



Home Office

Triennial Review of the Animals in Science Committee

July 2014

Triennial Review of the National DNA Database Ethics Group, Animals in Science and Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

As part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) continue to have regular independent challenge, the Home Secretary has announced that a review of the National DNA Database Ethics Group (NDNAEG), Animals in Science Committee (ASC) and Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) will take place.

A Triennial review is the process for reviewing the form and function of Non-Departmental Public Bodies, the appropriateness of the body's delivery mechanism and its governance arrangements.

The aims of a Triennial Review are:

- a) to provide a robust challenge of the continuing need, in terms of both their form and functions, for individual NDPBs; and
- b) where it is agreed that a particular body should remain as a NDPB, to review:
 - the control and governance arrangements in place to ensure it is complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance, including an assessment of its performance; and
 - its capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently, including identifying potential for efficiency savings and its ability to contribute to economic growth.

Cabinet Office has published detailed guidance on the process and background for Triennial Reviews, which can be accessed on gov.uk through this [link](#).

We are inviting views on the continuing need, in terms of both their form and functions, for each of these bodies.

You can respond online, or by post or e-mail completing the form below and sending it to the address below. The closing date is 5pm on 19 August. Any responses received after this time will not be considered.

For more details contact:

Tom Dooley/Ben Foyle
Home Office
3rd Floor Seacole,
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Email: triennialreviews@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Animals in Science Committee

The Animals in Science Committee roles are:

- to advise the Secretary of State on all matters concerning the use of animals in scientific procedures;
- to advise animal welfare and ethical review bodies on sharing best practice within the UK; and
- by exchanging information within the European Union to co-ordinate best practice.

The Animals in Science Committee is responsible for providing impartial, balanced and objective advice to the Secretary of State, to animal welfare bodies and within the European Union on issues relating to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as amended.

The Animals in Science Committee is an advisory non-departmental public body of the Home Office. The Chair, Dr John Landers, and all members are appointed by the Home Secretary, in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice.

The Animals in Science Committee was established by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as amended to comply with Directive EU 2010/63/EU which came in to force on 1 January 2013. Article 49 of this Directive requires each EU country to set up a National Committee for the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes. In this country the committee is known as the Animals in Science Committee and has superseded the Animal Procedures Committee.

Further information on the Animals in Science Committee can be found on their website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animals-in-science-committee>.

Questions

1. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a need for a body to provide advice to Government on all matters concerning the use of animals in scientific procedures?**

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

Please explain your answer in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

The use of animals in scientific research is a specialist area that requires input from a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure that multiple and varying views are encompassed. This includes input from disciplines including medical and veterinary sciences, biological sciences, ethics and humanities amongst others, together with lay members without specific expertise in these areas. Advice on best practice and animal welfare is also constantly evolving in light of advances in scientific research. There is therefore a need for a specialist body such as the Animals in Science Committee (ASC) to provide up-to-date advice on these matters.

It should also be noted that under Article 49 of the European Union's (EU) Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (European Directive 2010/63/EU), there is a regulatory requirement for a national committee such as the ASC to exist.

2. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a need for a body to advise animal welfare bodies on sharing best practice within the UK?**

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	

Don't know	
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3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a need for a body to coordinate best practice by exchanging information within the European Union?

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

Please explain your answer in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

There is a need for harmonisation across the EU to ensure that all member states, including the UK, exercise and promote best practice for high standards of animal welfare in a consistent fashion. This includes harmonisation in important areas such as training and severity assessment. Exchanging information via a body such as the ASC ensures that the UK is cognisant of practices across the region. Whilst it is of utmost importance to ensure high standards of animal welfare, the requirement to attract and retain strong and vibrant life sciences research in the UK also needs to be considered. If the UK adopts more stringent rules and regulations governing animal research than those practiced in other EU countries without strong justification, there is a risk that such research will be driven out of the UK unnecessarily.

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the advice should be independent of Government?

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

5. Members of the Animals in Science Committee are appointed by Ministers from outside government in a personal capacity, because of their skills and experience in a relevant field. To what extent do you agree or disagree that members should be appointed in a personal capacity?

When answering this question, please consider alternatives, such as members representing organisations, the private, voluntary or third sector, or government departments, and whether any of those alternatives might be more appropriate. The various alternatives are set out in more detail in the Cabinet Office document Categories of Public Bodies: a guide for departments

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/80075/Categories_of_public_bodies_Dec12.pdf.

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

Please explain your answer in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

It is vital that members of the ASC are appointed in a personal capacity so that they can act independently and not on behalf of their organisations. Indeed, members are appointed in light of their expertise in a relevant field, which is key if they are to inform the issues that are being discussed. If they represented their organisations, their views and experience might be diluted by the broader organisational position. Seeking approval and advice from a member's organisation on various issues relating to animal research could also cause unnecessary delays.

In order to assist the ASC in specific areas of expertise, the Committee may benefit from input from co-opted individuals who have a working knowledge of a particular field of interest (for example, a working neuroscientist with active experience of using non-human primates).

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the role of the Animals in Science Committee could be provided by a different organisation?

Strongly agree	
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	x
Don't know	

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the role of the Animals in Science Committee could be done in a different way, for example, from within a government department, or by the third/voluntary sector, or the private sector?

Strongly agree	
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	x
Don't know	

8. Are you aware of any other bodies that perform similar functions?

Yes	
No	x
Don't Know	

Please list the bodies in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

N/A

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Animals in Science Committee could be merged with a similar body?

Strongly agree	
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	x
Don't know	

Please suggest a similar body with which the Animals in Science Committee could be merged in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

N/A

10. There are three key reasons why a NDPB should exist at arm's length from government. In order to be a NDPB, a public body must have met at least one of the following three tests:

- **it performs a technical function**
- **its activities require political impartiality**
- **it needs to act independently to establish facts**

In 2010 the Government concluded that the Animals in Science Committee should be retained on the basis that it performs a technical function which needs external expertise to be delivered.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Animals in Science Committee Group continues to meet this criteria?

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it meets the other 2 criteria?

Strongly agree	x
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

Please explain your answer in the box below (feel free to attach another sheet clearly marking which question you are answering):

We believe the ASC performs its technical function by providing expert advice on the use of animals for research, which should be objective, evidence-based and outcome-driven.

Animal research is a controversial issue that resonates with many members of the public and thus, the electorate. Political impartiality is therefore needed to provide objective, evidence-based and outcome-driven advice on these issues that transcends political positions.

For similar reasons, we believe the ASC needs to act independently of Government in assessing evidence.