

# Ethics Committee Terms of Reference

## Introduction

### 1. Our Vision

- 1.1. BeyondAutism is a charity dedicated to empowering people with autism to lead fuller lives through positive education experiences, training for the people who work with them and support for their families and carers.

### 2. Our Values

2.1. At BeyondAutism we are:

- Dedicated to delivering excellence – By developing expertise, outstanding services and positive engagement, always seeking to go above and beyond expectations.
- Committed to Applied Behaviour Analysis – By contributing to research and ensuring our staff continually develop and share best practice that ensure aspirational outcomes for people with autism are achieved.
- Respectful – By embracing diversity, showing integrity, acting with compassion and always treating people with dignity.
- Proud to challenge – By listening, changing thinking, shifting attitudes and educating.

### 3. Our Services

BeyondAutism is a charity dedicated to empowering people with autism to lead fuller lives. Through our Early Years, Schools and Post-19 services. BeyondAutism teaches children and adults aged 15 months–25 years old with autism and related communication disorders. We also provide Outreach and Training services for parents, carers, professionals and mainstream schools – delivering life-changing outcomes in education settings and at home.

We are extremely proud of the expertise that our staff hold. Our multidisciplinary team consists of Board Certified Behaviour Analysts, Qualified Specialist Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists. We are experts in educating children and young adults with autism, applying the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behaviour (VB) to teach students and arm them with the life skills they need to live as independent a life as possible.

### 4. Purpose

- 4.1. The Ethics Committee exists as part of the governance of any research conducted by or in conjunction with BeyondAutism.

The Ethics Committee will be responsible for advising, implementing and reviewing procedures and guidelines relating to ethical issues arising from teaching, research and other related organisation activities. The Committee will oversee research

integrity across the charity, including monitoring compliance with our vision, mission and values.

The ongoing role of the committee will in part be proactive in relation to emerging issues but will principally be reactive in relation to providing guidance.

Its terms of reference will be as follows:

#### **Established in April 2019**

4.2. The Ethics Committee will:

- Receive reports from members of staff about any matters relating to these terms of reference.
- Review any research proposals from outside agencies or from within BeyondAutism:
  - granting approval for research to proceed
  - seeking clarification or advising amendments to proposals before approval
  - dismissing any research proposals that do not pass approval by the committee.
- Review and monitor ongoing research within or in conjunction with BeyondAutism ensuring any ongoing research continues to comply with appropriate ethical guidelines and remains within the remit of the initial brief.
- Review and monitor case studies provided by our services that are for the purpose of purchasing of Continuing Education Units (CEUs), in line with ACE accreditation requirements for BCBA and BCaBA continuing education.
- Refer where necessary to external experts (co-opting) in a particular field if the Committee feels unable to make a decision regarding the ethical practice of a proposal. Further consideration to be given to appointing an external expert to the Committee in future structures of the committee.
- Report to the SMT.
- Review these terms of reference annually and recommend any variations to the SMT.

## **5. Membership**

5.1. The members of the Ethics Committee would normally include:

- Chair (Appointed by the Ethics Committee and approved by the SMT)
- Head of Service/ Delegated role from within relevant service (Dependent on research proposal of preference from head of that service)
- ABA Consultant (Dependent on school or service research relates to)
- Marketing/ Communications representative
- Fundraising representative
- Allied Health Professional (depending on type/ place research will be conducted)
- Qualified Teacher (depending on type/ place research will be conducted)

- Governor/ Trustee (link to this level nominated)
- Designated secretary to circulate pre- meeting items and to take minutes of the meetings.

## 6. Accountability

6.1. The Ethics Committee is a sub-committee and accountable to the Senior Management Team (SMT). The CEO will report through to the Board of Trustees.

## 7. Meetings

7.1. Meetings will be held by email as required depending on the frequency of research proposals received. Dates will be nominated once per academic term for physically being quorate, with additional meetings scheduled should this be deemed necessary by the Ethics Committee. They will be held at a BeyondAutism site, to be confirmed with the dates.

7.2. The Chair, appointed by the Ethics Committee and approved by the SMT, will organise the meetings in partnership with the Ethics Committee and will ensure that there is an appropriate record of proceedings.

## 8. Sharing of information and resources (including confidential materials)

8.1. Members of the Ethics Committee will be given a BeyondAutism email address and password protected access to the relevant folders on the BeyondAutism server.

## 9. Conflicts of interest

9.1. Ethics Committee members are required annually to complete a register of business interests. If a member's personal or financial interests conflict with those of BeyondAutism in any matter being considered by the Ethics Committee, the member must declare any such interest, withdraw from the meeting while the matter in question is being considered and not vote on any directly related decision.

## 10. Safeguarding

10.1. BeyondAutism has a particularly vulnerable cohort of students. Safeguarding is a golden thread throughout the organisation. It is of paramount importance to the Ethics Committee that its students are protected from mistreatment and enabled and empowered to make choices and take control of their lives. The Committee promotes the liberty of the students served by BeyondAutism and will give due consideration to this when considering research proposals.

- 10.2. Whilst the Ethics Committee will aim to have a Safeguarding Lead, it recognises that safeguarding remains the responsibility of the whole Ethics Committee (and indeed ultimately the responsibility of the Trustees of BeyondAutism). As an Ethics Committee, we recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of 'every one of us, all of the time'.
- 10.3. The Ethics Committee shall comply with all safeguarding legislation and guidance and have in place:
- sufficient Designated Safeguarding Leads (Alerting Managers) of appropriate seniority and with sufficient training to have responsibility for the protection and welfare of vulnerable adults and for liaison with the local authority, social services and other relevant agencies;
  - comprehensive and up to date safeguarding policy and procedure that meets all legal requirements and includes procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse of students by members of staff, other students or any other person either within the service or elsewhere.
  - All members of the Ethics Committee will receive a safeguarding induction explaining how the service's safeguarding processes run. All members should feel confident requesting refresher training in this area or asking for further explanations if they are ever unsure or uncomfortable with anything they read in a policy or see in practice in the service.
- 10.4. The Ethics Committee will review and approve relevant policies, in accordance with the organisation's policy review schedule.
- 10.5. The Ethics Committee will scrutinise and raise questions regarding:
- How any research conducted by or in conjunction with BeyondAutism complies with its statutory requirements, meets appropriate Ethical guidelines, abides by law and manages safeguarding – both internally and by working with key agencies; and student attendance data.

## 11. Joining the Ethics Committee – CHECKS AND INDUCTION

- 11.1. The Ethics Committee seeks to uphold the highest safeguarding standards possible to protect the vulnerable cohort of students within the service:
- no person shall be entitled to act as a member of the Ethics Committee whether on the first or any subsequent entry into membership until he or she has signed a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act in conformity with BeyondAutism's "Code of Conduct" and the current terms of reference;
  - a basic DBS certificate with contents satisfactory to BeyondAutism must also have been received; and
  - prior to attending meetings, new members will undergo an induction process which includes safeguarding training.
  - all candidates will be considered, regardless of race, gender, religion or beliefs.

## 12. Quorum for meetings

12.1. The quorum for meetings shall be not less than the number of the members specified below with voting rights:

- Full Ethics Committee: Five of eight committee members; ONE – of which none are employed by BeyondAutism
- If at the appointed start of any meeting an insufficient number of members to form a quorum is not present, the meeting shall be adjourned.

12.2. For MSc research proposals, a smaller group would be required: FOUR to be quorate. In this instance the committee may pre determine to co-opt an expert in the particular field for research

12.3. Where meetings are held over email, all members will be included. Decisions are seconded over email. In the first instance the chair of the committee will make an initial decision; considering all feedback and seeking seconded assent from the group before progressing with the outcome of the decision.

## 13. Voting

13.1. All decisions shall be determined by a democratic majority of the members voting on a proposal. Voting may be given either personally or by proxy. A proxy vote shall be in writing, signed by the appointor and naming another member as the appointee. The Chair should be informed in advance of a meeting if one member plans to give a proxy vote to another. In the case of equality of votes, the Chair of the Meeting shall have a second or casting vote. Any decisions made by the committee or members of the committee shall be respected by all.

## 14. Attendance

14.1. Term of Office of Members

Three years with the option of renewal for a further year.

14.2. Specialist Advice

The Committee may invite an individual to attend a particular meeting or meetings to give specialist advice to the Committee. Such individuals however should not participate in the final decision-making.

14.3. Full attendance and commitment of all members for meetings to which they have been invited is considered crucial to the effective ethical decisions pertaining to research and learning in our services and any external involvement in research or learning. Save where there are exceptional circumstances, members shall be disqualified from membership if they are absent from two consecutive meetings without having sent apologies and given reason which the Chair considers sufficient. Expectations regarding attendance and commitment shall be made clear to any persons considering becoming a member of the committee by the Chair of the committee prior to appointment or an election process.



Last review: May 2019  
Date of next review: May 2020  
Review group: Ethics Committee