ensure that the highest standards are applied to the allocation of its research funds and that the process of doing so is both impartial and credible

3.4.2. Definitions

The following non-exhaustive list includes conflicts of interest for all Expert Review Panel members (including the usual Chair) which would prevent them from participating in the Expert Review Panel's reviewing activities within a specific round:

- Being a Lead Applicant / Co-Applicant
- Being in a supervisory relationship with the Lead Applicant(s), now or in the past 3 years

The following non-exhaustive list includes conflicts of interest for reviewers which would allow them to participate in the Expert Review Panel's reviewing activities within a specific round, but excludes them from reviewing, scoring or commenting upon particular applications where they:

- Have a close personal, business or professional relationship with the Lead Applicant(s)
- Are based at the same institution as the Lead Applicant(s), or have been in the previous 12 months (even if the Lead Applicant(s) are not known personally to them)
- Have collaborated with the Lead Applicant(s) in the previous 3 years as defined by (i) co-authorship of scientific papers (except for publications from large scientific consortia or from workshops or consensus groups) or (ii) submitting a grant application or receiving a grant award from any organisation as a co-applicant or named collaborator
- Have any other relationship which could compromise, or cause a reasonably-informed outsider to doubt, the objectivity of the evaluation of the grant

application

The following instance represents a potential conflict of interest to be resolved in discussion with External Review Panel Chair or Deputy and Leukaemia UK:

- Being at the same institution as a named collaborator (rather than an applicant)

3.4.3. Declaring, Managing and Resolving Conflicts of Interest

Leukaemia UK's Research and Advocacy Directorate will work with Expert Review Panel members to ensure that actual or potential conflicts of interest are flagged or declared, and appropriate action taken.

Leukaemia UK recognises that the majority of conflicts or potential conflicts will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long-term restrictions on an individual's ability to volunteer for the charity or to sit on its Expert Review Panels. In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual's ability to continue in their volunteer position with Leukaemia UK. Where such a situation relates to a member of an Expert Review Panel, the matter will be discussed by the Chair of that ERP together with a Leukaemia UK staff member. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the ERP as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.

In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists, they should report this to Leukaemia UK. Leukaemia UK shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and, where possible, will decide on an appropriate course of action. In some cases, the potential conflict of interest will be discussed with the Chair for a final decision.

If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of the review committee, then s/he should raise the matter with the Chair of the appropriate Expert Review Panel.

3.5. Updating the policy

Leukaemia UK will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years in consultation with the Board of Trustees that approves the policy.