

1. Introduction

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.

"A clear understanding of the aims and objectives of both AWERB and the scientist is needed, with respect for the pressures scientists are under to deliver, whilst ensuring scientists understand the importance and value of AWERB" – AWERB chair.

The use of animals in research is an emotive area for all concerned, so effective communication and understanding is essential between people with different roles. Many establishments feel that they do this well, but this cannot be taken for granted. For example, scientists may be unclear about the AWERB's roles and tasks; have little input or interaction with it; and see the AWERB merely as an obstacle to obtaining a project licence. AWERB members may have little contact with scientists other than during project review; they may not know what scientists are taught about the AWERB; or how the committee is viewed. This lack of awareness and understanding from both parties can seriously affect the expectations that AWERB members and scientists have of each other and their working relationships.

"It helps if the AWERB appreciates that the decision to use animals is not an easy one for me" – scientist.

"I sometimes hold back asking questions as I can feel patronised by the answers. I don't feel the scientists are that interested in my contributions" – lay member.

The AWERB should be a positive force within an establishment, supporting staff and contributing to the Culture of Care, so it is crucial to resolve any communication issues and facilitate good relationships. This resource pack aims to help AWERB members, AWERB chairs and scientists understand and support one another better, so that all can benefit. It comprises:

- good practice tips for scientists ([here](#))
- good practice tips for AWERB members ([here](#))
- good practice tips for AWERB chairs ([here](#))
- ideas for activities to help understand different people's perspectives ([here](#))
- suggestions for survey questions that AWERBs can use to evaluate their relationships with scientists ([here](#))

Each sheet can be used as a stand-alone resource, for example as part of a training or induction package for staff members, AWERB members and chairs, or as an AWERB discussion document.



"I think any scientist would benefit to be part of an AWERB meeting at least once - even if they are not project licence holders - just to consider all the ethics around the use of animals in research" – scientist.

The material was produced by a working group convened 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](#) (participants are listed at the end of this document). The content builds on similar information contained in previous documents such as the [RSPCA/LASA Guiding Principles on Good Practice for AWERBs](#), and reports of meetings such as [AWERB-UK](#). The word cloud on the left was created from keywords collectively suggested by the working group to summarise current relationships between scientists and AWERBs.



N.B. The term 'scientist' in these resources refers to all of the researchers who are personal and project licence holders at an establishment, regardless of their involvement with the AWERB, plus those carrying out non-ASPA regulated procedures (e.g. using invertebrates) and those indirectly involved with animal use (e.g. designing *in vivo* experiments, using cells, tissues or reagents derived from animals or analysing samples from experiments).

"Never assume the AWERB is embedded in the business as you think it is, or should be" - AWERB chair.

Further reading:

[RSPCA/LASA Guiding Principles on Good Practice for AWERBs](#)

- tinyurl.com/RSPCA-LASA-GP

[RSPCA Ethical Review web pages](#) - search for 'RSPCA' 'ethical review'

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