

Conflicts of Interest Policy for Members of the Medical Research Committee and Lay Research Panel

Members of the Medical Research Committee and Lay Research Panel (referred to below as Committee Members) are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest related to agenda items under discussion to MDUK's Director of Research and Innovation in advance of committee meetings. If a Committee or Member is unsure whether a situation is a conflict of interest, they should get in contact with the Director of Research and Innovation as soon as possible to discuss the matter. Committee members with conflicts of interest related to applications will be identified by Charity staff in advance of the committee meeting based on the principles set out below. If necessary, where a conflict of interest is not clear, the ultimate decision will be made by the Chair or the Vice Chair if the Chair has a conflict of interest.

Committee members who have conflicts of interest

- Will be excluded from seeing applications and associated comments made by expert reviewers
- Will be asked to leave the committee meeting during the discussion of the relevant item and will take no part in the related discussions or recommendations

Members who are applicants or co-applicants on an application under consideration by the committee will receive redacted versions of paperwork e.g. meeting minutes, in which references to the item have been removed

If the Chair is excluded from the discussion of an item, the Vice Chair will be nominated and if he/she has a conflict of interest the MDUK Research Team will nominate another member to chair the meeting for the duration of this discussion

Automatic exclusion:

A Committee Member should be automatically excluded from participation in a funding decision in cases where that individual has a direct interest in the funding

proposal under discussion. A direct interest applies to any of the following situations:

- The individual concerned is the Principal Applicant, Co-applicant, Supervisor or Collaborator on the funding proposal. In this case, the individual will not receive names of reviewers or reviewer reports relating to the application and will be excluded from any discussion, both verbal or written, about their application
- The individual concerned works in the same research institution as the Principal Applicant or Co-applicant.
- A relative (including, but not limited to, spouse (current or past), siblings, children and parents) of the individual is the Principal Applicant or Co-applicant.
- An applicant on the proposal is a business partner of the individual.
- The individual concerned serves on the board or an advisory board of a pharmaceutical, biotech or other company that may have an interest in the grant being discussed.
- The individual has collaborated or published with the applicant within the past three years.
- The individual has equity interests in any enterprise that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of the charity.

These interests should be disclosed to the Director of Research and Innovation before the committee meets

Discretionary exclusion:

In certain situations, an individual may be excluded from discussion of a proposal at the discretion of the Director of Research and Innovation or the Chair. Examples of such situations include:

- The individual concerned can be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant; i.e. they are currently being funded or are currently applying for funding on a project of a similar nature to the proposal under discussion.
- The individual has acted as an external reviewer, or was on a funding panel/committee in respect of the proposal under discussion, at a time when the proposal was being discussed by another funding body.
- The individual is aware of any other issue that might reasonably be expected to give rise to, or give rise to the perception of, a conflict of interest.

Committee members should contact the Director of Research and Innovation in the following circumstances

- If they have disclosures regarding any of the exclusion principles set out above

- If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of a Panel or Committee.
- If there have been discussions of an agenda item with other members of the funding committee that occurred outside the decision meeting. Such discussions should be disclosed to the Chair
- If a committee member is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the Director of Research and Innovation. They may subsequently be asked to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.
- If they are uncertain whether a conflict of interest exists. A decision will be made by the Director of Research and Innovation and will be communicated to the Chair.

If members have disclosures or have questions relating to this policy please contact the Director of Research and Innovation directly or email Researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

The Charity will review this conflict of interest policy every two years.