

**MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUPS  
JUNE 2018**

**1. PREAMBLE**

The Advisory Group structure was put into place in 2007 so that the Society could rationalise and codify arrangements that were already in existence to enable the Society to be more nimble in its external affairs and internal communications. The drive for reform came about for a number of reasons, which are arguably even more coherent in 2018:-

- Respiratory medicine is a broad specialty with a number of sub-specialisms. This often means that BTS has to deal with a number of complex issues at any one time.
- The specialty is not static; there are a number of external pressures and challenges that require sensitive and strategic handling.
- A number of ad-hoc groups and working parties had been in existence for several years prior to 2007, and the reporting arrangements (to the Society's Standing Committees) were felt to be in need of reform.
- The Society is a stakeholder in a number of external organisations' consultation arrangements, some of which require a "rapid response" while still maintaining the integrity of a corporate BTS response.
- The Board of Trustees has developed a strategic planning process, which has meant that BTS has a more considered approach to what is said on its behalf; work that is undertaken; and limiting the use of members' surveys for other than organisational/strategic purposes, for example.
- The annual planning process always relies on accurate and timely "horizon scanning".
- Trustees consider that these pressures require active involvement from the membership via its Committee, Advisory Group and communications structures, but that it is the role of the Board to set the parameters for the operation of its Committees and Groups.
- Improvements have also been made in respect of internal communications with members, and more are planned as part of the BTS Digital Improvement programme – for example, the building of "on-line communities".

**2. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BTS SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUPS**

- To advise the Society on matters which influence the care of patients in the areas covered by the SAG.
- Specific tasks will include:-
  - giving advice to the Society on programme content for the Winter and Summer Meetings
  - when requested, providing faculty members and advice on content for BTS short courses

- providing a source of reviewers for Winter Meeting abstracts in their area of expertise
  - providing advice about emerging and unmet research needs, especially where the Society might be involved in some way in answering clinically significant questions
  - assisting if requested in the development of relevant audit tools and the collection of data about respiratory services in a planned way linked to the Society's strategic objectives;
  - advising on relevant training issues in sub-specialty areas
- To provide a pool of expert opinion to which the Society can refer when it receives requests for advice and in response to consultations. These responses are generally prepared by the SAGs, but sent to the organisations concerned by BTS head office staff
  - This will require the core membership of the SAG, via its Chair, to liaise with the Honorary Secretary regularly **and in particular in relation to proposed activities that are not covered in the above list**. The Society will provide a structure in which this liaison can take place effectively, using headquarters staff to facilitate effective communication. The Chief Executive is the main staff liaison member for SAG Chairs.
  - It is important for the Chair and all members of the SAG to note that the function of all Advisory Groups is to advise the Society. **The SAG should not develop new pieces of work without prior discussion and agreement.**
  - SAGs have no role in speaking on behalf of the Society, unless specifically requested to do so by the BTS Board of Trustees. Communications training will be provided from time to time.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 All members of SAGs must be members of the British Thoracic Society.

3.2 Membership is structured so that the Society gains advantage from a broad range of members' expertise, while ensuring that the size of the group is contained and opportunities are given to colleagues who are in the earlier stages of their careers. The BTS Board of Trustees consider that it is important that one place on each SAG is reserved for a Specialty Trainee.

3.3 The maximum number of SAG members should not exceed 6 at any time. A system is in place to allow rolling replacement of members, to regularly replenish the group as members come to the end of their period of service. Appendix A describes the selection process for the Chair and members of the SAG in more detail.

3.4 All members will normally serve for no more than 3 years from the date of taking up membership. The term of service is usually effective from the date of the Society's Annual General Meeting which takes place on the first day of the BTS Winter Meeting each year. If a casual vacancy occurs during the year it will not be filled until the next opportunity for selection occurs.

3.5 The only exception is the Chair – elect. S/he will be appointed in the third quarter of the third year of the Chair’s period of service, to allow handover, and may expect to serve for a longer period, but certainly for no longer than 4 years but exceptionally for 5 or 6 years. This latter situation will only occur if the Chair-elect is already serving on the SAG at the time of the election.

3.6 After the initial establishment period, when members will be selected by the Board of Trustees to establish and serve on the SAG, and appointed for a varying lengths of time to ensure a rolling succession, vacancies will be filled in the usual way i.e. by soliciting volunteers annually.

3.7 **It is not intended that any professional body and/or type of member should be given a place in a representative capacity.** However it may be important that the membership is multi-disciplinary. This *may* mean that the number on a SAG can be raised to 7 or, exceptionally, 8. This should be discussed by the Chair of the SAG and the Honorary Secretary and, in annual reports to the Board, this aspect will be monitored. All such appointments, however, will also be in a personal capacity, selected from BTS membership and not as the representative of a particular professional body. If a SAG needs to take specific “one-off” advice (for example, from a discipline that is outwith the “normal” membership of the Society) the Chair may do this on an ad-hoc basis, but may not invite the person concerned to join the SAG.

3.8 If a Specialty Trainee sitting on a SAG becomes a Consultant during their period of service, he or she may remain on the Group for the remainder of their 3 year appointment. However, when their period of office ends they will not be replaced by another Consultant. This will prevent an upward drift in numbers. In the interim another Trainee can be appointed for a three year period but only during the next annual replacement process.

3.9 The Chair and all members are required to conduct themselves in accordance to the Society’s policies and general procedures and in particular in relation to the policy about relationships with the bio-medical and tobacco industries, and the associated Declarations of Interest Scheme. These are listed in section 6.4, below. Members are especially asked to note that they must return a completed DoI form each year. If a form has not been completed after a reminder has been given, and certainly before the first meeting (including by teleconference) of the year, the member concerned will be asked to withdraw from membership.

#### 4 **ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF THE SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP**

4.1 The Chair is responsible for the direction, conduct, progress and completion of SAG business, both during and between the meetings. A Deputy Chair post is not necessary and should not be established. The SAG may function more effectively if members are given specific roles (including note-keeping) as resources are not available at head office to be able to provide a full secretariat service to the SAGs. Advice is always available to the Chair of the SAG from the Society’s Honorary Secretary and Chief Executive.

4.2 The Chair will plan SAG business (which will mostly involve responding to requests from the Society for assistance) and will chair meetings of the SAG, the Open Meeting during the Winter Meeting, and any ad-hoc meetings and teleconferences.

4.3 The Chair has an important role in ensuring that Declaration of Interest forms from all Committee members are scrutinised and any issue of concern discussed with the individual concerned and the Honorary Secretary. S/he must also ensure that at the beginning of each meeting or teleconference members are asked to declare any additional recently-acquired interests, and is expected to exercise judgement in the conduct of Committee business in the event of any potential conflicts of interest.

## 5. STANDING ORDERS AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

5.1 The SAG is required to hold an Open Meeting for all interested parties (members / non-members) at the BTS Winter Meeting. Only one such meeting a year is necessary. The timetable and location for these meetings is agreed with SAG Chairs by the BTS Conference Manager in October each year and publicised widely. The purpose of this meeting will be to report on developments in the sub-specialty during the year, what the SAG has done in the year, and receive feedback about issues of concern. Anyone attending the Winter Meeting can attend the SAG Open Meeting, but it is not possible for someone to be allowed entry just to attend the Open Meeting.

5.2 In between times, the Society will provide funding **for one face-to face meeting and up to 2 teleconferences or Webexes**. Many SAGs also hold a second face-to face meeting of SAG members only during the BTS Winter Meeting, when it is reasonable to expect most SAG members will be present. Travel expenses will NOT be paid for individual members to attend this meeting, if one takes place. BTS can provide a room for the SAGs to meet, bookable via BTS Head office. If more meetings are needed a case should be made and approval sought from the Hon. Secretary, via the Chief Executive, both of whom who will consult Trustees as necessary.

5.3 It is not possible for BTS Head Office to provide a secretariat service for meetings of SAGs. It is recommended that the SAG records its discussions (certainly its main decisions), however. This might be done by the Chair; or a designated member, or by members in rotation, and a copy of minutes of meetings and related queries should be sent to the Society via the Chief Executive. The Society will not support the development of structures within each SAG so that there are "SAG Secretary" posts.

5.4 A meeting will be held in the early evening before the start of the Winter Meeting each year between SAG Chairs and the Board of Trustees. This will enable the Board to report on the Society's activities and plans; to receive feedback from SAGs about significant issues and developing themes; and to check that governance and communications systems are working effectively. A template annual report form will be sent to SAG Chairs in October each year for completion and circulation for this meeting.

5.5 The SAG Chairs will be asked in July and November each year to consult the SAG and make proposals for symposia at the BTS Summer Meeting and Winter Meeting. The organising Committees reserve the right to suggest amendments and/or additions to the suggestions, in order that a coherent programme can be built for both Meetings.

5.6 In matters where the Society's opinion is required by external organisations, Society's Head Office staff will seek the views of the SAG and may ask it to reply on the Society's behalf, or to contribute opinions as part of an overall BTS response.

5.7 The SAG may also be called upon to provide individual representative(s) on external bodies when a BTS nomination is sought.

5.8 The SAG will be able, via consultation with the Hon. Secretary and/or Chief, to ask that an item or items be discussed by the BTS board or the appropriate BTS Standing Committee. Similarly, the SAG may be invited to prepare a paper and /or make a presentation for the Board, a Standing Committee or BTS Council to inform discussions at any time during the year.

## 6. CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1 The Society values the contribution of those members who serve on its various Committees and Advisory Groups and Working Parties. Without this service, it would not be possible to carry out the great variety of work that is undertaken which contributes to the raising of standards of care of people with respiratory disease. BTS has a justifiably high reputation for the quality of its activities and the advice it gives to external bodies.

6.2 It is not permissible for the Chair or any member of a SAG to accept a position on an industry Advisory Board, or a meeting to explore service delivery issues etc in anything other than in an individual capacity, in which case the activity will be reported via the DoI scheme. **Under no circumstances should the organisers of such meetings refer to the presence of an individual as a BTS SAG Chair or member.**

6.3 The Society is also proud to have been a pioneer in a number of areas, including the Declarations of Interest scheme, which has been replicated by a number of other Societies in recent years. The probity of our actions is underpinned by a number of policies and procedures which are kept under regular (annual) review.

6.4 Consequently, we ask all members of Committees, Advisory Groups and Working Parties to note and abide by the following policy and procedures documents:-

- BTS Policy on **Biomedical Industries & Commercial Sponsorship and associated Declarations of Interest Scheme**. This is reviewed annually by BTS Council and Trustees.
- **Endorsement policy**
- **Media policy**
- **Travel and subsistence policy**
- **The complaints procedure**

These documents can all be found on the BTS website in the "governance" pages of the section entitled "About BTS"

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## APPENDIX A

### Arrangements for selection of the Chair and members of a BTS SAG

#### Chair

Succession planning for the Chair of the Committee will take place as follows. In the year preceding the December when the Chair's 3 year term in office is due to end, the Society will advertise that a vacancy for the Chair of the SAG will be coming up. This will be as part of the annual call for volunteers in early July.

Members of the SAG plus any other member of the Society will be invited to apply by submitting a short c.v. and statement of interest. The advertisement will state clearly the criteria that applicants should be able to meet in terms of experience, knowledge and anticipated contribution.

Senior officers of the Board, in consultation with the current Chair, and assisted where needed by the Chief Executive, are responsible for selecting the Chair-elect, taking into account the information supplied in the application. Shortlisting and interviewing will be undertaken by a senior officer of the Society (Honorary Officer or President/President-elect), the current Chair of the SAG and the Chief Executive.

The Board (usually via its Officer's group) will be asked to ratify the selection and the decision will be made known to the successful candidate so that the Chair-elect can spend a period of time before taking up post shadowing the incumbent.

#### Members

A call for volunteers for all BTS Committees and Advisory Groups is circulated in early July each year to all BTS members. The call for volunteers will clearly state the vacancies that are available; the experience and special interests sought (if any) and the arrangements for selection. Selection criteria will be clearly stated.

If there are more volunteers than places available, selection will be undertaken by the Honorary Secretary and Chair of the SAG, with the assistance if required of the Chief Executive, and will be based on consideration of information to be supplied in the form of a short CV and supporting statement. Interviews will not be necessary but a scoring grid will be used.