

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

15 October 2020

1. Welcome & Apologies

NSAC members present:

- Professor Niall O'Higgins (Chair)
- Dr Sheelagh McGuinness
- Dr Velma Harkins
- Dr James O'Mahony
- Ms Martina Fitzgerald
- Ms Irene Regan
- Dr Susan Kent
- Dr Ellen Crushell
- Dr Paul Kavanagh
- Ms Jillian van Turnhout
- Professor Michael Rigby
- Ms Keelin O'Donoghue
- Dr John Ward
- Ms Anne Burke
- Mr John Gleeson
- Dr Abigail Collins
- Professor Andrew Green

Invitees:

- Dr Patricia Harrington, HIQA, Health Technology Assessment Project Manager
- Dr Kieran Walsh, HIQA, Health Technology Assessment Research Analyst

Secretariat:

- Evette Wade, Population Health Screening Unit
- Luke Kearney, Population Health Screening Unit

Department of Health:

- Inese Freimane, Population Health Screening Unit
- Jane Hannon, Population Health Screening Unit
- Kate O'Flaherty, Population Health Screening Unit

Apologies:

- Professor Ciaran O'Neill
- Dr Mary Codd
- Dr Paul D'Alton

2. Documents - for discussion and approval

The minutes of the meeting on 17 July 2020 were agreed by the Committee.

The NSAC approved and adopted the following documents:

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

The Secretariat of the NSAC will publish the minutes of 17 July 2020 meeting, NSAC Standing Orders and the NSAC Criteria for considering the Viability, Effectiveness and Appropriateness of a Screening Programme on the NSAC website.

The NSAC approved an outline of the process for submitting applications. Details will be drawn up and submitted to the Committee for consideration and approval.

3. Case for a modification of the Diabetic RetinaScreen screening interval

At its meeting in July 2020 the Committee considered the application for the modification of the Diabetic RetinaScreen (DRS) and concluded further detailed analysis of evidence be undertaken before approval could be given. The HIQA carried out a detailed Scoping Report which was submitted to members of the NSAC.

At the October meeting Dr Harrington and Dr Walsh from HIQA presented the findings of their Scoping Report entitled *Extended Interval Screening of the Diabetic RetinaScreen Programme in Ireland* to the Committee.

The Committee approved the proposed DRS interval change from one to two years for those with diabetes who have no retinopathy and no non-diabetic eye disease in two annual screens.

I will write to the Programme Manager and Clinical Director informing them of the decision. and recommending that (i) a communications campaign be put in place be in order to reduce the number of people who might be lost to follow-up as a result of extending the screening interval (ii)an audit system be established for tracking of non-responders and (iii) the cost-effectiveness of the programme should be subject to formal assessment in three years.

A formal recommendation will now be made to the Department of Health.

4. HIQA Support for NSAC

The Committee welcomed the establishment of a dedicated Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Team within HIQA to support the work of the Committee.

HIQA provided the Committee with a brief overview of how they produce HTA reports and agreed to provide detailed explanation to the Committee on the techniques and systems utilised by HIQA in evaluating Evidence Review Reports and Health Technology Assessments. The Secretariat will liaise with HIQA to arrange a suitable meeting for NSAC members as part of the schedule of meetings in 2021.

5. Matters arising

It was decided that the Committee would meet in February, May and October in 2021. The Secretariat will circulate potential dates for the 2021 meetings for agreement and publish the dates on the Committee's website.

I informed the Committee that the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, had written to him with a request that the Committee provide a progress report on the work that has been completed by the NSAC since its establishment. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to communicate with the Minister and it is envisaged that the update will be provided by way of an annual report. The Chair will write to the Minister accordingly.

In line with its Terms of Reference the NSAC discussed its ongoing commitment to communicating with its stakeholders, including the public, with a focus on increasing public information about screening programmes. The Secretariat will develop a communications plan for the Committee.

Next Steps:

The Secretariat will:

- Publish the Minutes of the NSAC meeting that took place on 17 July 2020, NSAC Standing Orders & NSAC Criteria on the NSAC website <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/nsac/>
- Develop the detail of the NSAC Application form
- Liaise with HIQA to arrange a session for NSAC members on production of evidence synthesis & HTA reports.
- Draft a NSAC communications plan to ensure stakeholders, including the public, are kept up to date with the valuable work of the Committee.
- Circulate potential dates for the 2021 meetings to NSAC members for agreement.
- I will write to the Diabetic RetinaScreen -the National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme and inform them of the decision and request further clarification on points raised by the Committee. The Chair will also write to the Minister for Health with the recommendation to extend the screening interval.



Signed: _____

Date: **15 October 2020**

Professor Niall O'Higgins
Chair of the NSAC