

NUFFIELD COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS - MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCOB) is a leading independent policy and research centre, and the foremost bioethics body in the UK. We identify, analyse, and advise on ethical issues in biomedicine and health so that decisions in these areas benefit people and society.

Developments in biomedicine and health are essential to solving the world's problems but also raise profound ethical challenges. For over thirty years we have tackled some of the most complex and controversial bioethical issues facing societies across the globe. We aim to bring clarity to complexity and find practical ways through leading to shifts in public understanding and lasting policy change in the UK and internationally.

We are looking to recruit up to five new Council members across a range of disciplines and sectors to contribute and engage in all the work of the NCOB, including its priority areas: reproduction, parenthood and families; mind and brain; and environment and health.

We are seeking Council members from a broad range of backgrounds including (but not limited to):

- **Medical science / biological science**
- **Philosophy**
- **Public and community engagement**
- **Social science / political science / science and technology studies**
- **Science, regulatory and / or health policy**
- **Public affairs**

Council members are part of the deliberative body that drives the intellectual function of the organisation. The main responsibilities of the role are to contribute to decisions on the future work programme and strategic direction of the NCOB, scrutinise and ensure the quality of work and outputs, and make decisions on the membership and function of the organisation. Council members are involved in topic selection and project work, as members of the advisory groups that oversee our priority areas. There are also opportunities to be involved more generally in horizon scanning and other projects as they arise.

Council members are encouraged to be actively involved. As well as being part of discussions around interesting and important issues in a supportive multi-disciplinary environment there are opportunities to use and develop skills, such as in chairing and communication, for example writing blogs and representing the NCOB externally.

Candidates do not have to be directly involved in the field of bioethics, but they should be able to demonstrate an interest and appreciation of the ethical issues. Key qualities include a willingness to contribute to debate in an open and constructive manner.

We welcome applications from non-academics and academics, and from people at any stage in their career. We value diversity which is a key part of our multi-disciplinary approach and our commitment to hear from all relevant voices in our work. We are keen to encourage applications from all sections of the community including those from groups that are currently under-represented on the Council. We particularly encourage applications from minority ethnic candidates, those who are LGBTQ+, or who have a disability.

The basic time commitment of Council membership are its four meetings a year which are usually 3 hours long and involve reading a substantial set of papers in preparation. Two of these are in person meetings held at the NCOB's offices in London. As mentioned above there are many other ways that Council members can be involved and as a result the time commitment is usually around one to two days a month. Being involved in project work may add to the time commitment in terms of meetings and contributing to project activities.

Council members receive an honorarium of £2,000 per annum and reasonable travel expenses are paid.

Applications should be in the form of a statement of interest (not more than 1000 words) which outlines your interest in the NCOB and what you can contribute, a short curriculum vitae, and the names of two individuals we could approach for a reference as to your suitability for membership.

Please apply using our [recruitment site](#). The closing date for submissions is Friday 19 September. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed and the dates of the interviews will be 20 and 22 October. We welcome requests for any adjustments to ensure that the recruitment process is accessible to everyone.

If you would first like to talk informally about the Council and how it works, please feel free to contact us. Please email press@nuffieldbioethics.org in the first instance.

NUFFIELD COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS MEMBERSHIP PACK

Thank you for your interest in Council membership. The following is designed to give an overview of the NCOB, its structure, the role of Council members, the membership appointment process and project work.

If you have any further questions, please explore our website, or contact Carol Perkins at cperkins@nuffieldbioethics.org.

General information about the Nuffield Council on Bioethics

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics is a leading independent policy and research centre, and the foremost bioethics body in the UK. We identify, analyse, and advise on ethical issues in biomedicine and health so that decisions in these areas benefit people and society. We were established by the [Nuffield Foundation](#) in 1991, and since 1994 we have been funded jointly by the Foundation, [Wellcome](#) and the [Medical Research Council](#) (now part of UKRI –

UK Research and Innovation). We are currently funded on a five-year basis and are in the second year of our current funding cycle (2024 – 2028).

We have an international reputation for providing independent and balanced advice to policy-makers and stimulating debate in bioethics. Our recommendations are backed up by a thorough process of consultation, engagement and deliberation with a wide range of people and organisations.

Our strategy, [*Making ethics matter*](#), has at its centre the aim to put ethics at the centre of decisions about biomedicine and health, so we all benefit.

To achieve this:

1. We will **anticipate scientific developments** and health trends that pose fundamental ethical questions to society.
2. We will undertake and communicate **rigorous ethical analysis** in a way that is clear and relevant to decision-makers and the public.
3. We will demonstrate **the value of ethics to society** and decision-makers and embed ethics in policy making.
4. We will build **greater connections** across bioethics networks to strengthen the voice of bioethics in policy and public debate.

Our values

We are guided by our long-standing core values:

- **Rigour:** Our approach to ethical analysis is multidisciplinary and deliberative. We draw on a wide range of expertise and experience and use the best available evidence.
- **Independence:** We set our own agenda and select our own topics, methodologies and outputs. We do not represent any particular group or view.
- **Relevance:** We explore things that matter to society so we can support real-time policy developments and debates and anticipate those coming down the line.
- **Transparency:** We are open about how we conduct our work, and our outputs are understandable and relevant to our audiences.
- **Inclusiveness:** We engage with a wide range of different voices and views and are committed to increasing the diversity of the people we work with. We create safe and welcoming spaces for deliberation.
- **Sustainability:** We manage our organisation with a focus on contributing to environmental sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint.

Structure of the NCOB

The NCOB consists of the Council itself; its Executive staff body; and a Governing Board.

- **The Council** is the deliberative body that drives the intellectual function of the organisation. Its main responsibilities are to contribute to decisions on the future work programme and strategic direction of the NCOB, scrutinise and ensure the quality of work and outputs, and make decisions on the membership and function of the organisation. Council members are involved in topic selection and project work, as members of the advisory groups that oversee our priority areas. There are also opportunities to be involved more generally in horizon scanning and other projects as they arise.

In addition, Council members may become more involved in particular projects in a variety of ways, examples are being on working groups, participating in workshops, and advising on and reviewing Council publications.

The Chair of Council is Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Professor of Medical and Family Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. There are usually around 15 members, with a variety of backgrounds, and a list of current Council members can be found [here](#).

- **The Executive** is a team of around 15 people that carry out research, manage projects and draft the Council's publications. Staff organise and participate in workshops, meetings, events, and represent the Council at professional and public meetings. There are communications, external affairs and horizon scanning functions and the team also manage the financial and administrative work. A list of the Executive is [here](#).
- **The Governing Board** is appointed by the Council's funders. It is responsible for reviewing and challenging the work of the Council, providing assurance that the Council is operating within its remit and is committing expenditure in line with the terms of the funding grant and the goals of its strategy. The Governing Board meets twice a year with the Council Chair and Director.

Council membership

The role of Council members

As mentioned above, Council members form the deliberative body that drives the intellectual function of the NCOB. Their **core responsibilities** are to:

- Decide questions of strategic direction and topic identification.
- Be part of Advisory Groups that provide advice and guidance on priority areas, topic selection and projects.
- Ensure a thorough horizon scanning process.

- Scrutinise and ensure the quality of outputs at key stages during projects so as to ultimately adopt them.
- Decide on the direction, function and membership of the organisation.
- Provide support and advice to the Executive.

Other responsibilities will normally include:

- Sitting on Council subgroups, for example the Horizon Scanning Advisory Group / Membership Committee.
- Being involved in project work.
- Being a member of a subgroup that pays particular attention to a NCOB project.
- Participating in activities such as workshops.
- Advising on the content of publications such as briefing papers during the drafting process.
- Representing the NCOB at external meetings or conferences.
- Writing blogs.
- Acting as a media spokesperson for the NCOB, if and where appropriate.

The initial term for membership is three years, with the possibility of renewal for one to three years. The renewal process looks at an individual's contribution, capacity and appetite for continuation and considers how this meets the future needs of the Council.

The basic time commitment of Council membership are its four meetings a year in January, April, July and October, which are usually 3 hours long and involve reading a substantial set of papers in preparation. As mentioned above, there are many other ways that Council members can be involved and as a result the time commitment is usually around one to two days a month. We recognise that individuals will have varying levels of time available, but it is hoped that every Council member will be able to play an active role in the Council's work.

Being involved in project work may add to the time commitment in terms of meetings and contributing to project activities.

Council members receive an honorarium of £2,000 per year and reasonable travel expenses are paid.

Council membership is open to people from outside of the UK. However, there is a practical question about travel as members will be asked to attend some meetings in person. It is difficult for the NCOB to justify long-haul travel for Council members from a financial and environmental perspective, but we are happy to consider applications from Europe and a little further afield.

How Council members are chosen

The Council has a Membership Committee, which recommends which disciplines should be advertised, monitors the make-up and diversity of the Council, shortlists, interviews and

makes appointment recommendations. It has an independent Chair and has members from the Council and its Governing Board. Its current members are:

- **Sapna Marwaha** (Independent Chair) – Managing Director, Formation Consultancy Ltd and experienced board member and committee chair.
- **Sarah Cunningham-Burley** – Chair of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and Professor of Medical and Family Sociology / Dean of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.
- **Ruchi Baxi** - Consultant in Public Health Medicine working as a Consultant Advisor for the NIHR Coordinating Centre, based at the University of Southampton.
- **Carol Brayne** - Professor of Public Health Medicine and Co-Director of Public Health at the Cambridge Public Health Interdisciplinary Research Centre in the University of Cambridge

When vacancies arise, they are advertised in a variety of ways, including relevant media, newsletters, social media, through relevant organisations, networks, professional bodies and charities. Applications are considered and shortlisted by the Membership Committee, candidates are interviewed, and recommendations are then made to the Council who have the final decision.

Selection is based on the following criteria:

- **A demonstratable interest in bioethics** – this could be a professional interest or an interest that comes from general engagement with bioethical issues.
- **A willingness to contribute to ethical debate in an open and constructive manner** by contributing thoughts and ideas and by listening to and respecting the views of others from a wide range of disciplines and positions.
- **A willingness and ability to work with others** in a multidisciplinary environment, where all contributions are valued. This includes working with the other members of the Council, the Executive and individuals who might attend NCOB events and can include academics, healthcare workers, individuals personally affected by issues, policy-makers and people from a variety of professions.
- **An understanding and commitment to the aims and values of the Council** and to maintaining the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in all of its activities.

We aim to maintain a wide range of expertise including members with backgrounds in science, medicine, social science, philosophy, law, policy and public affairs, media, communications and industry. We welcome and value diversity and are keen to encourage applications from all sections of the community including those from groups that are currently under-represented on the Council, from non-academics, and from people at all stages in their career.

The issues we work on

Over the past 30 years, our work has spanned a wide range of ethical issues across science, medicine, public health, technology and agriculture.

Our horizon scanning ensures we understand the developments coming down the line and we often have many potential work areas in our sights. To enable us to identify the most important issues and prioritise them, we apply our work selection criteria, to help assess where we can bring greatest value using our independence and expertise to shape developments in science and health for a fairer society.

Selection criteria

1. **Achieving change:** Work in this area will put ethics at the centre of decisions about biomedicine and health.
2. **Timeliness:** There are good reasons to do this work now.
3. **Distinctiveness:** We have the knowledge, skills and resources to deliver work in this area, where others do not.

Priority areas

We have selected thematic priority areas around which to focus our work for a 2-3 year period. A range of different projects will be delivered within each priority area, examining both narrow, near-term issues and broad, long-term questions, with outputs targeted towards different audiences.

Through horizon scanning and engagement with experts, we have identified three priority areas for the first phase of our new strategy:

1. **Reproduction, parenthood and families**
2. **The mind and brain**
3. **The environment and health**

We believe these represent today's most urgent and important developments in bioscience and health, raising critical ethical, social and policy issues on which we can offer a distinctive contribution. Issues that cut across our work – such as health inequalities, use of health data, and commercial drivers in research – will be considered in the context of each of the priority areas.

We recognise that we cannot anticipate everything, so as well as carrying out work in the priority areas, we will retain the flexibility and capacity to respond to other developments as they emerge. This will allow us to take opportunities to apply past work to current policy debates, acknowledging that real change often requires long-term engagement.

Our horizon scanning constantly feeds into our work planning processes and we will regularly review our priorities to ensure we are focusing on the right topics.

Information on our current and past work is available on our [website](#).