



National Screening Advisory Committee

CHAIR'S STATEMENT – NSAC ANNUAL REPORT 2020

I am pleased to see this first Annual Report of the National Screening Advisory Committee published. It lays out the significant amount of work carried out by the Committee to date and indicates our plans for the year ahead.

The progress of the Committee in the short time since it was inaugurated has been remarkable, despite the difficulties and constraints caused by COVID-19.

In 2020, we made two recommendations to the Minister for Health, following rigorous assessment of the relevant evidence, and we also established the processes for our future work which will include increased engagement with the public and our stakeholders.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee whose enthusiasm has motivated everyone involved and it is very satisfying for me to acknowledge in public the advice and guidance provided by so many of them. I also wish to acknowledge the support of the Minister and Department of Health over the first year of the Committee's operations.

Additional work in 2021 will include examination of further expansion of newborn bloodspot screening, based on scientific evidence and informed by methodologically sound and detailed analysis to be provided by HIQA. I am also looking forward to the first public call for proposals on new population screening programmes which will be announced later in the year.

An important objective for the Committee is to play a strong role in enhancing public trust and confidence in population health screening in Ireland. The experience of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance of, and indeed the complexities involved in, addressing population health challenges. I look forward to working with the Committee members and our stakeholders in continuing to strengthen the value of population-based screening in Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Niall O'Higgins'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Niall O'Higgins
Chair, National Screening Advisory Committee

March 2021