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# **RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC)**

**The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) invites applications from external suitably qualified individuals who are interested in becoming the Independent Chairperson of Tusla’s Research Ethics Committee**

**Opening date for Applications: 20th July 2023**

**Closing date for Applications: 12 noon, 7th August 2023**

**How to apply:** All interested persons must provide the following:

* Personal statement clearly stating suitability for the role as linked to the stated competencies (250 words max)
* Comprehensive CV to include: contact details, details of qualifications, relevant experience and specific skills relevant to the role
* Completed “**Eligibility Criteria Questions”** as requested within this document.
* Names of two referees

All of the above must be **emailed** to Denise Nugent; [denise.nugent@tusla.ie](mailto:denise.nugent@tusla.ie) before the specific closing date for applications.

## **Role description**

The current role is available for three years, with the possibility of a second consecutive term with Tusla’s Board approval.  Remuneration is currently paid at a rate of **€295 per seven hour working day and pro-rata for any periods of less than a seven hour working day**. The anticipated time commitment for the role is no more than 35 working hours over 6 week rolling period.  **Entitlement to remuneration is in accordance with Tusla’s vendor/service provider set up, Travel and Subsistence (T&S) paid via My Self-Service, payroll payment request and travel set up / authorisation, Declaration and Disclaimer form.** Expenses will be met under the terms and conditions of Tusla’s financial regulations.  Please note that the role may impact on a potential applicant’s current working and /or pension terms and conditions.

## **Location**

Meetings are scheduled every 6 weeks. To align with Tusla’s blended working policy, meetings may alternate between face-to-face meetings in Brunel and/or other Tusla locations and via Tusla MS Teams. The Chairperson will set out the schedule on commencement of role, with the expectation that members must attend both face-to-face and online meetings as scheduled.

If and when required, a hot-desk will be made available to the successful applicant.

## **Proposed Interview Dates**

September 2023, pending interest and Board availability.The criteria for short listing are based on the requirements of the role as outlined in the eligibility criteria and skills, competencies and/or knowledge section of this application. Those successful at the shortlisting stage of this process will be called forward to interview. The interview panel will comprise three persons – two expert panel members and an Independent Chairperson supplied by Tusla HR.

## **Contact for Informal Enquiries**

Marian Brattman, Research Manager. E-mail: [marian.brattman@tusla.ie](mailto:marian.brattman@tusla.ie) Mobile: 0860211671

## **Background and independence of the Tusla Research Ethics Committee**

One of the specific functions of the Agency, as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 Part 2 Section 8 (1)(f) is to “Undertake or commission research relating to its functions”.  As part of this function, the Agency has established an Independent Tusla Research Ethics Committee. The REC is an impartial and independent committee of the Agency, formally approved by the Tusla Board and governance of Tusla’s REC sits under the Tusla Board’s Service and Quality (SQC) sub-committee. The Child and Family Agency’s (Tusla) Research Ethics Committee (REC) is a group of people appointed by the Agency to review research ethics applications to assess formally if the research is ethical.

Further information on Tusla's REC is available here <https://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/research-ethics-committee/>

The REC is supported by Tusla’s National Research Office, Quality and Regulation Directorate.

## **Role of Chairperson**

The main purpose of the role is to Chair the independent and impartial Tusla Research Ethics Committee to ensure that all proposed research applications seen by the Committee receive ethical review within the Tusla REC guidelines 2015 and the Tusla REC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) 2022. <https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/REC_SOP_Version_2_May_2022.pdf>. The SOP governs the operation of the Independent Committee and is subject to review every two years including review by the Chair/Vice-Chair and in consultation with members, and further change as the Tusla Board may determine necessary.

The Chairperson as leader of the committee is responsible for the committee function, ensuring that all ethical issues are explored, and clear decisions made and recorded. The independent Chairperson’s appointment will be approved by the Tusla Board.

The Chairperson will have a role in membership selection of other members of the REC, supported by the National Research Office, through a skills match process.

The Chairperson will work with the Tusla REC Administrator, recognising their separate but complementary responsibilities in managing REC functions; the Chairperson will receive support from the Administrator on all issues of process, which are governed by the REC SOP, including the use of the Tusla National Research Database. The Tusla National Research Database enables applicants to submit their research ethics applications to Tusla’s Independent Research Ethics Committee (REC) via an electronic form, which once completed and submitted, is received by the Research Ethics Committee Administrator. A second component of the database, which has recently been operationalized enables the REC to assign, review and make decisions about applications electronically, as well as initiate and maintain ongoing contact with applicants once their application has been approved.

The Tusla Board Appointed Chairperson duties are to:

* Chair 6-weekly meetings (which may be subject to some minor changes to accommodate leave arrangements) of the Research Ethics Committee ensuring that ethical issues are explored and debated.
* Assuming lead reviewer role, where necessary, and to be responsible for the time management of the committee meeting.
* Ensure compliance with the Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures
* Implement, with support of the REC Administrator, all REC communication in line with REC SOP processes and timelines.
* Promote the courteous treatment of members, researchers, and other attendees, if required, attending the meeting.
* Ensure that during the meeting a decision is reached and recorded and that the methods of making decisions are agreed and appropriate in line with REC SOP processes.
* Promote the effective working of the committee as a cohesive group.
* Be available to the REC Administrator (via email, via MS Teams or in person) on a planned or ad/hoc daily basis, (for no more than 35 working hours every 6 weeks), to include the following:
* Check and approve the Minutes (drafted by the REC Administrator) in a timely manner to allow decision letters to be sent within timelines,
* Sign the minutes,
* Sign letters when required.
* Provide general advice and guidance to the REC Administrator and Committee members.
* Liaise with the relevant research structures and other relevant structures within Tusla, where appropriate e.g., Tusla Legal.
* Liaise with relevant academic institutions, where appropriate
* Ensure an annual report is issued to Tusla Board and provide the Chairperson’s introduction. The annual report should include feedback from REC members, applicants, supervisor, the National Research Office team, and others as deemed appropriate as relevant to the effective working of the REC.
* Be aware of and ensure that applicants to the REC, REC members and potential members, are treated fairly and equally in accordance with Tusla values – Respect, Trust, Kindness, Empowerment -, with Equality legislation, Tusla’s Public Sector duty and principles of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).
* Administer the REC Distress Protocol, with support from the NRO, if and when required.
* Review all Agency Consultation protocols and/or research activity plans to determine if full ethical approval is required as per Tusla guidance [Determining when Ethical Approval is Required; Guidance for Tusla Child and Family Agency staff](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Guidnace_on_when_ethical_approval_is_required_Approved_Nov_2020.pdf)

A Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee who is formally appointed and approved by the Tusla Board must agree:

* to take part in continuing professional development appropriate to their role.
* maintain confidentiality regarding applications, meeting deliberations, information about research participants and related matters.
* be willing to have their name, profession and affiliation published on the Tusla Research Ethics Committee webpage.
* attend at least two-thirds of all scheduled Research Ethics Committee meetings in each year.

## **Specific duties and Relationships**

### Lead the Research Ethics Committee through convening and chairing of meetings to ensure:

* Review of research applications within Tusla’s remit and scope.
* Provision of timely, comprehensive, and independent reviews of the ethics of proposed studies
* Oversee the authority of the Research Ethics Committee to approve (with or without revisions) or decline applications for research, on the basis of ethical considerations only.
* Promote responsible research and practice through the operation of the Research Ethics Committee[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Assess the potential benefits and risks of proposed studies to research participants, the organisation and to wider society.
* Advocate and encourage ethical standards of practice in research; protect research participants from unnecessary harm; preserve the research participants’ rights and through its functions, provide reassurance to the public that best practice is being applied.

### **Relationship with the Research Ethics Committee Administrator**

* Liaise with Research Ethics Committee Administrator, by phone, MS Teams and/or email and through the National Research Database system regarding:
  + Scheduling of an annual calendar of Research Ethics Committee meetings
  + Attendance at the Research Ethics Committee or ensuring the attendance of the Vice-chair to be quorate in order to proceed with a meeting,
  + Scheduling of issues to be brought before the Research Ethics Committee
* Ensure meetings follow a previously prepared agenda including:
* The date, time and venue of the meeting
* Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda
* Minutes of the previous REC meeting
* Matters arising at the previous meeting(s) that the Committee specifically indicated that it wished to review.
* Applications for ethical review to be considered at the meeting.
* Consideration of requests for expedited reviews.
* Consideration of whether applicants should be invited to present applications or to elaborate on specific issues.
* Follow-up directly with an applicant, (or via delegation to an appropriate REC member), with feedback and clarification on their application in a timely manner, if requested
* consideration of additional expertise, where required for input on applications or matters arising.
* seek advice from Tusla’s Legal Services as required.
* ensure deliberations and decisions of the Research Ethics Committee meetings are accurately presented in the form of written minutes signing off an annual report detailing the activities, actions, and decisions of the Research Ethics Committee
* Manage appeals and complaints in accordance with the REC SOP, Tusla’s Tell Us Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure.

### **Relationship with the Research Ethics Committee Vice-Chairperson(s) (appointed by the REC)**

* Liaise with Research Ethics Committee Vice-Chairperson regarding:
  + Attendance at the Research Ethics Committee or ensuring the attendance of the Vice-chairperson to be quorate in order to proceed with a meeting.
  + Coordinating review for approved requests for expedited reviews with Vice-Chairperson, or via a REC member delegate, and placing on the agenda for discussion at the next scheduled meeting.
  + Formally delegating to Vice-Chairperson in Chair’s absence.

### **Relationship with the Research Ethics Committee Members**

* Liaise with Research Ethics Committee Members to ensure all applications are previewed and to carry out a detailed review on all applications assigned to them by the REC Chairperson
* Convene and chair the decision-making procedure as follows:
* Ensure decisions are arrived at through consensus where possible. The application under review will be approved when all members present are willing to allow the application to proceed.
* Invite members who have conflicts of interest to declare these at the meeting and ensuring that these are recorded in the minutes.
* in cases of approval pending revision(s) suggested by the REC, ensure clear suggestions for revision and the procedure for having the application re-evaluated are specified.
* ensure declined applications are supported by clearly stated reasons.
* Oversee the provision of Continuing Professional Development programme for committee members with regard to the induction training, on-going education, mentoring, and in-service needs of the Research Ethics Committee
* Address attendance with Research Ethics Committee Members who do not attend at least two thirds of scheduled Research Ethics Committee meetings.

### **Relationship with the National Research Office**

* Meet with the REC Administrator for reporting purposes for the National Research Office on an at least 6 weekly basis.
* Meet with the National Manager for Research on a quarterly basis and with members of the National Research Office, when required.
* Meet with the National Research Office twice yearly to plan knowledge exchange events for Independent REC members.
* Advise the NRO on recruitment of new members, where resignations occur mid-term.
* Seek presentations from the NRO to the REC as needed.

### **Relationship with the Services and Quality Sub-Committee (SQC) of the Tusla Board**

* Submit an annual report to the Committee in line with Tusla’s Board and sub-committee work plan, dates of which will be provided to the Chairperson via the NRO.
* Present to the Sub-Committee on an annual basis and on request.
* Review the SOP with REC members as per the review requirements in Section 8 of the REC SOP.
* Consider other review and service improvement requirements emanating from the SQC Sub-Committee during the lifetime of the REC term.

## **Administration/ Operational Duties**

* Consider renewal of Research Ethics Committee membership for a second consecutive term and provide recommendation to the SQC Board of Tusla.
* Monitor attendance of Research Ethics Committee Members and exercise discretion regarding membership of those who do not attend a number of meetings or do not attend three consecutive meetings.
* Keep all relevant records pertaining to the REC.
* Ensure REC Members who wish to resign from the REC, inform the Chair in writing providing a minimum of four weeks and no more than eight weeks’ notice.
* Consult with the National Research Office, as required, regarding seeking replacement of members at the end of the term of appointment, or, if mid-term, to make an interim appointment for a limited time.

## **Eligibility Criteria / qualifications and / or experience[[2]](#footnote-2)**

The applicant must possess the following:

* A relevant professional qualification from a third level institution (minimum QQ1 Level 8).
* A minimum of one year’s experience as a member of a REC.
* Relevant methodological and ethical expertise in clinical, non-clinical qualitative, quantitative, and other research methodologies in health, education and social science fields.
* At least a minimum two years’ experience of chairing meetings or committees involving multiple stakeholders.

Applicants must possess the requisite knowledge and ability, including a high standard of suitability, for the proper discharge of the role including:

* A working knowledge of appropriate international good practice Guidelines, relevant EU Directives, national guidelines and/or legislation pertaining to the ethical conduct of research e.g., GDPR, Data Protection legislation, Health Research Regulations, with respect to both applicants and the community e.g. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in research, HSE’s National Policy for Consent in Health and Social Research that has been endorsed by Tusla.

### **Skills, Competencies and / or knowledge**

The Chairperson must possess the following:

* Professional Knowledge & Experience
* Teamwork & Building and Maintaining Relationships
* Managing & Delivering Results
* Communications & Interpersonal Skills

### **Other requirements of the role:**

Some travel may be required in accordance with Tusla’s financial regulations.

## **Service Level Agreement and conditions of role**

A written letter of appointment will be signed by the successful applicant, which will commit them to the terms and conditions of the role.

The Child & Family Agency indemnifies the work the Chairperson. Details of this indemnity will be set out in the written letter of appointment.

The Appointment shall remain in force for the Service Term unless it is terminated earlier.

Full detail is available within the written letter of appointment, which will be issued to the successful applicant on engagement.

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**INDEPENDENT CHAIRPERSON**

**RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC)**

**Eligibility Criteria Questions for Application**

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| --- |
| **Tusla Research Ethics Committee** |
| Eligibility criteria Qualifications and/or experience   |  | | --- | | **1.** Please outline the details of your 3rd level Qualification required to be relevant to the role of independent Chairperson of Tusla’s Research Ethics Committee | | * **Date(s) from / to:** * **Educational Institution:** * **Conferring Body:** * **Course of Study:** * **Qualification Achieved:** * **Grades Achieved:** | |
| |  | | --- | | **2.** Please demonstrate your **experience** of being a member of a Research Ethics Committee in a relevant sector or discipline, including but not exclusively: social work or social care in statutory or voluntary organisations, education, child health or mental health or nursing, youth justice, advocacy or public redress, law, psychology, disability, policing (minimum 1 years’ experience). | | * **Date(s) from – Date(s) to:** * **REC Name in** private, public or voluntary sector: * **Brief detail regarding role and responsibilities relevant to this role.** | |
| |  | | --- | | **3.** Please outline your relevantmethodological and ethical **expertise** in clinical, non-clinical qualitative, quantitative and other research methodologies in health, education and social science fields or a relevant sector or discipline, including but not exclusively: social work or social care in statutory or voluntary organisations, education, child health or mental health or nursing, youth justice, advocacy or public redress, law, psychology, disability, policing. | | * **Date(s) from – Date(s) to:** * **Employer(s) & Department Name:** * **Brief detail regarding role and responsibilities relevant to this role.** | |
| |  | | --- | | **4.** Please outline your relevant **experience** in chairing skills training or experience of at least a minimum two years’ experience of chairing meetings or committees involving multiple stakeholders. (Minimum 2 years’ experience). | | * **Date(s) from – Date(s) to:** * **Employer(s) & Department Name:** * **Brief detail regarding role and responsibilities relevant to this role.** | |
| |  | | --- | | **5.** Please demonstrate your working knowledge of appropriate international good practice Guidelines, relevant EU Directives, national guidelines and/or legislation pertaining to the ethical conduct of research e.g. GDPR, Data Protection legislation, Health Research Regulations, with respect to both applicants and the community e.g. Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in research, HSE’s National Policy for Consent in Health and Social Research that has been endorsed by Tusla. | | * **Date(s) from – Date(s) to:** * **Employer(s) & Department Name:** * **Brief detail regarding role and responsibilities relevant to this role.** | |

1. Good research practices include research environment; training, supervision and mentoring; research procedures; safeguards; data practices and management; collaborative working; publication and dissemination; reviewing, evaluating and editing. For further information on research integrity: Irish University Association (2013) *National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland.* Dublin. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Former employees of Tusla (or the HSE) will not be eligible until a minimum of two years has elapsed between the last date of their employment in the Agency and the date of submission of their Expression of Interest. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)