

## **The role of the reviewer: Information for applicants to join the expert reviewer community (professional contributors)**

### **1. Background information**

The goal of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is to create a health research system in which the NHS supports outstanding individuals, working in world class facilities, conducting leading edge research focused on the needs of patients and the public. The NHS reputation for international excellence is growing as it gains recognition for being the preferred host for collaborative and multi-centred research in the public interest in partnership with and for industry. This will benefit patients, society, the NHS and all our stakeholders.

The NIHR commissions and funds NHS, social care and public health research that is essential for delivering our responsibilities in public, health and personal social services. Our role is to develop the research evidence to support decision making by professionals, policy makers and patients, make this evidence available, and encourage its uptake and use.

We are currently recruiting new members to join our community of reviewers for the following research programmes:

- Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) programme
- NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme
- NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme
- NIHR Public Health Research (PHR) programme
- NIHR Systematic Reviews (SR) programme

These programmes are managed on behalf of the NIHR by the Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) based at the University of Southampton. NETSCC is a team of managers, academics, clinicians, researchers and support staff that oversee the management and delivery of the research programmes including the recruitment process for reviewers.

#### **1.1 What is expert review?**

Expert review is the process through which research briefs, research proposals and final reports are critically assessed by relevant individuals unconnected to both the decision making body and those who have prepared the material being assessed. The practice of 'peer review' is very commonly used to inform decision making for scientific publications and grant funding. Peer review involves an assessment by colleagues in a relevant field of expertise. In using the term 'expert review' we are acknowledging the broad spectrum of knowledge, skills and experience needed to get a well-rounded assessment. We seek input from patients, members of the public, academics, subject experts, clinical staff, service managers and public health professionals.

## **1.2 Why is expert review important?**

Expert review provides an assessment of research briefs, research proposals and protocols, and final reports independent of the teams undertaking the research. It is an essential process that ensures only the highest quality research is funded and published in our journal series. The comments provided by reviewers inform the decision-making process and help to shape final research reports.

## **1.3 What do expert reviewers do?**

The NIHR relies on independent expert reviewers to comment on the content of briefing papers, proposals for research, and final reports. Reviewers are invited to read a research brief, research proposal or final report and critically assess the document to help ensure that it:

- is of high quality
- is scientifically robust
- answers the questions set
- represents good value for money
- meets the needs of patients, the NHS and the wider public.

Reviewer comments feed into the decision-making process or editorial process for final reports. Because we seek reviews from a very wide range of individuals, we accept that not all reviewers are able to answer every question as some areas may be outside their area of knowledge or expertise. We don't expect all reviewers to be able to comment on every aspect, and therefore ask that they only comment on those areas where they have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to do so.

## **1.4 What is the expert reviewer community?**

The expert reviewer community is essentially a database of individuals who have agreed to undertake reviews. These individuals have provided us with information about their knowledge skills and experience that enables us to match them to reviewing tasks. Each year, we list the names of all individuals who provided a review during the previous year on our website. Members of our expert reviewer community are encouraged to join our mailing list to receive email updates, bulletins, and our latest funding opportunities, you can subscribe via [our website](#). Of course, you can request to be removed from the expert reviewer database at any time by contacting [reviewerpool@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:reviewerpool@southampton.ac.uk) .

## **2. Role description, terms and conditions, and person specification**

### **2.1 Expert reviewer (professional contributor): Role description**

- Undertake a review of research briefs, papers, research applications or final reports and provide feedback from a professional or work-based perspective.
- Declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest.
- Maintain the confidentiality of research briefs, vignettes, papers, proposals for research and final reports.

- Submit reviews by the stated deadline via the NETSCC Management Information System (MIS).
- Inform us of any changes to your contact details to enable us to update your reviewer profile regularly, or update these details yourself via the MIS.

## 2.2 Terms and conditions

**Duration of role:** There are no limitations to the length of time any one individual can be in our community of expert reviewers.

**Payment:** Professional contributors who undertake reviews are not normally paid.

**Support for reviewers:** Support is available from programme staff, should a reviewer require it when undertaking a review. A detailed guidance note will be provided to support reviewers in completing the reviewing task.

**Declarations of interests/conflict of interest:** All expert reviewers are required to declare if they have any interests that might be in conflict with the reviewing task. We will not offer a reviewing task to anyone who is based at the same institution as the applicants or report authors. Reviewers should not accept any reviewing task where there is a known conflict of interest (e.g. if you know someone in a research team personally, or if you could gain financially if the research was funded). If there is a potential conflict of interest, the risk should be raised with the programme staff who sent the reviewing task, and should also be recorded on the submitted review form.

**Continued Professional Development:** In discussion with your professional body, you may be able to claim Continued Professional Development (CPD) points. Where appropriate, we will provide written confirmation of reviewing tasks that have been completed.

**Acknowledging your contribution:** As a gesture of our appreciation your contribution as a reviewer will be acknowledged on our website, where we publish an annual list of individuals who have completed a review for us during the past year. You can indicate if you would prefer us not to publish your details.

## 2.3 Person specification

Criteria	Essential attributes	Desirable attributes
<b>Knowledge</b>	<p>Work-based or professional knowledge that is relevant to the remit of the EME; NIHR HTA, HS&amp;DR, PHR, SRP research programmes.</p> <p>An active interest in current affairs relating to health and well-being, public health, and</p>	<p>Knowledge of peer-review processes and its contribution to high-quality science.</p>

	<p>health research e.g. via TV, radio and newspapers.</p> <p>An understanding of the importance of, and need for, health and/or public health research.</p>	
<b>Skills</b>	Confident user of e-mail, internet and word processing packages.	Experience of using web-based peer review systems.
<b>Experience</b>	<p>An ability to read and critically assess complex and formal written documents.</p> <p>Experience of assimilating a large volume of written information into a succinct and critical appraisal of the information provided.</p> <p>Ability to provide constructive feedback.</p> <p>Completed relevant professional training, appropriately qualified or experienced in field of expertise.</p>	<p>Experience of preparing written reports.</p> <p>Experience of research, e.g. member of a research project team.</p> <p>Experience of undertaking peer-review.</p> <p>Experience of writing research proposals or applications for funding.</p>