

**Tusla Child and Family Agency Research Ethics Committee (REC)**

**Expression of Interest Document – External Member**

1. **Introduction**

The Child and Family Agency’s (Tusla) Research Ethics Committee (REC) is appointed by the Agency to review research ethics applications to assess formally if the research is ethical. A 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 of the Agency that is formally approved by the Tusla Board. The REC’s implementation and operations will be supported by Tusla’s National Research Office, Transformation and Policy Directorate.

Tusla’s REC acts in accordance with the *Declaration of Helsink*i and statements of appropriate ethical practice produced by relevant professional organisations. This includes adherence to the GDPR regulations, Data Protection legislation, Health Research Regulations 2018[[2]](#footnote-2) and requirements and to Codes of Professional Conduct and Ethics such as the Health and Social Care Professionals’ Registration Board. It follows international good practice guidelines, relevant EU Directives, national guidelines and national draft and enacted legislation pertaining to the ethical conduct of research, with respect to both applicants and the community, which includes guidelines for declaring and managing conflicts of interest. Tusla recognises the role and value of patient and public involvement (PPI) and cultural diversity in research.

**Tusla’s National Research Office is inviting applications via expression of interest from applicants external to Tusla to become members of the Research Ethics Committee.**

The role of REC member is available for three years. This role is voluntary.

1. **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[[3]](#footnote-3).
* review research applications in line with best practice and ethical standards as per the Standard REC Application Form to the best of their knowledge and ability.
* 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.
* work with and maintain respectful relationships with all committee members, the REC administrator and the REC Chair in the functioning 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
1. **Membership**

The REC seeks a broad representation of expert members, specialists or relevant professionals and academics as relevant to the services provided by Tusla. The Child and Family Agency has responsibility for the following range of services:

* Child Protection and Welfare 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)

1. **Eligibility Criteria / qualifications and / or experience**
	1. The REC is seeking the following categories of **external members:**
* Primary Care representative from a primary care setting
* Mental Health Service representative
* Research Academic representative
* Child Advocacy representative
* Family advocacy representative

4.2 REC members are required to have experience of applying for ethical approval for academic or other research requirements.

4.3 Tusla Children First training will be required from all REC members before they take up position on the committee.

1. **Skills, Competencies and / or knowledge**

Tusla 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 provide accurate and clear verbal and written feedback, to demonstrate excellent communication skills and maintain relationships across the REC.

Tusla REC members are required to demonstrate an understanding and familiarity of the following: principles and best practice of research ethics, research design, research methodologies, participant selection and recruitment and approaches to data analysis. Tusla REC members should draw from their own knowledge base of their respective discipline or service area and should have a broad understanding of the wider services provided by Tusla.

1. **Attendance**

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. Travel and subsistence expenses will be met under the terms and conditions of Tusla’s financial regulations.

1. **Induction Training**

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

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **Reporting arrangements**

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.

1. **Administration**

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

1. **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 external REC members will log in using the account details provided. There is no other client-side application required.



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

**Expression of Interest Form – external members**

Tusla’s 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.

Please read the Tusla Child and Family Agency Research Ethics Committee EOI document and the Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedure 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.

We are seeking one representative from each of the following professional groups/organisations: Primary Care, Mental Health, Child Advocacy, Family Advocacy, Academic Researcher. Therefore, there are 5 positions for external members available on the Research Ethics Committee.

Incomplete applications without a supporting statement will not be considered.

**Personal Details**

|  |
| --- |
| **PERSONAL DETAILS** |
| **Forename:**  |  | **Surname:** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |
| **Mobile number:** |  |

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

Please detail why you want to become a member and include any specific contribution that you would make to the Research Ethics Committee. Specific contribution may relate to your professional background and/knowledge and experience that relates to Tusla’s service areas.

Demonstrate your knowledge of research ethics principles and best practice and indicate your experience if any in the area of research ethics and making applications for research ethics approval.

Please add any other information that is relevant to the role.

**Please enter your supporting statement in no more than 500 words below:**

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

**Please provide names of 2 referees i.e. a current and/or previous employer and/or academic referee, state the relationship with the applicant and provide a contact for them:**

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

**Declaration**

I confirm:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 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 application form by email to the REC administrator Lynn Hirtes recadmin@tusla.ie . Informal queries can be directed to marian.brattman@tusla.ie

**Please note: The closing date for applications is Thursday 19th November 2020 no later than 5pm. Late and/or incomplete applications will not be accepted.**

**Selection Process**

* Eligible applicants will be invited for a skills match meeting with the REC chairperson and second nominated person, this meeting will take place in an online format. It is intended that the skills match meeting will take place 7th to 18th December.
* Applicants will be notified of the date and time of the skills match meeting by email to their email address provided in this application form.
* Persons will be selected as REC members on the basis of their eligibility provided in their supporting statement and at skills match meeting. A panel may be formed where remaining applicants meet eligibility criteria and the panel will be retained for 3 years.

Incomplete applications without a supporting statement will not be considered.

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. http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/314/made/en/pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Conflict of interest is defined in the REC SOPs 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-3)