



British  
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# MINUTES

**BFS Executive Meeting**

**12 October 2021**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86144844158>

**09:30 – 16:00**

**Attendees:**

**President:** Alison Murdoch

**Executive Officers:** Raj Mathur (Chair), Kevin McEleny (Secretary), Marta Jansa Perez (Treasurer)

**Elected:** Uma Gordon, Mostafa Metwally, Harish Bhandari, Mark Wilcox, Bryan Woodward, Ippokratis Sarris, Angela Pericleous- Smith, Stephanie Gadd, Matt Noble, Yvonne Wedden, Debbie Evans, Jackson Kirkman-Brown

**Co-opted:** Stuart Lavery, Jacky Boivin, Yadava Jeve, Matthew Prior

**Observers:** Gwenda Burns (FNUK), Adam Balen (FEI), Melanie Davies (FPUK), Sarah Norcross (PET and ELP), Allan Pacey (Journal), Mark Hamilton (Chair of Trustees), Kate Brian (RCOG Women's Voices)

**Invited:** Colin Duncan (SRF), Jason Kasraie (ARCS), Rachel Cutting (HFEA), Clare Ettinghausen (HFEA)

**Apologies:** Uma Gordon, Mostafa Metwally, Clare Ettinghausen

**Absent:** Stephanie Gadd, Stuart Lavery, Melanie Davies, Yadava Jeve, Gwenda Burns, Adam Balen, Colin Duncan, Jason Kasraie, Matt Noble

## Minutes from last meeting

### 1. Executive Committee membership

Yadava Jeve is eligible for another term as a co-opted member. It was agreed that this should be offered.

**Action: RM to write to Yadava offering him another term**

### 2. Membership:

#### a) Membership numbers

As per report.

#### b) Lapsed & cancelled members

As per report.

#### c) Honorary members

**Action: Exec members to send suggestions to officers**



**d) Membership categories & rules**

Consolidated membership categories & now have criteria and evidence people need to supply. This has been circulated to the Executive.

Psychologists to be separate category and will need to put in their number if they are a practicing clinical psychologist, and their academic qualification if they are an academic psychologist. Descriptor “Clinical” to replace “Clinicians”.

Discussion over missing qualifications on Counsellors’ list, any that are not there, members can add to the personal statement section otherwise too many to include.

BW to send Masters’ students the membership benefits leaflet.

**Action: Send members’ changes list to Officers before they go to DD to implement. Add a clause to include opt in to telephone.**

**e) Membership working group**

Report on the portal. Discussed above.

**3. Website update & tender**

Traffic to website has increased. Breakdown by countries – small change but not significant. We are going to look at this data as we launch new website. Douglas Digital have been awarded website contract. Contract being signed – Marta waiting for Yadava to feedback to her then MJP will sign. Matt Prior leading for BFS Executive.

Cost: £53k + VAT over 3 years.

Working group to be put together, to be heavily involved in early stages, which includes working in partnership with Douglas and Profile. Working group needs to be multi-disciplinary – please can members of the Exec state expressions of interest to Matt and Marta.

Angela, Yvonne, Kate, Bryan, Kevin – all volunteered.

**Action: Exec to volunteer to be in working group to MJP/MP.**

**4. Media & PR Update**

Nothing to report. Steady stream of queries.

Thanks to colleagues who have volunteered to help with media queries and who are now included in emails about these.

**Action: CB to produce a list of new people willing to help**



## 5. Newsletter

RM to summarise the aims agreed for Strategy Day and put it in the newsletter. About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of newsletters are opened which is within the normal range for this kind of newsletter.

**Action: CB next edition due in November**

## 6. Mentorship Programme

21 pairs working together. CB has asked for feedback from mentees – some really wonderful feedback received, MJP thank you to all involved. Please, if you are not already involved, do please consider it as mentees really appreciate it. Face to face meet up for these pairs at Fertility at the BFS stand.

Feedback to go on website/social/BFS stand anonymised

**Action: CB to send individual feedback to people. CB to arrange get together for mentors/mentees at Fertility. CB to anonymise feedback.**

## 7. Trustees & Governance update

### - Trustee minutes

In portal

### - Articles of association

The eligibility for someone to stand for election as chair of the Society - says should have been a member of the Exec for at least 3 years. Is this a bit restrictive?

Consensus to keep as 3 years at the point at which they take up the post as Chair.

i.e. 2 years from when elected as elected a year in advance.

New AOA approved by Exec for presentation to the membership with modification of 3 year term.

**Action: CB to circulate to membership in advance of the AGM**

## 8. Journal update

Publisher's report in portal. Denny Sakkas has stood down from the Editorial Board after nearly 24 years. The role of Science sub-editor has now been split into two. Bryan Woodward and Stephen Fleming appointed. BFS Exec gave approval for this change. Editorial board members in the science domain needed to backfill this. AP will circulate an expression of interest email inviting people to apply for the roles.

Jane Denton stepped back as Nursing, Counselling and Ethics sub editor earlier in the year. Eleanor Stephenson took this on. New Nurse editorial members – Patricia Herschberger from North America and Val Peddie from Aberdeen. BFS Exec gave approval.

Impact figure is now 2.76. Fifth year of increase.

Backlog: needs to be tackled. It exists because the journal is getting more popular and receiving more submissions. Only way to tackle this is to increase issue numbers, AP has already increased page numbers by 100.



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Probably need to consider increasing journal size by 100 pages, which has contractual issues with Taylor and Francis. Window of opportunity coming up if we choose to use it, the BFS have to give 12 months' notice of a contractual change, with breakpoint of 5 years. Could one of the Officers check the contract? We will need to request a contract change or serve notice on T & F but this needs to be done asap. Other option is to go to the open access model, which is a strategic decision to be made by the BFS.

RM: Do we have enough information to decide if we want to go to open access? Effect on BFS finances will be positive as we are currently losing money. Problem will be our members will have to pay for articles to be published. We will probably be able to secure from T & F a certain category or number of articles that can be published at reduced rates. RM thinks the time has come for us to make this decision.

AP has not seen the BFS figures so does not know how it will affect the bottom line for the BFS. AP gut reaction is open access will be beneficial for the BFS but hasn't seen the BFS work this through as a society. It was agreed with T&F that the BFS wouldn't pay for student members going forward.

It has also been agreed that we will pay for an Editor going forward.

MJP: saw figures from T&F, wants to engage with T&F again and negotiate again. Look at figures and come back to the Exec with a firm proposal.

What does the BFS want from the journal? What is it for and what are we wanting to do with it? Is it a prestige object or a source of income? RM thinks it can be both – raising prestige of reproductive medicine but also not something we should lose money on. If the publishers are strongly in favour of an open access model, then they are the ones who really know the future of journal publications, need to have further talks with them.

MW: Do we keep the journal at the same size and become more selective rather than increasing its size? Or do we just make it bigger and allow more in.

AP: Acceptance rate has not increased, remained at 14% - increasing academic rigour won't cap size, we either have to flex size of journal or we have to accept a big backlog.

Open access means members will have to pay to submit. Only 7% are UK. AP doesn't think moving to an open access model will be detrimental to members as only a minority publish. Through fee waivers or bursaries, the BFS could ameliorate the fees.

MJP: How much does free access to Human Fertility affect new members? How much does it weigh in their decision to become a BFS member? Perhaps the question should go into a survey. RM: need to be careful how to phrase it.



HB: Will it affect submissions from overseas? AP: lots are willing to pay, the business model is quite complex – we don't know if the ratio will stay the same. Some lower resource countries have their fees waived by the publishers also.

KM: T&F said impact factor tends to go up when switched to open access. Also, most people can access the journal elsewhere. We want to grow the membership but growing it is financially disadvantageous to us atm.

**Action: Officers & AP to meet again with T&F, and AP and come back to Exec with a recommendation.**

RM: Sincere thanks to AP for an amazing job as Editor. He has been synonymous with the journal and it is where it is today thanks to Allan and Henry before him.

AP has given 1 year's notice to allow us time to find a replacement.

How to find a replacement? Any journal editorial board experience would help. Circulate expressions of interest and see who applies.

**Action: AP to look for the expression of interest that was sent when he applied for the role and send to RM. Expression of interest NOT to be sent until AP notifies BFS that he has told the editorial board.**

AP has not told editorial board or publishers yet. So please keep this confidential – they have an editorial board meeting in a few months' time.

BW wondering if Daniel Brison or Roger Sturmey may be useful to consider.

## 9. Finance update

### a) Quarterly report

Little change since last Exec. Financial position allows us to invest in the website. Healthy position, making a significant surplus for Study Week and RCOG but we must be mindful. Expenditure will increase as we do more face to face meetings. Education: £52.5k so far – surplus about £38k. Sponsorship is the other significant income. Expenses: biggest expenditure is Profile organisation fee for Study Week and production costs. Moving forwards it may be hybrid, which will affect costs and increase expenditure. Bottom line is positive £3.5k – not losing money. Charity: Membership income is our main income, we need to focus on increasing this. Bottom line is a small positive.

### b) Sponsorship

Need to put together new sponsorship packages. The digital packages we put together during pandemic need review. Going to review packages now, meet with sponsors face to face at Fertility 2022. Need to acknowledge the role that sponsors play in the security of BFS. We were successful last year as we were proactive in changing our packages. This will need to happen each year.

**Action: CB to rework sponsorship packages. Set up meetings with sponsors at Fertility.**

**Write to sponsors and ask for their views on packages from RM, KMc and MJP**

## 10. Strategy & Development:

### a) Planning



Minutes on portal.

Arising from this were some actions and priorities which we need to start acting on.

First was to agree membership criteria – done.

Second was to form a working party for the website – in process of doing this.

**Action: Patient information lead – RM requested expressions of interest from members of the Executive Committee. The role is to lead on revising and developing patient information resources of the BFS. If no expressions of interest from Exec, we will go to the membership. Please notify the Officers. Angela PS volunteered. Exec officers to consider recruiting further support for her.**

## b) Royal Charter - NTR

## c) Sub-Committees

### Meetings:

#### Fertility 2022

Over 320 abstract submissions – more than 2020.

82 accepted for oral.

Exhibition and sponsorship sales are over target.

Programme is finalised bar one speaker.

Launching on web/marketing in next few weeks.

Need to find judges – SE to remind SL.

Silke Dyer is the Patrick Steptoe eponymous lecturer. Has suggested “Matters of Life” as her subject.

Set up a networking event on the evening of Wednesday – perhaps in Bar Cuba where SRF did their event previously. Put some money behind the bar.

Ensure on Thursday that any overseas speakers are looked after by Exec members.

Make sure a group photo of the exec is taken at the Exec on Wednesday. Also please do individuals pics of the SIG leads and individual committee chairs.

AGM – last year was most widely attended. Gives us an opportunity to recognise people who have contributed to the society.

Travel grant applications will be coming in later as abstract acceptances have only just been sent out

Can we organise a 5km run at Fertility – we have done in past but not many takers – will do so again. Maybe consider Yoga

**Action: Committee and SIG leads please send photo and paragraph about what they wish RM to tell the membership about their work at the AGM.**

**SE to ask photographer if they can take photo of BFS Executive on Wednesday at the meeting.**



## 11. Training:

### a) Study Week 2021

As per report. Forecasting £38k surplus.

Online great – nurses Study Day to remain fully online in 2022. Some other courses will benefit from hybrid and CB is pulling together a budget for hybrid for some modules for 2022. ET/IUI and PU.

Will it be hybrid contemporaneous or asynchronous?

Is the experience degraded when they're done at the same time?

Exec supportive of looking at options of hybrid.

### b) Training Committee update

As per report

### c) Joint BFS/RCOG course

As per report

World Congress in June.

Indian Fertility meeting in December – not a BFS stream but BFS members giving lectures.

## 14. Policy & Practice

### a) Policy & Practice guidance

Harish has submitted document of guidance.

Has also included clear timeline and flowchart.

Query over 5000-word limit. HB thinks 5000 words is acceptable (excluding references).

RM: it depends on the subject. Perhaps 5000 as a guide.

### b) Consultations & Policies

7 guidelines in progress – 5 are BFS, 2 are joint with ARCS.

- Oocyte cryopreservation in draft – just needs reduction in words from 9000. HB has returned to lead author to reduce to 5000 if possible.
- Coparenting – has been worked on but the final draft needs some questions answering still – HB has sent it back and asked why not answered or if they feel they don't need answering
- Extended Carrier Screening for Donor Gametes – commissioned in June Exec. Scope has been worked on (included in documents)  
**Action: Deadline of 2 weeks for Exec to feedback to HB on this paper**
- ICSI guidelines – 31 December deadline been given to George Hughes so HB should have first draft by next Exec.
- Thromboprophylaxis – hopefully will have something soon from Lisa Webber.
- Endometriosis – working to deadline of 6 months
- Medical Optimisation – working to deadline of 6 months
- IUI guidelines – any comments appreciated – in documents. Authors have requested for some funding approx. £3k for a Delphi process. There was a discussion about this. Members were open to funding this, but need to understand that it is needed and will be appropriate, once a literature search has been done and gaps identified.



**Action: HB to send list of contributors to RM for AGM**

## 15. SIGs

### a) SIG governance

Chairs need to change every 3 years. RM to take this up with SIG leads (excluding LPE as this is a recent appointment).

**Action: CB make the SIG governance document a standing paper in Exec docs. RM to take up new leads with SIG leads.**

### b) Fertility Preservation UK

No document received

### c) Fertility Education Initiative

Minutes in portal.

### d) Andrology

As report. Varicoceles questionnaire being circulated. Male animations all progressing.

### e) Law, Policy & Ethics

- IS writing something for BioNews on shared motherhood. RM and SN to agree words that BFS are happy with to go to the Dept of Health and the Minister.
- Changes to storage limits and the BFS response to the consultation. What to do if there is a gap in consent?
- Timelines – not sure when it will get near Parliament – could be May next year.
- Any thoughts or drafts Exec members are putting in it would be useful for the SIG to see so that the response the LPE SIG submit is more representative of what the BFS membership thinks. RM happy for everyone to put in responses but wants one strong BFS response too.  
**Action: Please let SN know any clinic or personal responses to the consultation on storage limits by the 19<sup>th</sup>**
- AM: Rewriting the Act for the BFS. Great starting point for the BFS to think about the modernisation of the Act. RM use document as an engagement tool and have a meeting around ideas for it – an extended LPE SIG meeting which others can attend, have speakers and discussion and someone making notes. SN: thinking of having something on the PET stand at Fertility 2022 so that members can let us know what they would like to change – try to get their ideas in. RM: we should use our position to lobby Dept of Health and write articles. KM: also beneficial for the Royal Charter.
- Planned reforms to surrogacy laws – will be late Autumn next year not Spring.

## 16. HFEA Update

Prism went live on 13<sup>th</sup> September. Feedback is positive.

The old register was switched off at end August and migrated into the new register. So all the data at the moment is caveated that it is only accurate until end August.

Companies who provide data are working on their systems to ensure their systems can talk to the HFEA. We expect everyone to be submitting data by December.

Open The Register service: suspended during pandemic when clinics were shut. Led to huge backlog of applicants. Took on 2 new temporary staff and are working through the backlog. Starting a project to look at the service in more details – streamline, make it more efficient, and then put policies and procedures in place for 2023.

Started a Patient Engagement Forum. 160 participants. This will be used as a sounding board for various projects in the future.



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Authority meeting: Multiple births – down at 6% - the Authority agreed we should publish this information and then revisit it in a couple of years' time.

Code of practice: signed off by Secretary of State and going to parliament late October.

Maria Caulfield is the new minister in charge of Fertility.

Ethnic Diversity work: CE felt there was a very positive meeting with RCOG taskforce, still more work to do.

Register research panel: Suspended this at the moment – because of staff turnaround and new staff need to learn how to extract data. Also the new register means data format is slightly different.

Government consultation on extending storage limits: Preparing consultation response. Supportive of it.

RM: the BFS LPE SIG has been engaged with the intra-partner donation of eggs and we appreciate what the HFEA has set its position as. We don't think this is a satisfactory position – we don't think it is professionally, clinically or legally defensible. RC – we have to be compliant with the law and uphold it as it is. We have to issue clarification which complies with the law. The HFEA are still in discussion with them. The HFEA agree with the BFS. The BFS will be making lobbying efforts.

RC: embryos created by donors – question 8 refers to gametes being put in not embryos. This would be a good question to consider in detail in the BFS response.

JB: when will the research panel be back – because it affects funding applications. RC: depends on post Prism work. Hopefully by end of this financial year so by March 2022 hopefully. JB to contact RC directly.

BW: Send link to RC from the Diversity Network.

SN: Please could the HFEA share their response with the LPE SIG so that a stronger case can be made. Urges everyone to send their feedback ahead of the LPE SIG meeting next week.

## 17. External Meetings:

- a) **RCOG World Congress**  
Report in portal
- b) **RCOG PD Conference**  
Report in portal



## 18. Relationships with other organisations:

### a) Associated Fertility Societies

NTR – next meeting in November

### b) FNUK/Fertility Fairness

Fertility Awareness – 1<sup>st</sup> week in November. Releasing short videos throughout the day. Also a webinar released at 6pm every day. RM has done the first one on Fertility Fairness.

Joyce Harper Fertility Education for Thursday.

Two surveys on Fertility in the workplace and one on covid.

Please support, share and like and use the hashtags.

Wales & Scotland have been busy with Freshers for Fertility Education.

They've been to a number of Fresher events in person. Huge response to Fresher Surveys.

Clinic ambassador scheme going well – thank you to Matt Noble who is one.

Working with CCGs on fertility policies

Currently recruiting for an England coordinator.

### c) NHS England

NTR

### d) Dept of Health

NTR

### e) PET

Large programme of events coming up from now until April 2022. Work with Genomics England as they are piloting a scheme for whole genome sequencing at birth.

Event on extending the storage limits got great feedback – thank you to MW for speaking.

Event on 20<sup>th</sup> – future of Female Fertility

Annual Conference on reproducing regulation and discussing law change.

Workshop – constructive discussion on add-ons at which social scientists will be presenting their findings from discussions with patients. Public meeting about this in January next year.

PET is 30 next year – there will be events around this.

## 19. BFS Representation on other committees:

### a) IFFS

Current representative is JS. NTR.

### b) RCOG Council, SST & Liaison committees

Current RCOG representative is IS. NTR.

SST representative is YJ. No report/apologies sent – RM will write and ask him to continue for a new 3 yr term.

### c) NQAAP

NTR

### d) ESHRE

**Action: RM to contact Arianna D'Angelo to see how we can affiliate BFS with ESHRE.**

BW sent round the guideline on assisted reproduction for viral positive patients from ESHRE..

Embryology exam is online next year. But Annual Conference will be in Milan and onsite.



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**e) RMCSG**

NTR from clinical studies group. But we are allowing them a space on the BFS stand at Fertility 2022 to publicise their trials and someone from the RMCSG can be on the stand also.

**f) National Casemix Office**

HB asking if there is a representative to replace him after 4 years.

**Action: HB to send feelers out to people outside the Exec and then liaise with officers.**

**AOB:**

- Covid-19

Our FAQ. Safety of vaccine in pregnancy etc we have a lot more information.

Liaised with Lisa Webber as no volunteer from Exec. She has agreed to work on the Revision of the Covid19 vaccine FAQ with Ephia. Should be ready to circulate in about 4-6 weeks. Joint FAQ between BFS and ARCS.

- Travel grant application

**Action: Agree to usual £250 but not £400.**

**CB to send out reminder to people to apply.**

- Royal College of Nursing working on a document moving from fertility care to maternity care – hoping to ask BFS if they wish to be involved & have their logo on. RM happy to support it in whatever way they can. YW will also email officers to ask for any financial support.

**Dates of 2022 meetings:**

- 5<sup>th</sup> January 11.30am – Liverpool (at Fertility)

- Dates tbc with officers. April/June/November. 1 of these f2f, 2 virtual.

**Action: Dates to be circulated to Exec once decided**

- If Exec members miss more than 2 meetings, the Officers need to pick up with them as to why.