

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) Chair: information pack for applicants

Closing date: midday on 9 January
Reference: SACNChair26

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Summary

Key facts about the post

Role:	SACN Chair
Location:	Online meetings or London
Remuneration:	£400 per full day meeting (including reading fee)
Time Commitment:	approximately 10 to 15 days per year

Indicative timetable (subject to change)

Closing date:	9 January
Shortlisting complete:	20 January
Interviews held:	Week commencing 2 February

Role description and person specification

Thank you for your interest in the appointment of Chair to SACN.

The role of SACN is to provide independent scientific advice on and risk assessments of nutrition and related health issues.

Members are appointed as independent scientific experts on the basis of their specific skills and knowledge. The committee also includes at least 2 lay members.

Applicants must be eligible to work in the UK. Applicants must declare any potential conflicts of interests as part of the application process and routinely as a member of SACN. These will be discussed at interview and if appointed would be handled according to the [SACN code of practice](#). Please note that individuals are only eligible to be SACN members if they do not hold significant interests in relation to the food, drink, diet or supplement industries. Further information is in the [SACN Code of Practice](#).

DHSC values and promotes diversity and encourages applications from all sections of the community.

In this pack you will find additional information about SACN and its work, details of the advertised roles, and how to apply.

SACN role and responsibilities

SACN is an advisory committee set up to provide scientific advice on, and risk assessment of, nutrition and related health issues. It advises the governments of all four UK countries and is supported by a secretariat located in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Its advice covers scientific aspects of nutrition and health with specific reference to:

- nutrient intakes and nutritional status of the population
- nutrient content of individual foods and advice on individual nutrients and diet as a whole, including the definition of a balanced diet
- monitoring and surveillance of the above aspects
- nutritional issues which affect wider public health policy issues including conditions where nutritional status is one of a number of risk factors (such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, oral health, osteoporosis and obesity)

- research requirements for the above.

Consideration of vulnerable groups (such as infants, adolescents and older adults), racially and ethnically diverse groups and health inequality underpins all SACN's evidence evaluations. Where relevant, and when available evidence allows, SACN also considers beliefs and cultural influences.

The function of SACN is to gather and assess scientific information (risk assessment) to assist policy making or analysis (risk management). The task of policy making is the responsibility of government, which will consider practical options for responses to the problem on which scientific advice has been sought, assessing those options and making decisions on them. Where required, SACN may advise on possible practical solutions, but does not develop policy on behalf of government. SACN has a public health focus, therefore the treatment of disease is outside SACN's remit, unless specifically requested to consider. Alcohol, other than as a source of energy, is also outside SACN's remit.

SACN is supported in its work by a secretariat provided by OHID. The secretariat has scientific expertise.

More information about SACN's remit and how it works is set out in the [SACN Code of Practice](#). This includes details about the roles and responsibilities of a SACN member; terms of office; SACN's policy on declaring interests and avoiding or resolving conflicts of interest; and travel and subsistence expenses.

The SACN Chair has particular responsibility for:

- keeping track of committee progress against the agreed work programme for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the performance of SACN
- the operation and output of the committee, including assessing the workload and ensuring that the volume of work does not compromise the rigour of discussion
- ensuring that the right balance of skills is represented in the SACN membership
- ensuring that the full range of scientific opinion, including unorthodox and contrary scientific views are appropriately taken into account
- ensuring that any significant diversity of opinion among the members of the committee is fully explored and discussed and if it cannot be reconciled is accurately reflected in the report and in any other communications with OHID or other government departments in the UK

- ensuring that every member of the committee has the opportunity to be heard and that no view is ignored or overlooked, using, where appropriate, a structured process which ensures that all views are captured and explored
- ensuring that members have any necessary training to enable them to fulfil their role
- ensuring members' declarations of interests are handled and managed appropriately
- reporting the committee/ advice to government departments in the UK including alerting them to new evidence likely to have an impact on current policy
- representing the consensus of the committee to the public or the media (unless other specific arrangements have been made)
- ensuring that the secretariat accurately documents the proceedings of the committee so that there is a clear audit trail showing how a decision was reached.
- keeping track of individual members' performance in order to carry out members' appraisals with the SACN secretariat.

A Chair is also a member of SACN. A member's role is to:

- ensure DHSC and other government departments in all UK countries receive the highest quality, timely, advice
- consider whether the questions on which SACN offers advice are those which are of interest to (and understandable by) the public and other interested parties outside the scientific community
- examine and challenge if necessary, the assumptions on which scientific advice is formulated
- ensure that the committee has the opportunity to consider contrary scientific views and where appropriate the concerns and values of stakeholders before a decision is taken
- adhere to the terms by which members are appointed to SACN, set out in the [Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees](#)

All members should share in the general responsibility to consider the wider context in which their expertise is deployed.

Person specification for SACN Chair

To be considered, you must be able to demonstrate that you have the qualities, skills and experience to meet the specific criteria for appointment set out in this information pack.

Essential criteria

- Proven leadership skills
- Track record of significant achievement in public health
- Ability to contribute robust technical views
- Sound understanding of the public health aspects of their areas of expertise
- Experience of chairing Committees
- Understanding or experience of risk assessment for policy development

Personal skills and qualities required for all SACN members

In addition to the essential criteria, the successful applicants will be expected to demonstrate the following skills and qualities:

- strong analytical and problem solving skills
- sound judgement and decision making
- effective communication
- ability to work in a team environment and accept a wide range of views, for example accepting when you have a minority view
- effective influencing skills
- strong commitment to [principles of public life](#).

Remuneration

You will be paid £400 per full day meeting (including reading fee).

Remuneration is taxable, and subject to National Insurance contributions, both of which will be deducted at source under PAYE before you are paid. Remuneration is not pensionable.

You may claim travel and subsistence expenses, which are properly and necessarily incurred in carrying out your role and responsibilities as member of SACN in line with travel and subsistence policy and rates for the SACN. A copy of the policy and rates can be obtained from SACN.

Time commitment

Approximately 10 to 15 days per annum. SACN main meetings are held 3 times a year. Dates for meetings in 2026 are 12 March, 17 and 18 June (meeting and horizon scan) and 19 November. There is also an expectation that the Chair join at least one [working group](#). Additional time is needed for reading papers before and between meetings.

Location

The majority of SACN meetings are held online via Microsoft Teams. Typically, one meeting per year is held in London with the option to attend in person or online. In person attendance by any international members will be considered on a case by case basis depending on costs.

Tenure of office

The SACN's Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) determines the length of the appointment, which will be for up to a maximum of 3 years in the first instance. The Chair may be offered reappointment up to the maximum 10-year term.

Accountability

Members are appointed by the SRO and are accountable to the SRO via the Chair for carrying out their duties and for their performance.

The recruitment process

Making an application

The SACN secretariat is managing this recruitment campaign.

To make an application please send a CV, supporting letter and completed monitoring forms to SACN.Recruitment@DHSC.gov.uk quoting the reference SACNChair26 in the subject field.

Deadline

Applications must be received by midday on 9 January

CV

Please ensure your CV includes:

- your full name, title, home address, personal contact telephone numbers (land line and mobile) and personal email address
- similar contact details for two referees who will support your application. One referee should be the person to whom you are/were accountable in your current/most recent appointment or position of employment. Please indicate the relationship of each referee to you. References will be requested for short-listed candidates prior to interview
- details of your education and qualifications, employment history, directorships, membership of professional bodies and any relevant publications or awards
- brief details of your current or most recent post and the dates you occupied this role. Please identify any past or present Ministerial appointments.

Please do not include a photo on your CV.

Supporting letter

The supporting letter is your opportunity to demonstrate how you meet each of the criteria set out in the person specification. How you choose to present the information is up to you. However, you should aim to provide detailed examples that demonstrate how your knowledge and experience matches each of the criteria, and which describe what your role was in achieving a specific result. It will also benefit the selection panel if you can be clear which particular evidence you provide relates to which criteria. Providing separate paragraphs in relation to each criterion is common practice. Please write all acronyms in full first.

Please ensure your full name and the reference number for the post (SACNChair26) are clearly noted at the top of your letter.

Please also set out details regarding any potential conflicts and/or reputational issues and how you would propose to manage these (see below guidance on conflicts of interest and the seven principles of public life).

Conflicts of Interest

In your supporting letter please declare any interests, which may, or may be perceived to, conflict with the role and responsibilities as a member of SACN, including any business interests and positions of authority outside of the role in SACN and details of how you propose to manage these, including whether you'd be prepared to stand down from this commitment ahead of appointment. This includes any interests relevant to SACN's terms of reference. These include personal and non-personal financial interests as well as any non-financial personal interests.

The SACN [Code of Practice](#) outlines that individuals are only eligible to be members of SACN if they do not hold significant interests in relation to the food, drink, diet or supplement industry. They should also not hold significant interests in pharmaceutical products or devices closely related to the work of SACN (for example, weight loss drugs).

Significant interests include:

- employment
- consultancy (paid or contractual)
- advisory boards
- payment or honorarium for industry meeting / conference attendance (over and above covering conference fees or usual travel and accommodation expenses)
- significant gifts and hospitality
- research funding or support directly from commercial sector, that is not part of an independent grant-making body process (such as MRC or BBSRC).
- shares in individual companies, unless these are held in a managed fund where the person does not have the ability to instruct the fund manager as to the composition of the fund.

Any other interest that is considered to be unmanageable by the Chair and secretariat would preclude membership. Any family interests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Please also give details of your involvement in social media such as "X" and "LinkedIn" or involvement with lobbying organisations.

If you are invited for interview, you will be asked about these interests. Information on interests is also asked for in the monitoring form.

If appointed, you will also be required to declare these interests in the register of interests which is available to the public. See the current register of interests on the [SACN webpage](#) for examples of entries.

The seven principles of public life and ensuring public confidence

You will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to and an understanding of the value and importance of the seven principles of public life. All successful candidates will be asked to subscribe to [the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees \(CoPSAC\)](#).

Should you be successful in your application, if there is anything in your personal or professional history, that if brought into the public domain, may cause embarrassment or disrepute to the organisation, please provide further details in your supporting letter. Failure to disclose such information could result in an appointment being terminated.

Disqualification from appointment

There are circumstances in which an individual may not be considered for appointment. They include:

- significant conflicts of interest (as detailed in the SACN Code of Practice)
- persons who have received a prison sentence or suspended sentence of 3 months or more in the last 5 years
- persons who are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order, or a debt relief order or interim debt relief order under Schedule 4ZB to the Insolvency Act 1986
- persons who have had an earlier term of appointment with a health service body terminated on the grounds:
 - that it was not conducive to the interests or good management of the body that the person should continue to hold office
 - their attendance was deemed unacceptable
 - that the person failed to declare a pecuniary interest or withdraw from consideration of a matter in respect of which the person had a pecuniary interest

- of misconduct or failure to carry out the person's duties
- anyone who is under a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986
- anyone who has been removed from trusteeship of a charity.

Monitoring form

Please complete in full and return the monitoring form with your CV and supporting statement. The form is split into sections, covering:

1. Disqualification, conflicts and standards in public life (see sections above for more information)
2. Diversity data
3. Reasonable adjustments
4. Disability Confidential scheme

Diversity data

We encourage applications from talented individuals from all backgrounds and across the whole of the UK and internationally. SACN is keen to increase the diversity of Committee membership to reflect the diversity of views of the public they serve. Please complete the monitoring form so that we can make sure we are attracting a broad range of people to these roles and that our recruitment processes are fair for everyone. Without this information, it makes it difficult to see if our outreach is working, if the application process is having an unfair impact on certain groups and whether changes are making a positive difference. The data you provide is used to produce anonymised management information about the diversity of applicants. You can select "prefer not to say" to any question you do not wish to answer. The information you provide will not be seen by the panel assessing your application.

Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to make sure applicants with disabilities, physical or mental health conditions, or other needs are not substantially disadvantaged when making an application. This can include changing the recruitment process to enable people who wish to apply to do so.

When you apply you will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments to the application process in this section of the form.

Disability Confident scheme

DHSC values diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity for all and the appointment of disabled people. We are a member of the Disability Confident scheme, which helps recruit and retain disabled people. All candidates who apply under the Scheme for one of our appointments and who meet all the essential criteria, will be offered an interview. Indicating that you wish your application to be considered under the scheme will in no way prejudice your application.

To be eligible for the Disability Confident scheme you must have a disability or long-term health condition, which could be physical, sensory or mental and must be expected to last for at least 12 months. You do not have to be registered as a disabled person to apply under this scheme.

If you wish to apply under the scheme, please ensure you complete this section of the monitoring form.

The assessment process

The SACN secretariat will deal with your application as quickly as possible and will advise you of the likely timetable at each stage. After the closing date for applications:

- the panel will assess the information provided by candidates to determine who it believes best meet the criteria for the role, and who will be invited to interview. Please ensure you provide all the information requested, including all interests relevant to SACN's terms of reference. Please also ensure that you provide evidence to support how you meet all of the essential criteria
- the selection panel is expected to be chaired by Dr Adrienne Cullum, Head of Nutrition Science at DHSC and expected to include the current Chair of SACN Professor Ian Young; Dr Tazeem Bhatia, Chief Nutritionist and Deputy Director at DHSC; and an independent panel member
- we anticipate that by the week of 19 January the panel will have decided who will be invited for an online interview, and that the interviews will take place on 5 February, although these dates are subject to change
- the panel will select for interview only the strongest applicants who it feels have demonstrated that they best meet the criteria set out in the person specification. If there is a strong field of candidates the panel will also consider who meets the desirable criteria for the role in order to differentiate between those who would

otherwise be of similar merit. However, if you have applied under the UK Disability Confident Scheme and you meet all of the essential criteria, then you will also be invited for interview

- the SACN secretariat will write to let you know whether or not you have been invited to be interviewed. It is our intention that interviews will take place via Microsoft Teams. Additional in person interviews (in London) may be offered if the panel consider it necessary. If you are invited to interview and unable to attend on the set date then an alternative date can only be offered at the discretion of the panel
- if invited to interview, the panel will question you about your skills and experience, asking specific questions to assess whether you meet the criteria set out for the post. If you have declared any interests you will also be asked about these
- candidates who the panel believe are 'appointable', will be recommended to the SACN Senior Responsible Officer who will make the final decision. The SACN Senior Responsible Officer may choose to meet with appointable candidates before making a decision. If they do, they will meet all candidates and in the presence of the panel chair or their nominated representative. Candidates should therefore be prepared for a short time gap between interviews and a final appointment decision being made. Candidates who have been interviewed will be kept informed of progress
- if you are successful, you will receive a letter from the SACN Senior Responsible Officer appointing you as a Member of SACN, which will confirm the terms on which the appointment is offered
- if you are unsuccessful at interview, you will be notified by the SACN secretariat. We appreciate it takes a lot of time and effort to apply for roles and that feedback is a valuable part of the process. As a result, the letter will provide the details of who you may approach for feedback on your interview if you so wish.

Queries

For queries about the application process, please contact:

SACN.Recruitment@DHSC.gov.uk

For further information regarding the role of the SACN and its members please contact:

Dr Rachel Allen: Rachel.Allen@DHSC.gov.uk

Please quote reference SACNChair26 on all correspondence.

If you choose to apply, we would like to thank you in advance for your time and effort in making an application.

All applications will be acknowledged by email after the closing date.

If you are not completely satisfied

The SACN secretariat will aim to process all applications as quickly as possible and to treat all applicants with courtesy. If you have any complaints about the way your application has been handled, please contact nutritionlegislation@dhsc.gov.uk.

How we will manage your personal information

Your personal information will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. You will not receive unsolicited paper or electronic mail as a result of sending DHSC any personal information. No personal information will be passed on to third parties for commercial purposes.

When we ask you for personal information, we promise we will:

- only ask for what we need, and not collect too much or irrelevant information
- ensure you know why we need it
- protect it and insofar as is possible, make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn't
- ensure you know what choice you have about giving us information
- make sure we don't keep it longer than necessary
- only use your information for the purposes you have authorised

We ask that you:

- provide us with accurate information
- inform us as soon as possible of any changes or if you notice mistakes in the information we hold about you

The diversity monitoring information you provide will not be used in the selection process and will therefore not be shared with the selection panel assessing your application at any stage.