

11 May 2020

Dear Professor Whitty,

Re: NERVTAG concerns regarding transmission of COVID-19 in care homes

I am writing to you in my role as Chair of the New Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG). I'm sure you will understand the role of the committee well, and will likely be aware that NERVTAG has considered the issue of COVID-19 transmission within closed settings. On several occasions NERVTAG has highlighted the apparent high rates of transmission in these settings, particularly within care homes, and the importance of this matter has been communicated to DHSC via your office and DCMO Jonathan Van Tam.

NERVTAG's role as a committee is to provide scientific advice rather than advising on operational issues and specific policy decisions. However, during our most recent meeting on 7 May, members expressed a view that they were unclear on what practical steps the Government were taking to reduce the risk of transmission in care home settings, and to protect residents. This led to concerns around whether the scientific advice provided by NERVTAG about the importance of these settings has been acted upon.

We were assured at the time by DCMO Jenny Harries that there is a ministerial-led group working on this issue, and there is an action plan in place, however members expressed a wish for further detail. Could I ask if you would provide some assurance around the ongoing actions, and if you would provide the Secretariat with a copy of the action plan, so that it can be shared with NERVTAG members.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

Professor Peter Horby
Chair of NERVTAG