



THE ROLE OF LAY MEMBERS IN THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ANIMAL WELFARE ETHICAL REVIEW BODY (AWERB)

The role of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body

The University's Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) considers the ethical, welfare and related aspects of the use of animals in science. To fulfil this function the membership of AWERB brings together a range of people with relevant expertise and perspectives. It also actively seeks to widen its membership in order to take into account the views of lay people – who may be independent of the University - who have no personal responsibilities or other involvement in the laboratory use of animals.

Who can be a lay member of the AWERB?

Lay members of the AWERB may be drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and fields of work which are *unrelated to animal use*. There is no 'typical' lay member - they might include, for example, individuals from the local community, clergy or public services; managers, administrators, lawyers, librarians, safety officers; or academics from the arts or social sciences.

Why are lay members important for the AWERB?

Lay members can bring a range of important benefits to ethical review in relation to the use of animals, and to ethical review more widely, including:

- **providing a different perspective:** asking questions that people more deeply involved in the research might not identify or think of asking; viewing established practice and accepted norms with a "fresh eye"; and stimulating new or different ways of thinking about the ethical, animal welfare or scientific issues
- **supplying a degree of public representation:** bringing a societal perspective to consideration of animal experiments, which are often funded by public money and carried out in the public's name. Individual lay members are not expected to represent and convey the full spectrum of public opinion, but their participation in AWERB is a contribution to openness and can help the scientists see how members of the public might view their work; and
- **helping to ensure the integrity of the ethical review body:** from an independent stand-point, checking that the AWERB's procedures are rigorous, that all participants play an active part, and that decisions and advice are acted upon.

The benefits listed above rely on lay members being able to ask pertinent questions, which:

- **can be from the animals' point of view**, with the aim of making a positive difference for animal welfare
- **may address scientific aspects**, with the aim of understanding the benefits that are sought, how these can be achieved with the least possible impact on the animals, and why alternatives cannot be used; and
- **can help to ensure that the justification for using** animals is rigorously evaluated.

Fulfilling the role of a lay member

To deliver the benefits of lay participation listed above, lay members (and other members of AWERB) need to feel confident and comfortable in their role. In particular, they should:

- **not be worried about lacking in scientific expertise:** by definition, lay members are not experts in this field – but neither are other AWERB members, when discussions move outside their particular specialist areas
- **have the confidence to ask a question or initiate a discussion on any area that they feel is important:** this might also enable other members of the AWERB to enter more fully into discussions.
- **be open-minded, fair and impartial:** they should be prepared to 'think outside the box' and challenge the status quo, but also listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to differing views
- **get to know the other participants in the AWERB, and other relevant University staff:** talking with other lay members can be especially helpful and the support of a challenging AWERB chair is very valuable, particularly when that chair is also a lay person
- **obtain as much information as possible to help them in their role:** e.g. about the AWERB itself and the work under discussion, and where to go to for advice and information on other issues. Visits to animal facilities and discussions with relevant animal care and scientific staff can also be very helpful
- **have realistic expectations** of what they can achieve.

Meetings and time commitment for lay members

- AWERB holds five meetings per year. These meetings normally take place in February, April, July, September and November and they are scheduled to last for two hours.
- In addition there is an AWERB sub-committee which meets monthly throughout the year to consider all the research project licence applications, and mid-term and retrospective reviews. These meetings can last for two to three hours but where possible they are 'shared' between lay members, to reduce the time commitment on individuals.

Payment of expenses

- All lay appointments to the AWERB are in the nature of public service appointments and no remuneration is made. However, members are eligible to claim reimbursement of travelling expenses for attendance at meetings of AWERB and its sub-committee. Claims will be reimbursed in accordance with the University's standard terms and conditions for payment of expenses.

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