 

**Call for Expressions of Interest for Members of the HSE’s Reference Research Ethics Committees**

HSE  
*27 October 2021*

**Expressions of Interest should be completing the application form and submitting via email to** [**HSE.REC@hse.ie**](mailto:HSE.REC@hse.ie) **by 30th November 2021.**

**Please include ‘HSE Reference REC Member EoI’ in the subject line, thank you.**

**Calls for Expression of Interest for the HSE’s Reference Research Ethics Committee (Reference REC)**

The HSE launched its first National Framework for the Governance, Management and Support of Health Research in September 2021[[1]](#footnote-1). In order to implement this Framework, it is required to reform the current HSE Research Ethics Committee (REC) system.

The current REC landscape in the HSE is fragmented and uncoordinated, and the current structure causes significant challenges for researchers. With the establishment of the National Research Ethics Committee (NREC) by the Department of Health and the development of new governance structures for research in the HSE, a parallel reform of the HSE REC system is needed. This reform will involve, among other things, the establishment of six regional HSE Reference RECs with a geographical cover aligned to the *Sláintecare* regional health areas. The Reference RECs will provide support to HSE services and HSE funded hospitals and community services with no access to REC, and will be able to provide a single opinion for studies involving multiple sites.

RECs are a fundamental cornerstone in the overall process of governance of health research. REC members are a mixture of experts (registered healthcare professionals, clinical trial experts, statisticians and other experts in research) and lay members with an interest in health research ethics. Committees review applications for research approval and are made up of volunteer members who give their time to make a difference and ensure that Health Research conducted in Ireland is to the highest ethical standards.

**The HSE is now seeking expressions of Interest for Membership of the HSE’s Reference Research Ethics Committees for Midlands region and Corporate (Regional Health Area B)**

The HSE Reference REC for Midlands\_Corporate will accept applications for proposals involving HSE services, HSE funded services, corporate and national services within Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Kildare, parts of Dublin and Wicklow (i.e Sláintecare Regional Health Area B, corresponding to all of current CHO7 and 8 except for Louth) which do not already have a REC.

Individuals with prior REC experience are welcome to apply, although experience is not essential. Expressions of Interest are particularly invited from those who may be, or have been, patients, parents, carers or involved in patient organisations or feel they have an informed life experience or perspective to bring to bear for health research in Ireland.

The HSE is committed to creating a positive working environment whereby all volunteers inclusive of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age, disability, civil status, membership of the Traveller community, and geographic location are respected and valued.

This is an exciting opportunity to enable health research while ensuring that that the research is strengthened by the highest ethics standards. Appointed Members will receive training and administrative support to conduct Committee work. Meetings may be held face-to-face or online, and meetings that are held face-to-face will facilitate online attendance.

**What are HSE Reference RECs?**

**HSE Reference Research Ethics Committees** **(HSE Reference RECs)** are Research Ethics Committees that will all operate to the same Standard Code of Governance and Management, and will be supported in their operations by the National HSE REC Support and Coordination Office. HSE Reference RECs will report to the HSE National Research Committee for the Governance, Management and Support of Research, which will be established shortly.

The primary role of the HSE Reference RECs is to protect the welfare and the rights of research participants in accordance with recognised ethical principles and standards, relevant EU Directives, national legislation, in alignment with the HSE National Framework for the Governance, Management and Support of Research and other relevant policies. HSE Reference RECs also help to protect host institutions and researchers by ensuring research abides to high quality ethical standards.

**Why join a HSE Reference Research Ethics Committee?**

* As a member of a HSE Reference REC you will be providing oversight and guidance to research studies being conducted in the HSE and its funded organisations. This will give you insights into the latest developments in research and enhance your professional & personal development.
* Members will receive certificates of REC attendance to meetings and training events. Our clinical members will be able to earn Continuing Professional Development points for their work with the HSE Reference REC.
* Members will gain information about some of the biggest challenges we face in health and social care today, from cancer to dementia, and more recently COVID-19, and their work for the committee will provide an opportunity to learn from other members with different expertise. REC members are a mixture of experts and lay members, who despite having different roles and experiences have a shared goal; to ensure research is ethical and fair.
* Skills that members will gain include:
  + Understanding of research ethics
  + Knowledge in research including methodology and statistics
  + Understanding of relevant legislation
  + Specialised knowledge, for example the individual rights of data privacy or about adults lacking capacity to give consent
  + Enhanced committee skills: summarising, debating, evaluating and decision making
  + Opportunity to train for the role of a REC Officer i.e. Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson

**What is expected of members?**

Membership of a HSE Reference REC is an important role and does require commitment. Members will be responsible for contributing to protecting the welfare and the rights of research participants in accordance with recognised ethical principles and standards of relevant legislation. They will also be part of a group that ensures that the HSE Reference RECs protect the host institutions, their staff and researchers by ensuring research abides to high quality ethical standards.

HSE Reference REC members are unpaid volunteers and receive no payment for contributing to the review of applications at scheduled meetings or for attending such meetings. For those who work in healthcare settings (in any capacity), prior to making an application to be on a HSE Reference REC, please ensure that your line manager is aware and supports your application.

We need members who can commit to:

* Attending full REC meetings on a monthly basis (we ask that members attend a minimum of six meetings a year). Meetings last between two-three hours and may require two-three hours of reading in preparation. You can join meetings in person or virtually, and if you did need to travel for a meeting any travel costs will be reimbursed in line with the [HSE reimbursement of expenses guidance](https://www.hra.nhs.uk/documents/111/reimbursement-of-hra-committee-members-expenses.pdf);
* Taking part in sub-committee work (reviewing applications with no material ethical issues or amendments to approved research) with two hours reading for each subcommittee meeting (approximately two to three times a year);
* Reviewing research applications electronically;
* Induction training, which includes orientation, ethics and policy, must be attended within the first six months of appointment. Throughout each year of your membership there will be essential (mandatory) and non-essential training;
* Commit to a consensus-based approach to decision-making under the direction of the Chair, contributing your opinion in line;
* Adhere to the HSE Reference REC standard code of Governance and Management.
* Maintain the strictest confidentiality on proprietary information;
* Declare all affiliations and any conflicts of interest on application and before each meeting.

## Your interests:

* Protecting patients and public;
* Health research;
* Research ethics;
* Developments in healthcare;
* Working as a team member.

## Skills required:

* Ability to read, understand and analyse complex issues and weigh up conflicting opinions;
* Ability to take an objective stance, looking at a situation from several perspectives;
* Good communication with a practical approach and the confidence to voice your opinions and a respectful approach to the opinions of other fellow members;
* Be comfortable using Gmail, Microsoft Word, PDFs and video conference calling to facilitate HSE Reference REC work.

### **Role of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson**

In addition to the above, the Chair and the Deputy Chair, have an important responsibility in the management of the committee and they will require additional time commitments than regular members.

The main purpose of these roles is to Chair the committee to ensure that all study applications processed receive ethical review within relevant guidelines, legislation and SOPs.

The Chair, 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 REC Manager will support the Chair and Deputy Chair in their roles.

Responsibilities include:

* Chair the regular HSE Reference REC meetings and sub-committee meetings ensuring that ethical issues are explored, debated and recorded.
* To ensure that all study applications seen by the committee receive ethical review within relevant guidelines, legislation and Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) and within the Terms of Reference of the REC.
* Responsibility for ensuring appropriate reports on committee activities are submitted to relevant parties in a timely basis.
* Be available to the Reference REC Manager on a planned or ad hoc as necessary (i.e., to check and approve the minutes, to allow decision letters to be sent within timelines; etc.).
* Offer support, and mentorship as required to the Deputy Chair and members.
* Ensuring the membership of the committee meets the defined criteria in collaboration with the Reference REC Manager.
* Assisting with recruitment and selection of new members.
* In collaboration with the Reference REC Manager, ensuring that own, and members training is up to date.
* Review and take account of the REC Annual Report.
* To report any administrative issues or concerns which affect the efficient running of the REC.
* Pre-review applications in advance of REC meetings to expedite the overall work of the committee

The Reference REC Deputy Chair is responsible for deputising for the Chair where necessary and support the pre-review of applications.

### **Expert, Lay, Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) Members:**

“Expert members”, meaning any of the following:

* A practicing or retired health practitioner.
* Have qualifications or experience relating to the conduct of health research (outside of being a member of a Research Ethics Committee).
* Have qualifications or experience in the area of ethics.

“Lay members” means any member of the committee who is not an expert member as outlined above.

“Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)” entails research being carried out ‘with’ or ‘by’ members of the public, rather than ‘to’, ‘about’ or ‘for’ them. The word public can refer to patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services, people from organisations that represent people who use services as well as members of the public[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Application and Selection Process**

* Interested candidates should complete the Expression of Interest form below. The form can also be downloaded as a word form from the following link: <https://hseresearch.ie/research-ethics/>
* Completed forms should be emailed to [HSE.REC@hse.ie](mailto:HSE.REC@hse.ie). including ‘HSE Reference REC Member EoI’ in the subject line.
* **NOTE: Deadline for applications is 30th November 2021** (please note this call for Expression of Interest may close earlier than the 30th November if enough applications are received).
* The HSE Reference REC Support and Coordination Office (SCO) will manage expressions of Interest in collaboration with the HSE Reference REC where membership posts are being filled.
* Expressions of Interest will be evaluated for demonstration of the skills and attributes necessary for effective HSE Reference REC participation. This will include an ability to work as part of a team, to understand complex issues to the extent required to form and voice an opinion, and to be objective in considering issues and weighing-up conflicting opinions.
* Additionally, applicants interested in the roles of Chair or Deputy Chair should evidence relevant experience at an appropriately senior level and knowledge of the Irish health research environment as it relates to the remit of the HSE Reference RECs.
* Member selection will be proposed based on the diversity of skills, qualifications, interests and backgrounds required to make decisions on applications likely to be made to the HSE Reference RECs. Selection will also be informed by appropriate representation of both ‘expert’ and ‘lay’ Members as provided for in the Standard Code of Governance and Management Required for HSE Reference RECs. The HSE Reference REC will typically consist of 15 members (minimum number of committee members is 10 and maximum number of committee members is 21). Where, in the view of the HSE’s Support and Coordination Office, there is likely to be a particular gap in expertise or representation, prospective Members may be approached to invite an Expression of Interest.
* HSE Reference REC members are appointed for a fixed term not exceeding three years. Appointments may be renewed once, so that the fixed term is six years.
* Given the breadth of expertise and perspectives required and the anticipated expansion of the scope of HSE Reference RECs over time, where applicants are not appointed on this occasion, they may be invited to be included on an HSE Reference REC Expert Group list. In this case, individuals may be approached from time to time to contribute to HSE Reference REC deliberations based on their expertise, experience or perspective.
* Transparency: Membership of all HSE Reference RECs will be published via the HSE R&D Website.

**Compensation.**

* HSE Reference REC members are unpaid volunteers and receive no payment for contributing to the review of applications at scheduled meetings or for attending such meetings. However, expenses incurred during the course of a HSE Reference REC member’s duties are reimbursed. These may cover travel and subsistence among other, but do not cover loss of earnings.
* When the Chair or Deputy Chair are members of staff in HSE or S38 agencies, the time dedicated to REC activities should be included within their normal HSE employment and this should be agreed with the relevant line manager.
* When members not employed by the public sector hold these roles, (this may include public sector retired staff) remuneration will be provided in line with the NREC remuneration levels, and an agreement with the HSE with respect to their duties and responsibilities related to their role will be put in place.
* Other HSE Reference REC Members will not be paid, however remuneration for PPI representatives will be awarded in due course in line with future recommendations from the Department of Health.

**Further information**

Expressions of Interest for the HSE Reference REC of the remainder Sláintecare areas will take place in 2022.

Please contact the National HSE Reference REC Support and Coordination Office if you need further information about this campaign:

**Hazel A Smith, Senior R&D Manager (Research Ethics Governance and Support Services),**

[**HSE.REC@hse.ie**](file:///C:\Users\hazelsmith2\Desktop\HSE.REC@hse.ie)

 

**Expression of Interest for membership of the HSE Reference Research Ethics Committees**

Forms must be returned with any continuation sheets to HSE Reference RECs Support and Coordination Office at [HSE.REC@hse.ie](mailto:HSE.REC@hse.ie) Please include ‘HSE Reference REC Member EoI’ in the subject line.

**Are you applying to be** (please only tick one box)**?**

Expert member  Lay member

**If applying as an expert member, which position are you applying for** (can tick more than one box)**:**

Chair  Deputy Chair  Committee Member

**If you would like to apply for the role of Chair, Deputy Chair or Committee Member:**

**Do you intend to carry out your committee work during your normal working hours and have received permission to do so by your line manager?**

Yes  No

**If not, will you carry out your committee preparatory work[[3]](#footnote-3) outside working hours?**

Yes  No

**If you would like to apply for the role of Chair or Deputy Chair or Expert Committee Member are you fully aware that financial compensation for your REC work may not be possible?**

Yes  No

**Are you a staff member of HSE or HSE funded S38 organisation (i.e voluntary hospitals)?**

Yes  No

**If yes, please indicate the name of your service:**

**If applying as a lay member, which position are you applying for**:

Lay member  Public & Patient Involvement (PPI) Representative

**If you would like to apply for the role of Lay or PPI Representative are you fully aware that financial compensation for your REC work is currently not possible?**

Yes  No

**Are you currently a member of a research ethics committee?** Yes  No

**If so, please indicate the name of the committee:**

**Part 1: Your personal details**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Surname:** |  | | |
| **Forenames:** |  | | |
| **Title:** |  |  |  |
|  |  | | |

Which address are you using **Home Address ☐** **Business Address** ☐

for correspondence?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Address (including Eircode):** |  | |
| **Contacts** | **Email:** | |
|  | **Phone:** | **Mobile:** |

**Career history**

Please attach your CV to your application submission.

**Other Relevant Experience**

Please give any further information that is relevant to your application explaining briefly what you are able to offer as a member, highlighting work on committees, boards or other relevant experience. Expert applicants may wish to detail their experience in research or ethics. Lay applicants may wish to describe any involvement as a patient or carer of a patient or in research or ethics that they feel is relevant to the role. (Please continue on a separate sheet if required)

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**Motivation to Apply**

Please provide details on why you would like to be a Research Ethics Committee member. (Please continue on a separate sheet if required)

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**Part 2: Specific requirements for the role**

**Please describe an example of when you used the following skills:**

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| --- |
| 1. Read, understood and analysed complex issues and weighed up conflicting opinions. |
| 2. Have discussed issues with people who may not agree with you, including influencing others from a range of backgrounds. |

**Part 3: References**

Please give details of two Referees. Referees do not need to be employment related but can be any person (who is not a relative) that can attest to your character. An appointment will not be offered until we have received satisfactory references.

**We will contact your referees prior to engaging with you to discuss your application unless you request otherwise. Please cross the following box if you would prefer us not to contact your referees prior to the initial conversation: ☐**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Address |  |
| Eircode |  |
| Telephone number |  |
| Email |  |
| How do you know he/she/they |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Address |  |
| Eircode |  |
| Telephone number |  |
| Email |  |
| How do you know he/she/they |  |

**Part 4: Declaration of Interests**

Please declare any personal, business or professional interests, or legal impediment, that would likely interfere with your ability to play a full and proper role on an HSE Reference REC. The purpose of this declaration is to ensure that the functions of the HSE Reference REC can be exercised free of bias that could affect their independence in reaching decisions, and to ensure public confidence in the independence of the HSE Reference REC.

I have no interest to declare

I wish to declare the following interests:

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**Use of your personal information**

The HSE Data Protection Policy is in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). We will store your information for monitoring and audit purposes as follows:

* Your initial contact details will be held by the HSE for a period of at least 12 months
* If you submit an application form, the form and any supporting documentation will be held by the HSE for at least 12 months.
* Information held electronically, including your contact details and the monitoring information provided will also be held for at least 12 months.
* If you are appointed, your personal information including a copy of this application form will be retained on file by the HSE Reference REC Support and Coordination Office for the length of your appointment as a member. HSE Reference REC Member information is only accessible to staff employed by the HSE Reference REC Support and Coordination Office.
* Copies of the documentation related to your appointment will be retained electronically for seven years after the end of your service.
* In the case of an unsuccessful application, if you would like these details to be removed from our records as soon as this recruitment exercise is complete, please contact the HSE Reference REC Support and Coordination Office.

**Part 5: Declaration**

I hereby declare that the information given in my application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that falsification of information contained on this form may result in my appointment as REC member being terminated.

**Signature………………………………………………**

**Date ………………****…………………**

**How did you hear about becoming a HSE Reference REC Member?**

Please indicate below how you heard about becoming a HSE Reference REC Member, this information will be useful to the HSE for future HSE Reference REC Member recruitment campaigns.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| HSE (R&D) Website: |  |
| Twitter: |  |
| Email: |  |
| Your Employer: |  |
| Local organisation/ Volunteer organisation: |  |
| Patient and Public Involvement Group: |  |
| Word of Month: |  |
| Advert (please provide details):  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| Other (please specify):  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |

1. <https://hseresearch.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HSE-Framework-for-the-Governance-Web-Optimised.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/PPI/what-is-patient-and-public-involvement-and-engagement [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. While preparatory work may take place outside working hours, REC meetings may take place during working hours. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)