

# **Expression of Interest – member of the public and those with experience of Tusla services**

# **Tusla Child and Family Agency Research Ethics Committee**

## Introduction

A Research Ethics Committee (REC) provides independent advice to participants, researchers, funders, sponsors, employers, organisations and professionals on the extent to which proposals for research studies comply with recognised ethical standards[[1]](#footnote-1).

The Tusla Child and Family Agency REC is an independent committee formally approved by the Tusla Board. The REC is supported by Tusla’s National Research Office.

Tusla’s REC acts in accordance with best international practice as laid down by the *Declaration of Helsinki and* Codes of Professional Conduct and Ethics such as the Health and Social Care Professionals’ Registration Board and relevant professional organisations. In recognition of the role and value of patient and public involvement (PPI) in research, and cultural diversity, Tusla is inviting applications via expression of interest from members of the public and those with experience of Tusla services to be a member of this REC.

## Role Description

REC members are required to:

* preview research applications to the Child and Family Agency REC and to carry out a detailed review on all research applications assigned to them by the REC Chair.
* declare conflicts of interests where they arise[[2]](#footnote-2).
* provide verbal and/or written feedback to the REC chair on research applications reviewed.
* engage in and contribute to discussions about REC applications at REC meetings.
* support the REC to reach a consensus decision on full approval, approval with revisions, resubmission or research declined.
* maintain confidentiality in respect of the work of the REC at all times and sign a confidentiality agreement.
* work with and maintain respectful relationships with all committee members, the REC administrator and the REC Chair in the work of the REC and all matters pertaining to the REC.
* notify the REC chair and/or administrator of any absences expected or unexpected.
* demonstrate and promote Tusla’s values of trust, respect, empathy, integrity and working together.
* Familiarise and work within the proposed national research database that will operate a web-based version of the REC application for applicants, and back office functionality for reviewers.

## Membership

The REC is seeking the following categories of members:

* Members of the public who have an interest in research pertaining to child and family welfare and /or in the areas of services which Tusla provide and are listed below
* Members of the public who have availed of any of Tusla or child and family services in the past

For our principles of engaging and recruiting Public Contributors please see Appendix.

## Eligibility Criteria for membership

The Child and Family Agency has responsibility for the following range of services:

* Child Welfare and Protection Services, including family support services
* Family Resource Centres and associated national programmes
* Early Years (pre-school) Inspection Services
* Educational Welfare responsibilities including School Completion Programmes and Home School Liaison
* Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services
* Services related to the psychological welfare of children
* Adoption & Alternative Care

Further information is available on [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)

Public Contributors to the REC are not required to have experience of sitting on a REC or applying for ethical approval for academic or other research requirements. An academic qualification is not required. Induction training will be provided and members will be required to make themselves available for this.

REC members are required to demonstrate the following skills and competencies including the ability to: review and critically analyse applications, to formulate opinions, to assess potential risk to research participants, to provide accurate and clear verbal and written feedback, to demonstrate good communication skills and maintain relationships across the REC.

Public Contributors on the REC should draw from their lived experience and on their knowledge of any discipline or service area they have availed of in the past. They should also bring a broad interest in research and understanding of the wider services provided by Tusla.

Tulsa Children’s First training will be required from all REC members before they take up position on the committee.

All REC members are required to attend the REC Induction training programme. This will be delivered in an online format. Ongoing training will also be a feature of REC membership.

## Attendance

All REC members are expected to attend REC meetings in person. REC meetings will take place in the Brunel building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8 or via teleconference or MS teams as circumstances require and as per the Covid Crisis Management Advice. It is anticipated that both attendance at a REC meeting and related preparation will require a commitment of 16 hours within any given six-week period.

Tusla REC members will be assigned to the REC for the duration of 3 years. The role is voluntary. Travel and subsistence expenses will be paid in compliance with public sector guidelines which will apply if and when meetings return to face to face delivery.

## Frequency

Meetings will convene every 6 weeks and REC members are expected to attend a minimum of two thirds of all scheduled meetings annually i.e. attend a minimum of 6 meetings out of an expected 9 meetings per calendar year.

## Quorum

The meeting can only proceed when at least one third of REC members are present, the Chair or Vice-Chair and at least one public contributor.

## Reporting relationships

Dr Patricia Kennedy has been appointed as REC Chairperson, and will work with Tusla’s National Research Office on establishing the REC, which will come into effect in 2021. REC members will report to the REC chair and communicate with the REC administrator as required. The minutes of the meeting will be prepared by the REC Administrator, in consultation with the Chair, and other members as necessary.

## Administration

The administration of the REC will be overseen by the REC administrator in consultation with the REC chairperson.

## 10. ICT requirements

An account will be set up by Tusla ICT to access all applications submitted. This can be accessed via a secure URL on a web browser. The latest version of Chrome is recommended (you can also use Microsoft Edge, Internet Explorer or Safari]. The public REC members will log in using the account details provided. There is no other client-side application required.



# Expression of Interest Application Form:

# Member of the public and those with experience of Tusla services

On behalf of Tusla Child and Family Agency, the National Research Office invites those interested and eligible to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to join the Tusla Child and Family Agency Research Ethics Committee. There are six available positions available for Public Contributors on the Research Ethics Committee. These positions will be a mixture of past services users and members of the public.

In the event of oversubscription, persons will be selected on the basis of information detailed in their supporting statement and at skills match meeting. A panel will be formed for three years.

Please read the Tusla Child and Family Agency Research Ethics Committee EOI document and the Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures prior to completing this EOI form.

Please complete this application in full and include a short supporting statement. The supporting statement can be in narrative or bullet points.

**Personal Details**

**Personal Details**

|  |
| --- |
| **PERSONAL DETAILS** |
| **Forename:**  |  | **Surname:** |  |
| **Address:** |  |
| **Telephone number(s):** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |

**Statement to support your application for the role of member of Tusla’s Research Ethics Committee (REC) (500 words).**

Please describe why you want to become a member of Tusla REC and include any specific contribution that you would make to the REC. Specific contribution may relate to your personal background and use of Tusla or child and family services in the past, your lived experience and knowledge and experience that relates to Tusla’s service areas, or your broad interest and understanding of research. Please add any other information that is relevant to the role.

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

**Please provide names of 2 referees: i.e., suitable persons known to you to provide a character reference**

|  |
| --- |
| **1.**  |
| **2.**  |

**Declaration**

I confirm that:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | The information that I have provided on this application has been honestly and accurately expressed to the best of my knowledge and belief. |
|  | I do not know, or am aware of any conflict or potential conflict of interest, which would prevent my participation on the Research Ethics Committee. |
|  | I will adhere to the Terms and Conditions as set out for my participation on the REC. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: |  |
| Name of applicant: |  | Date: |  |

Please note that all personal data shall be treated as confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). All documents (applications and references will be held by Lynn Hirtes, REC Administrator for the purpose of the selection process. If applicant is not suitable or the membership is not taken up, documents will be deleted (paper and electronically) at the end of the selection process. Successful member details, and those panelled, will be held for the duration of the committee (3 years).

Please submit completed EOI’s to the REC administrator Lynn Hirtes recadmin@tusla.ie

Informal queries can be directed to Dr Edel Tierney; edel.tierney1@tusla.ie

**Please note: The closing date for applications is Thursday 19th November no later than 5pm. Late applications will not be accepted.**

**Selection Process**

Suitable applicants will be invited for a skills match meeting with the REC Chairperson and second nominated person. This interview will take place in an online format. Applicants will be notified of the date and time of skills match meeting by email to the address provided on this form.

Persons will be selected as REC members on the basis of their suitability provided in their supporting statement and at skills match meeting. A panel may be formed where remaining applicants meet suitability criteria and the panel will be retained for 3 years.

Incomplete applications without a supporting statement will not be considered.

## Key Principles for Engaging and Recruiting Public Contributors on Tusla Independent Research Ethics Committee

* Public Contributors on the REC may include: parents, other family members, carers, foster carers, former service users, (i.e., those with previous experience of Tusla services for example: family support services, educational welfare services, social work and social care services), the general public or a mixture of the above.
* The term Public Contributor will be used in this context until the REC is up and running and the contributors themselves will then choose an appropriate title.
* Public Contributors will be recruited via an expression of interest posted on various platforms, e.g. Tusla advocacy groups such as Tusla Advisory Group (TAG) or Empowering People in Care (EPiC), newsletters, social media, other digital fora.
* The selection criteria for Public Contributors will require independence from the Agency and non-involvement in scientific, clinical practice or legal work.
* Public Contributors will be required to represent their own personal experience and/or a broader experience as they see fit. The context for their participation on the REC is their lived experience of Tusla services and/or interest in research in general. They may review the ethics application via a particular lens of their lived experience. They may also wish to contribute to a wider discussion on ethics in research the focus being ethics in research.
* The process of recruitment will explore motivation and understanding of the public contributor via a skills match process and will emphasise that the role involves reviewing research applications to improve the ethical standards of research. The Chair of the REC will be involved in this eligibility process.
* Past users of Tusla services may be considered a ‘vulnerable’ population. However, we need to strike a balance and will not assume ‘vulnerability’ based solely on someone’s past use of Tusla services. With this in mind Tusla and the REC must be mindful of the risk of re- traumatisation, which certain research applications may bring to the fore for some who have been engaged with Tusla services in the past.
* Procedures for managing disclosures and distress arising from reviewing applications have been developed and supports will be made available to all REC members should they be required.
* At least two public contributors should attend each meeting so that a diversity of public perspectives can be represented.
* All REC members will require ongoing support in their role. A variety of supports will be made available.
* To engage fully on the REC all members on the Committee will receive induction training. A range of topics will be covered.
* This is a voluntary position, which means that contributors will not be paid. All REC members will be compensated via Travel and Subsistence reimbursement.
* The work of the REC will be guided by Tusla policies and procedures.
1. Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) (2012) International Review of Research

Ethics Structures. Available at <https://www.hiqa.ie/publications/international-review-research-ethics-structures> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conflict of interest is defined in the REC Stand Operating Procedures as follows:

A conflict of interest arises when a member (or members) of a Research Ethics Committee holds interests with respect to specific applications for review that may jeopardise his/her ability to provide a free and independent evaluation of the research focused on the protection of the research participants. This includes actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest may arise when a REC member has financial, material, institutional or social ties to the research which must be declared. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)