

**Chairperson's note of the inaugural meeting of the
National Screening Advisory Committee**

18 November 2019

1 Welcome and opening speech by the Minister

The Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD, opened the inaugural meeting of the National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC).

The Minister commented on the wide variety of expertise and experience that the members brought from their various backgrounds. He was particularly happy to see two members who represent the public voice on the Committee.

Minister Harris noted that the future work of the Committee on population screening programmes is an important milestone in the continued evolution of these programmes in Ireland. He wished the Committee success with their very important work and noted that he had no doubt that the NSAC will play a pivotal role in our continued education about population screening.

2 Introductions and apologies

NSAC members present:

- Professor Niall O'Higgins (Chair)
- Dr Abigail Collins
- Dr John Ward
- Dr. Mary Codd
- Dr Sheelagh McGuinness
- Dr Velma Harkins
- Professor Andrew Green
- Dr James O'Mahony
- Martina Fitzgerald
- Irene Regan
- Dr Susan Kent
- Dr Keelin O'Donoghue
- Dr Ellen Crushell
- Dr Paul D'Alton
- Dr Paul Kavanagh
- Ms Anne Burke
- Ms Jillian van Turnhout
- Professor Michael Rigby
- Prof Ciaran O'Neill, Professor of Health Economics

Invitees:

- Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick, Epidemiology & Biomedical Statistics and Head of Subject for Public Health, University College Dublin.

Secretariat:

- Ms Evette Wade, Department of Health

Department of Health:

- Ms Inese Freimane, Population Health Systems Unit
- Dr Helena Ferris, Specialist Registrar, CMO Division
- Dr Alan Smith, DCMO, Population Health Systems Unit

Apologies:

- Mr John Gleeson

3 The NSAC discussed and suggested changes to the following draft documents

- a) NSAC Terms of Reference
- b) NSAC Criteria for considering the Viability, Effectiveness and Appropriateness of a Screening Programme
- c) NSAC Standing Orders

The Secretariat of the NSAC will update the documents based on the discussion and circulate for adoption by the Committee.

4 Discussion of the National Newborn Screening Programme

The Secretariat updated the Committee on a recent visit to Italy to meet with counterparts to discuss the Italian approach to the expansion of the bloodspot screening programme there.

Some discussion followed on the task that the Minister for Health has set the Committee, to review and report on the best approach to expanding the National Newborn Screening Programme.

Background information was provided on the programme. The need to be robust in the approach to the task, considering it in line with the Wilson and Jungner criteria, was emphasised. Mr Les Martin was commended for bringing the conversation on the expansion of the programme into the public domain.

5 Update on meeting with the HIQA Health Technology Assessment Team

The Committee was updated on the meeting with a HIQA HTA team on 24 October 2019. The HIQA HTA Team will be the evidence hub for the NSAC and has been commissioned to work exclusively for the Committee.

It is envisaged that the team will produce a paper for the Committee to consider, which will set out the best approach to expansion of the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme.

6 Discussion of the draft NSAC Application Process

The Committee reviewed the draft NSAC Application Process Map that had been prepared by the Secretariat. The process sets out how the Committee will receive applications for revisions to current screening programmes or applications to add new screening programmes.

It was noted that the draft process will require some revision to map out the process. The Secretariat may contact Committee members seeking input into the draft process.

7 NSAC proposed work programme – Year 1

The Committee discussed the proposed work programme for year 1.

Minister Harris has requested that the Committee review the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme and in particular, how best to proceed with its expansion. This element of the work programme will be developed with the HIQA HTA Team, who will produce a paper setting out the best approach to the possible expansion of the programme.

Committee members suggested that the NSAC consider how to address the public understanding, trust and confidence in screening services in year 1.

8 2020 NSAC Meetings

The schedule of meetings for 2020 is as follows:

- a) 5 March 2020
- b) 4 June 2020
- c) 15 October 2020

9 Next steps:

The Secretariat will:

- Produce the minute of the meeting. This will be agreed and adopted at the next meeting of the NSAC and published on the website within 10 working days www.nsaccommittee.gov.ie
- Make changes to the draft NSAC Terms of Reference, draft NSAC Criteria for considering the viability, effectiveness and appropriateness of a screening programme and the draft Standing Orders based on the suggestions of the Committee.
- Circulate the amended documents to the Committee members for adoption.
- Review the draft NSAC Application Process and consult with Committee members for advice as required.
- Circulate a post-meeting evaluation survey to members of the Committee as part of the continuous improvement approach to working that the Committee has established.

Signed:

Niall O'Higgins

Date:

Dec. 16th 2019

Professor Niall O'Higgins, Chair of the NSAC

Der 10. 2019
New Orleans