

Summary of UK AWERB stakeholder discussion meeting, held on 18 May 2015

Attended by: John Landers (ASC Chair), Steve Owen (IAT), David Anderson (LASA), David Farningham (ELHF), Ute Weyer (LAVA), Sue Houlton (HO ASRU), Huw Golledge (UFAW), Alan White (HOLTIF), Manuel Berdoy (UTG), Jane Smith (Boyd Group), Maggy Jennings, Penny Hawkins, Nikki Osborne (RSPCA)

1. Aims of the meeting

The meeting was convened to discuss the potential for setting up a body to act as a central focus point for Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)-related activities, provisionally titled **AWERB-UK**. This could contribute to the organisation and development of AWERBs, providing support for members and a means of drawing interested parties together to facilitate dialogue and discussion. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- gain an initial overview of past, present and planned AWERB-related activities within the different organisations and other interested parties;
- identify any gaps that need to be filled with respect to supporting all AWERB members in fulfilling all the AWERB's tasks, including engaging staff who are advised or assisted by the AWERB; and
- explore the potential for improving communication and coordination of AWERB activities between different stakeholders, in order to contribute to the ongoing positive development of AWERBs, avoid duplication of effort and maximise use of resources.

This document briefly summarises the day's discussions, setting out some conclusions and action points to facilitate better coordination of the stakeholder's activities to further develop the UK AWERB.

2. Current AWERB-related activities of the stakeholder organisations

ASC (Animals in Science Committee)

- The ASC is convened to provide advice to Ministers and AWERBs, and to share best practice on matters relating to animal acquisition, breeding, accommodation, care and use. This requires a two way dialogue between the ASC and AWERBs
- The resources and funding available to the ASC are limited, which constrains the activities it is able to initiate and maintain.
- An ASC AWERB Sub-committee has been set up to implement the ASC's tasks relating to AWERBs.
- The ASC is currently working to set up a communication network between itself and AWERBs, and within AWERBs. The aim is to establish a system in which a number of the UK's 180 AWERBs can act as regional 'hubs' to facilitate communications between the ASC and AWERBs, as well as drawing the regional AWERBs together.
- Held workshop for invited AWERB Chairs in November 2014, with a range of aims including bringing the Chairs together, discussing the role of the ASC and informing its work programme.
- Intend to promote and champion the AWERB and its roles to: establishment heads, e.g. university Vice-Chancellors; funding bodies.
- Producing advice and information on 'grey areas', e.g. work that is conducted by UK researchers outside the European Union (EU), or otherwise out of scope of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA).
- It might be possible to draw up a list of people who wish to be lay/independent members.

RSPCA

- Organises an annual Lay Members' Forum since 1999. This is a one day meeting intended for lay members (although people holding several other AWERB related roles usually attend). The Forum comprises presentations and discussions on both scientific and AWERB-task/process related topics.
- Produces a Lay Members' Handbook since 2003 – this was recently updated to increase international relevance and reflect new EU legislation.
- Produces guidance sheets for lay members on housing and care of commonly used species, refining cage cleaning and humane killing (N.B. these are due to be updated).
- With LASA, jointly produces Good Practice Guidelines for AWERBs – third edition almost completed.
- Has produced an 'R' of Replacement resource and slide set for local delivery at establishments.
- A section of the RSPCA website is dedicated to ethical review, which explains the functions and tasks of ethics committees including the AWERB and links to key resources
- Runs training workshops in the EU and Asia to promote ethical review and the AWERB approach..

The Boyd Group

- This is a dialogue and discussion forum for multiple stakeholders, with a range of perspectives, on a variety of topics relevant to AWERB tasks. Focus is on exploring contentious issues, promoting reflection and challenge, and identifying practical applications for outcomes of discussions.

HO ASRU (Home Office Animals in Science Regulation Unit)

- Supported the requirement for the AWERB in the new primary legislation and produced a section on the form and tasks of the AWERB within the Guidance to the Operation of the ASPA.
- Advises establishments on good practice for individual AWERBs and Inspectors are encouraged to attend AWERB meetings. Home Office Inspectors input each year to the Lay Members' Forum.
- Supports the concept of identifying and promoting good practice for AWERBs that can be tailored to each establishment.

LAVA (Laboratory Animal Veterinary Association)

- LAVA members support and participate in AWERBs.
- There are no specific training courses on contributing to the AWERB for Named Veterinary Surgeons (NVSs), but will be aiming to address this topic at the LAVA October meeting.

HOLTIF (Home Office Liaison, Training & Information Forum)

- Has co-organised workshops to feed into the revision of the RSPCA/LASA Guiding Principles for AWERBs.
- Can provide useful contacts base for liaising with AWERBs.

UFAW (Universities Forum for Animal Welfare)

- Publishes information relevant to a number of AWERB tasks, including *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory and Other Research Animals* and the academic journal *Animal Welfare*.
- Organises or co-organises a number of laboratory animal welfare/Three Rs meetings including the RSPCA/UFAW Rodent Welfare Meeting, LASA/UFAW meetings etc.
- Has a link network of around 80 people (mostly researchers) within universities, who could be asked to support, promote and/or contribute to AWERBs.
- UFAW staff sit on both AWERBs and ethics committees in fields other than animal research (Zoo, Wildlife etc), so can provide insights from different perspectives.

ELHF (Establishment Licence Holders' Forum)

- Supports aims of AWERB and has had input into the revision of the RSPCA/LASA guiding principles document.
- Involved in training new ELHs, which provides a route to encourage good practice within AWERBs.

IAT (Institute for Animal Technology)

- Promotes the Culture of Care which is encompassed within the AWERB roles.
- Promotes education and career path for animal technologists, now including across the EU.
- The Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO) Guidelines cover membership of the AWERB and the IAT has also set up a NACWO exchange programme.

LASA (Laboratory Animal Science Association)

- Holds meetings and workshops on AWERB tasks and other relevant topics, e.g. within the Winter Meeting and specialist sections, particularly the Education, Training and Ethics Section (ETES).
- Has updated the Good Practice Guidelines for AWERBs together with the RSPCA, as above.
- Has also produced guidance on specific aspects of the AWERB's work including retrospective review and rehoming, together with guidance on education and training relevant to AWERBs.
- Contributes to FELASA activities including those relevant to Animal Welfare Bodies (a reduced version of the UK AWERB required by Directive 2010/63/EU).

UTG (Universities Training Group)

- Have not developed any specific 'AWERB' training, but all training bodies teach ethics and law.
- Participates in AWERB-related workshops held by other bodies.

3. Thoughts on issues and 'gaps' in training, resources and activities for AWERB members

RSPCA (on behalf of lay/independent members)

- Understanding the science
- Understanding the harms
- Having the confidence to question researchers and/or other staff.

LAVA

- Training and preparation for NVSs who sit on the AWERB.

HOLTIF

- Lack of training in (i) the processes involved in AWERB tasks, (ii) science, ethics and welfare, (iii) soft skills (e.g. communication skills, assertiveness, building relationships). The facility to share information and good practice across AWERBs.
- Lack of coordination between LASA, IAT etc. regarding AWERB-related activities.

ASC

- There is no network for AWERBs.
- Knowledge as to which, and what kind of, information needs to be channelled between AWERBs and the ASC, and between the AWERBs themselves.

Home Office ASRU

- Clarity about what individual AWERBs want to achieve for each of their functions.

UFAW

- Training for AWERB members, especially dissemination of animal welfare science to both lay and non-lay members (with tailored resources for both).
- Inadequate communication/information sharing between AWERBs.
- A mechanism for identifying and reaching out to AWERBs that are under-performing.

ELHF

- Greater understanding of what AWERBs should really be doing, and how AWERBs and ASC interact.
- Training for ELHs in the AWERB and its tasks, including how to be an effective Chair.

IAT

- Training for AWERB members in soft skills; e.g. communication skills, assertiveness, building relationships.

LASA

- Induction materials for new AWERB members.
- Additional training tailored to different roles, functions and tasks – including how to be an effective Chair.
- A means of reviewing the effectiveness of AWERBs, evaluated against Terms of Reference.

UTG (Universities Training Group)

- Information from bodies producing resources and materials needs to filter down to users.
- AWERBs need to be sure that scientists know what they are doing with respect to project design, implementing the Three Rs etc. (ASC could advise on this) – but there has to be ‘buy in’ from researchers; ideally they would view the AWERB as positive.
- There may be insufficient numbers of AWERB members, especially in universities.

In general, the most pressing needs identified by the group were:

- a. Training for all AWERB members (including scientists, lay/independent members, animal technologists, named persons, vets and Chairs) in: the role and tasks of the AWERB; ‘soft skills’; reviewing the science; identifying animal welfare issues; and practical ethics.
- b. Related to the above; induction materials for new AWERB members (it was noted that much of the materials required for this is probably already in existence or could easily be adapted for the purpose).
- c. Criteria for defining good practice, which AWERBs can use to self-assess. The RSPCA/LASA guidelines on AWERBs contain material that could be used for this purpose (e.g. the ‘ten top tips’ for an effective AWERB).
- d. A communication network between AWERBs (NB setting this up is the ASC’s role and is ongoing).
- e. A framework for ensuring dissemination of AWERB-related resources, initiatives and activities that are already available or ongoing.
- f. Greater buy-in and support for the AWERB on the part of researchers.

4. Summary points

The sense of ‘momentum’ within different AWERBs can vary considerably.

Stakeholders are already putting a great deal of collective effort into producing resources, and running workshops and training, that are relevant to AWERBs. However, these initiatives are currently not coordinated, and awareness of them can be low as there is no consistent mechanism to inform all institutions and their AWERBs. It was suggested that the ASC could endorse (but not ‘brand’) resources by other bodies as a means of promoting these. In particular, an easily-accessible repository is needed for ‘grey materials’ (i.e. literature that is not formally or commercially published), both to ensure that these are not overlooked and to act as a stimulus to create others.

There was broad agreement that a more coordinated approach would be highly beneficial, and that it is important for stakeholders to convene and decide what needs to be done and by whom. The question is; how could this best be achieved? Two approaches were identified.

1. The **ASC** could take the lead, by convening a regular series of meetings for the stakeholders at the present meeting, both to ‘catch up’ and coordinate and to focus on specific tasks or areas as appropriate. Engagement with scientific stakeholders would also be beneficial for future meetings. This

would be in addition to the ASC's activities aiming to facilitate communication between AWERBs. However, the ASC has limited resource, which could constrain its ability to actively support a range of initiatives*.

2. A body like **AWERB-UK** could be set up to act as a hub for communication and coordination between the stakeholders, complementing the ASC's role in ensuring communication between AWERBs. For example, AWERB-UK could take the form of an annual meeting organised by all the stakeholders at the present meeting, and open to all AWERB members. It would provide a forum for AWERB members to meet, gather information and discuss topics of interest and concern (in a similar manner to the RSPCA Lay Members' Forum, but widened to include named persons, animal technologists and scientists etc.), and also enable the organising bodies to meet and coordinate their work.

It was agreed that it would be useful to review the activities and approach of the US PRIM&R to see what could be adapted for the UK.

5. Conclusions and suggested actions

- The AWERB-related activities of all the organisations present need to be better communicated and coordinated.
- An appropriate approach in the short term could be for the ASC to act as a facilitator (1 above), convening (annual?) meetings to enable stakeholders to coordinate their activities, with the potential to set up a body like AWERB-UK as and when appropriate (2).
- In the meantime, an online forum could be set up for the organisations present (and any others involved in AWERB-related activities) to inform each other about new initiatives, or progress made (e.g. a Yahoo usergroup).
- Whether or not a body like AWERB-UK is eventually formed, there is scope for some or all of the organisations to work together and hold jointly-branded meetings, training workshops etc. for AWERB members holding a range of different roles.
- All stakeholders should consider initiatives aimed at addressing pressing needs (a) to (f) above – either in combination or as individuals (if the latter, informing other bodies about any resulting activities).
- The possibility could be investigated of using a section of the ASC website to act as a repository for resources endorsed by the Committee, including grey literature.

Summary prepared by Penny Hawkins, RSPCA
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We greatly appreciate the support of the Royal Veterinary College, which provided the venue and refreshments for the meeting.

* As an independent, statutory body, the ASC could convene a forum but would not be able to be a member of an overarching group. It must also 'have regard to both the legitimate requirements of science and industry and to the protection of animals against avoidable suffering and unnecessary use in scientific procedures'.