1. Introduction

1.1 Background on the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission

The Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission (TJBCM) is a convening body tasked by the UK Health Minister to deliver transformative national programmes to improve brain tumour research, treatments and care in the UK.

The TJBCM runs a portfolio of eight innovative programmes focused on accelerating research, advancing clinical trial infrastructure, improving care for today’s patients and connecting and training NHS staff. The Mission’s work is funded and supported by the UK government through the National Institute of Health Research, as well as nine leading cancer charities.

Over 90 NHS doctors, nurses and scientists from across the UK work daily with the Mission to deliver its programmes. Since being founded in 2018, the TJBCM has steadily grown in size, remit and funders.

The Brain Tumour Research Novel Therapeutics Accelerator (BTR-NTA) is one of eight strategic programmes run by the Mission.

Fig 1. TJBCM Programme Portfolio
1.2 Why the Brain Tumour Research Novel Therapeutics Accelerator (BTR-NTA) was established

Brain cancer sits among a cluster of cancers where 10-year survival is low, and very little improvement has taken place [see fig 2] (1). Barriers throughout the drug discovery pathway have contributed to this, and therefore a diverse set of experience is needed to build a successful brain tumour treatment programme [see fig 3].

![Fig 2. 10yr Net Survival Trends in Adults, England & Wales, 1971-2011 (1) – figure by Cancer Research UK (2)](image)

![Fig 3. Barriers to overcome whilst building a successful brain tumour treatment programme (3-8)](image)

The BTR-NTA is an accelerator programme that provides bespoke guidance and support to help position your therapeutic along a realistic pathway to clinical trials

The BTR-NTA programme aims to help address barriers by:
- Highlighting potential pitfalls or risks in your project
- Giving you multi-disciplinary feedback on your work to date
- Providing constructive guidance on your future work and next steps
- Recommending potential avenues for partnerships or funding
- Strengthening international collaboration in the brain tumour field
2. BTR-NTA Review Process

2.1 Overview of the review process

You can apply twice a year for your work to be reviewed by the BTR-NTA committee. If accepted, you will go through the following review process:

1. **Submit work to date**
   - Complete application form covering work to date
   - Expert review committee hand-picked and tailored to your needs
   - Your work reviewed by the committee under a strict confidentiality agreement

2. **In-person review meeting**
   - Meet with the BTR-NTA expert committee at an in-person review meeting
   - The committee will ask you questions to help guide and refine their feedback report

3. **Obtain feedback**
   - The expert committee will produce a report with feedback on your work to date, guidance on next steps and may recommend potential avenues for partnerships or funding

4. **Progress forward**
   - Your next steps unblocked
   - Improve your confidence
   - Pitfalls and risks identified
2.2 The expert review committee

We have assembled a committee of experts to provide you with constructive input on your compound or technology.

The BTR-NTA programme has been developed by a core committee of twelve international drug development experts form within and outside the brain tumour field [see fig 4].

In addition to the core committee, an extended bank of experts are drawn on to provide guidance specific to applicants' needs e.g. regulatory, manufacturing, pharmacology and delivery technologies.

Fig 4. The BTR-NTA founding committee

2.3 The in-person review meeting

The in-person review meetings are held every six months in the EU, UK or USA. The next BTR-NTA in-person review meeting is being held on the 10-12th November in London, United Kingdom.

Up to five suitable applicants will be chosen for their projects to be reviewed. Each applicant's project is reviewed over half a day, and the applicant is required to attend in-person for a 90-minute question and answer session with the review panel. There will also be time before and after this for the applicants and review committee to meet over tea/coffee.

Meetings are held in-person to provide the opportunity for collaborative discussions between applicants and reviewers.
3. Applicant FAQs

3.1 Why should I apply?

- To have access to a room full of multidisciplinary experts whose goal it is to help you advance and connect.
- The opportunity to receive independent and holistic feedback on your work to date and practical guidance on next steps.
- To have your potential pitfalls identified prior to approaching funders, which could save you time and resources.

3.2 Am I eligible to apply?

The BTR-NTA welcomes researchers developing any type of therapeutic for brain tumour patients (including delivery technologies):

- Both academic and industry researchers
- At any stage of pre-clinical or clinical work (as long as lead compound identified)
- With a paediatric or adult focus
- Developing novel or repurposed therapeutics.
- From the UK, EU or USA

BTR-NTA also welcome research groups who have a therapeutic for another indication, but are considering brain cancer as a new indication.

3.3 What sorts of guidance / feedback can I seek?

You can seek guidance on a range of issues including: animal models, brain penetrance, clinical trial protocols, regulatory requirements and intellectual property.

3.4 How is the feedback report shared?

- The feedback report is returned to you 6 weeks after the In-Person Review Meeting.
- We will only share the report with you (the applicant), unless you have given us permission to do otherwise.
- If you share the report with funders or other organisations, you are required to share the full and unmodified version in order to reflect the complete opinions of the BTR-NTA committee.
- A brief, non-confidential summary will be published on the BTR-NTA website to allow the public to see that reviews have taken place. This summary will be agreed on by you and the BTR-NTA committee.
3.5 How much does the BTR-NTA process cost?

- The review process will be free for academic / non-commercial applicants. A modest sliding fee will be charged to industry applicants based on the size of the company.
- All applicants will be asked to pay a £400 administration fee to secure a place on this sought after programme.
- You will be responsible for funding your own travel costs and accommodation to attend the meeting.

3.6 Is the process confidential?

- To protect your intellectual property, the review process is conducted under a strict confidentiality agreement and all reviewers are assessed for conflicts of interest prior to every in-person meeting.
- The names and institutions of the reviewers will be shared with you, so you can also identify if there will be a potential conflict of interest.
- Any intellectual property produced during the review process remains with you.
- Prior to submitting your full application form, you will sign an Applicant Agreement which outlines: the confidentiality and conflicts of interest process, your obligations when sharing the feedback report, as well as timelines etc.

3.7 Can I receive ongoing guidance and feedback following the BTR-NTA review?

- The BTR-NTA review process is a one-off review and the committee will not provide ongoing guidance.
- We welcome you to re-apply at a later date if your programme has progressed substantially.

3.8 Will I receive funding from BTR-NTA?

- The BTR-NTA review process is independent of funders, and no funding will be awarded as part of the review.
- The BTR-NTA feedback report can however be shared with funders, and may help you facilitate a funding application.

3.9 Will I receive a score or endorsement from BTR-NTA?

- The feedback report will describe the strengths and weaknesses of your work to date, provide guidance on next steps, and will aim to answer your questions.
- No numerical score or endorsement will be given as part of the review.
- The BTR-NTA review process is focused on being educational, and does not assign any status in terms of funding or regulatory potential.
- The BTR-NTA review will not grade the quality of the therapeutic.
4. Application Process and Timelines

4.1 Application process

You will initially be asked to complete a brief Pre-Application Form to assess your suitability for the BTR-NTA programme. The Pre-Application Form also helps us to tailor the expert review committee to your needs. To request a Pre-Application Form, please contact the BTR-NTA programme manager (details on page 10).

Based on the Pre-Application Forms, the BTR-NTA committee will select up to five suitable applicants, who will then be asked to complete a Full Application Form. This form will request more detailed information on your completed and proposed pre-clinical and clinical work.

The BTR-NTA expert reviewers will review the Full Application Forms prior to the In-Person Review Meeting, and the meeting will be used to further clarify and discuss important matters.

4.2 Timelines*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th June 2023</td>
<td>Pre-Applications open</td>
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<tr>
<td>21st July 2023</td>
<td>Pre-Applications close and forms returned</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The BTR-NTA committee selects suitable applicants to proceed for full review process</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th August 2023</td>
<td>Selected applicants sent Full Application Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st September 2023</td>
<td>Full Applications returned to be reviewed by expert committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-12th November 2023</td>
<td>In-Person BTR-NTA Review Meeting with Applicants and Reviewers (London, United Kingdom)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 weeks post In-Person Review Meeting</td>
<td>Feedback Report returned to applicant</td>
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*Dates are approximations and subject to change
5. Contact Information

If you are interested in applying, please contact Dr Charlotte Aitken (BTR-NTA Programme Manager) for further information and to request a Pre-Application Form

charlotte.aitken@tessajowellbcm.org

For further information about the BTR-NTA or other programmes run by the TJBCM, please visit our website

https://www.tessajowellbraincancermission.org/

6. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Brain Tumour Research for funding the BTR-NTA programme

We would also like to thank the TJBCM’s other funding partners

7. References