



Diversity House Research Ethics Committee

Diversity House research ethics committee (REC) will regularly review proposed studies with human participants to ensure that they conform to internationally and locally accepted ethical guidelines, monitor studies once they have begun and, where relevant, take part in follow-up action and scrutiny after the end of the research. Diversity House REC will have the authority to approve, reject or stop studies or require modifications to research protocols. The committee may also perform other functions, such as setting policies or offering opinions on ongoing ethical issues in research.

Review by the REC is required by international and national ethical standards governing research involving human participants, as well as by the regulatory bodies that Diversity House is registered to. The conduct of review is of paramount importance to Diversity House as it intends to publish the results of its investigations in journals and other academic portals.

The main responsibility of Diversity House REC is to protect potential participants in the research, but it will also consider potential risks and benefits for the community in which the research will be carried out. Its goal will be to promote high ethical standards in research for health and social wellbeing.

Structure and functions of the REC

Diversity House REC will be operating in-house, that is, within the charity to serve as a regulatory, scrutiny and best practice watchdog. The REC will provide greater consistency for any investigation by the charity thereby ensuring that Diversity House will have greater legitimacy in the eyes of the research community and the public.

The functions of Diversity House REC research will include identifying and weighing up the risks and potential benefits of any proposed research; evaluating the process and materials (printed documents and other tools) that will be used for seeking participants' informed consent; assessing the recruitment process and any incentives that will be given to participants; evaluating risks to participants' confidentiality (and the related risk of discrimination) and the adequacy of confidentiality protections; and examining any other issues that may affect the ethical acceptability of the research. The REC will represent the interest of the local population as well as that of the charity. Thus, it will ensure that the participants and their communities will receive fair benefits from the arrangement.

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Promoting Community Integration, Inclusion and Cohesion

www.diversityhouse.org.uk

Membership

In the light of their role in identifying and evaluating the risks and benefits of research, Diversity House REC must include individuals from a multidisciplinary field. Diversity House is of the belief that a diversity of backgrounds and qualifications (in medicine as well as law, social sciences, etc.) will help ensure that the REC judgements are not inappropriately dominated by a single perspective. Social diversity and gender balance will also be reflected in the committee's composition. The REC will have a broad community representation to identify relevant local attitudes or practices about which the researchers should be sensitive. For example, in some communities, it may be considered inappropriate to approach individuals about research participation before consulting community leaders. Input from community members will also enable the committee to assess the understandability of the information that will be provided to prospective participants as part of the informed-consent process.

The membership of Diversity House REC will be designed to minimize the potential impact of conflicts of interest on the decision-making process. For example, some members of the REC will not have any affiliation with Diversity House. In addition, members who have a conflict of interest with respect to a study should not participate in the review of that study.

Support and oversight

Diversity House REC will need staff and funding to support its operations. Therefore, as part of its funding strategies Diversity House will continually source for funding either through the provision of research activities or trust funds to provide support for the REC.

Members of Diversity House REC may where relevant, receive training in the international and local ethical and legal standards governing research, as well as in the process the committee will use to review and approve protocols. If recruited to REC, non-academic members (that is, community members) will be provided with training and support to beef up their understanding of research terminologies and research methodology enough to enable them to participate intelligently in the committee's discussions. A good knowledge of the social and cultural context is also important. Training will not be a single occurrence, but instead will be an ongoing process in which all committee members participate. Diversity House REC will be subject to ongoing oversight, both to ensure that they are following applicable standards and procedures and to determine whether their actions are improving the ethical quality of research. Oversight mechanisms may include regional or national meetings for the purpose of exchanging information about best practices, or partnerships between Diversity House REC and other committees from different NGOs.

