

# Research Review Panel and lay reviewers

## Code of conduct

October 2017

This document outlines Asthma UK's code of conduct for both scientific and lay members of the Research Review Panel (including the Chair), as well as lay reviewers who are not members of the Research Review Panel (referred to in the document as the lay reviewer panel), when taking part in any review processes linked to the charity's research funding programme

### Background

One of Asthma UK's goals is to fund research aimed at increasing our understanding of why people develop asthma and also to identify new treatments to control and prevent the condition. When allocating charitable funds for research, the overriding consideration of Asthma UK is to support the best quality research that has the greatest potential benefit for those affected by asthma.

Asthma UK relies heavily on, and is greatly appreciative of, the goodwill and willingness of those members of the medical and scientific community, and people affected by asthma, who give generously of their time to participate in its research funding processes to ensure that the charity is able to achieve these objectives.

Asthma UK aims to ensure that it receives expert and appropriate advice in research matters and that it sets an appropriate research strategy that enables the charity to meet its objectives. It also aims to ensure that research proposals are assessed objectively, impartially and in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Association of Medical Research Charities, of which it is a member. Advice from and review by an appropriately constituted body is seen as an essential element of this process.

As part of its commitment to impartiality and the integrity of the peer review and advisory processes, Asthma UK has set down a code of conduct for the members of the Research Review Panel and lay reviewer panel. The purpose of this code of conduct is to protect and preserve the integrity of both its advisors and its processes, as both of these groups have the opportunity to discuss the applications and their reviews are not done in isolation.

If Asthma UK has reason to believe that a member of the Research Review Panel or lay reviewer panel has breached this code of conduct, then he or she may be asked to step down from the Research Review Panel or be removed as a lay reviewer.

### Code of conduct

Each member of the Research Review Panel and all lay reviewers must at all times act in good faith and observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the conduct of the Research Review Panel's business in making research funding recommendations for the charity. In particular, members should

- familiarise themselves with the terms of reference of the Research Review Panel and lay reviewers;
- declare any personal or business interest which may, or may be perceived to, influence their judgement. A register of interests will be kept up to date and members should declare new interests as they arise to the Chair of the Research Review Panel or, in the case of the Chair, the Head of Research.
- not participate in the discussion or determination of matters in which they have a personal or business interest, and normally withdraw from any meetings where these are discussed;

- make a declaration of interest at any relevant meetings, where such an interest relates specifically to a particular issue under consideration, for recording in the minutes (whether or not a Research Review Panel member or lay reviewer withdraws from the meeting);
- ensure that the views of any individuals they are representing are reflected and that any final discussions relating to research funding decisions take these views into account;
- not misuse information gained in the course of serving on the Research Review Panel or lay reviewer panel for personal gain, nor seek to use the opportunity of serving on the Research Review Panel or lay reviewer panel to promote their private interests or those of connected persons or organisations;
- understand and accept that they are appointed as individuals and not as representatives of organisations by which they are employed or with which they have significant contracts;
- respect and abide by the stipulations outlined in the charity's conflict of interest policy;
- treat all documents and correspondence relating to applications for funding as strictly confidential and not disseminate or discuss them with anyone (who is not a current member of the Research Review Panel or lay reviewer panel) without the prior permission of Asthma UK. Members undertake to keep all documents secure and to dispose of them securely after decisions have been reached.