

MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUPS (SAG) 2025 – 2028

1. INTRODUCTION

The Advisory Group structure was put into place in 2007 to enable the Society to be more agile in its external affairs and internal communications. The Society recognises that:

- 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.
- 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 a strategic planning process, which means 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".

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:
 - Providing 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;
 - 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.

- This will require the core membership of the SAG, via its Chair, to liaise with the Chief Executive and 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 BTS 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 through the Communications team.

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 or near the first day of the BTS Winter Meeting each year. If a casual vacancy occurs during the year it will not usually be filled until the next opportunity for selection occurs.

3.5 The Chair of the SAG may occasionally 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 is already serving on the SAG at the time of the election.

3.6 Vacancies on the SAG will be filled in the usual way i.e. by soliciting volunteers annually to ensure rolling succession of membership.

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. If a SAG needs to take specific "one-off" advice (for example, from a discipline that is outside 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 (DOI) Scheme. These are listed in section 6 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 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.

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 members are asked to declare any additional recently-acquired interests, and is expected to exercise judgement in the conduct of SAG 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) either during the BTS Winter Meeting (if onsite) or online prior to the Winter Meeting. Only one such meeting a year is necessary. The timetable and location for these meetings is agreed with SAG Chairs and BTS Head Office 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, and online meetings will be open to all. Travel expenses will NOT be paid for individual members to meetings held during the onsite Winter Meeting.

5.2 It is not intended that SAGs hold regular, lengthy meetings, but where a meeting is required this may be arranged via Teams.

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 (and its main decisions). 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 Each BTS Advisory group will be asked to prepare an annual report for the Board and the chair will be invited to attend the annual meeting of SAG chairs and Board members.

5.5 The SAG Chairs will be asked to consult with SAG members and make proposals for symposia at the BTS Summer Meeting and Winter Meeting each year. 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, BTS 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 Honorary Secretary and/or Chief Executive, 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. 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 and the Biomedical Industry Policy for joint working and funding arrangements and associated Declarations of Interest Scheme. This is reviewed annually by BTS Council and Trustees.**
- **BTS Policy on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality**
- **Endorsement Policy**
- **BTS Information Governance Policy**
- **Complaints procedure**
- **Media access and Communications policy**
- **Travel and subsistence policy (reviewed annually by Honorary Treasurer and Chief Executive)**

These documents can all be found on the BTS website in the “governance” section.

Chief Executive
July 2025

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 November 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 June/early July.

Members of the SAG plus any other member of the Society will be invited to apply by submitting a short CV 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.

Short-listing and interviews will be conducted by the Honorary Secretary (or other Officer) and the Chief Executive for SAG Chair positions.

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.

Members

A call for volunteers for all BTS Committees and Advisory Groups is circulated in early summer 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 Chair of the SAG, with assistance from the Honorary Secretary and Chief Executive if needed, 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.