

5. Activities: Understanding different perspectives

Good engagement and communications between scientists and the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) are critically important to ensure that the AWERB can implement all of its functions effectively, with benefits for animal welfare, science and the establishment's Culture of Care.

This sheet is part of a resource pack which aims to help AWERB members, AWERB chairs and scientists understand and support one another better, so that all can benefit. The term 'scientist' refers to personal and project licence holders, regardless of their involvement with the AWERB, plus those carrying out non-ASPA regulated procedures or indirectly involved with animal use (e.g. using reagents derived from animals). An introduction to the resource pack, and the other sheets, can be downloaded via the QR code at the end of this sheet.

Providing well thought out information about the AWERB, with opportunities and incentives for AWERB members and scientific staff to meet informally outside of AWERB meetings, will help to foster mutual understanding of one another's roles, expertise and perspectives.

The suggestions in this sheet are all provided by a working group including AWERB members and scientists from a variety of establishments (see the end of this document). There are additional ideas in the RSPCA/LASA Guiding Principles on Good Practice for AWERBs (tinyurl.com/RSPCA-LASA-GP).

Providing information about the AWERB:

- Terms of Reference with clear, up to date and accessible information about the AWERB – its role and relationship with other internal and external bodies; its functions, tasks, membership and ways of working
- A list, or a poster detailing AWERB members with contact details and a photo and some background on each (if members are prepared to do this)
- Posting agendas, minutes, newsletters, advice and details of any AWERB projects on establishment websites and keeping these up to date
- Targeting information and advice to relevant individuals rather than sending out mass emails

Getting together:

Opportunities for AWERB members to get together with scientists include attending:

- Visits to the animal unit and laboratories. This is particularly valuable for AWERB members with no previous knowledge of animal use, including procedures, and how lab animals are housed and cared for. It provides a good opportunity for both scientific and animal care staff to show lay members around and explain their work
- Awaydays with the 'animal community' i.e. scientists, animal technologists, vets and care staff



- Research group/licensee meetings where the progress of projects is discussed
- Informal meetings where scientists talk about their work to animal technologists and vice versa
- Annual 3Rs events with posters, competitions (with prizes)
- Tea talks – informal scientific seminars with tea and cake (or lunch)
- Talks focussing on work with particular species or techniques
- Seminars with invited external speakers
- An 'ethics day' with social scientists, for anyone to attend
- Public engagement events like 'Pint of Science'

Opportunities for scientists to provide direct input to the AWERB (many of which could be incentivised, e.g. with CPD credits) include:

- Attendance/participation in AWERB meetings, particularly prior to a licensee's own licence application going to the committee
- Attendance/participation in AWERB sub committees (e.g. 3Rs, Animal Housing and Care, Openness)
- Participation in AWERB-sponsored activity to define the local 'Culture of Care' with everyone's input
- Work to set mutual policies, goals and projects for the AWERB, scientists or the establishment e.g. on severe suffering, the use of certain procedures or species
- Participation in reviews of AWERB materials and the impacts of the AWERB's work on the scientific community
- Development and discussion of case studies to stimulate wider awareness of ethical issues using topics where nobody has a vested interest. For example: whether mammoths should be resurrected from their DNA; whether it is right to kill alien species to save indigenous species (as part of the AWERB's role to provide a forum for discussion and development of ethical advice).

If people do not all know one another equally well, you can use high-tech and low-tech discussion aids as ice breakers or to tackle subjects that may be difficult. Examples include Post-it note exercises and voting hardware and software. Applications such as Padlet and PollEverywhere enable participants to use their own mobile phones as voting devices and it is possible to save the outcomes for discussion.

This sheet was produced by a working group set up by the RSPCA, which included scientists, AWERB chairs, lay members, and representatives of the Animals in Science Committee AWERB Subcommittee, Animal Research Nexus and NC3Rs. The participants are listed in the introductory sheet, which can be downloaded using the QR code.

