Meeting of 'the Chiefs' – 3 March 2021 – 16:00 – 17:00 – draft minutes

Attendees
David Crossman, Chief Scientist (Health)
Roger Halliday, Chief Statistician
Audrey MacDougall, Chief Social Researcher
[NR] CSA, Environment, natural resources and agriculture
[NR], Chief Advisors Secretariat/Evidence Team leader
Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Advisor for Scotland (co-chair)
Gregor Smith, Chief Medical Officer (co-chair)
Carol Tannahill, Chief Social Policy Advisor

Apologies
[NR] Head of Chief Advisors Secretariat and Evidence team
Gary Gillespie, Chief Economist
Joe Griffin, DG Education and Justice
Paul Johnston, DG Education, Communities and Justice

Context
This is the fifth meeting of the group of 'Chiefs', which was created following Paul Johnston's submission on scientific advice across government of 29 May.

Aims
This group aims to take a strategic approach to forward planning scientific and expert advice requirements across SG. This includes prioritisation of expert advice, visibility and oversight of work streams, commissioning of work where appropriate and working together to provide integrated expert advice for ministers.

Minutes and Actions from last meeting

1. Minutes from the last meeting 1 October were confirmed by email.

    Action 4.1 – [NR] to set up another meeting specifically to discuss the future of the COVID-19 modelling and analysis hub.

2. Action 4.1 completed – COVID-19 modelling and analysis hub has now been stepped down and ongoing work is now carried out in the new C19 analysis division in the organisational readiness Directorate. A further action was created:

Action 5.1 – NR to circulate the paper explaining the function and role of the new C19 analysis division.

Action 4.2 - Sheila and Gregor to work together on this, the group to discuss how we put in a process to best govern the circulation of SAGE, and evidence, papers.

3. Action 4.2 completed – GS explained that the circulation list for draft SAGE paper had now been widened to enable timely access to papers for officials and ministers.

Action 4.3 – NR to complete draft of paper and share with the group by 9ᵗʰ October 2020.

4. Action 4.3 completed – evidence papers have been circulated and published.

Action 4.4 - NR – to link up with Name Redacted to get some advice on what happens with internal groups.

5. Action 4.4 carry forward. Current understanding is that the group is informal and minutes not published.

Round Table discussion on experience of liaising with UK advisory bodies, SAGE, JCB, and NIHP.

6. It was noted that there was no DG representation at this meeting. Since the DG Education, Communities and Justice role has been split, for future meetings, secretariat will seek DG representation from Joe Griffin, DG Education and Justice.

7. It was noted that SG has greatly benefited from the advice papers SAGE has produced, and the organisational effort of GO Science.

8. SR and DC meets every 2 weeks with Go Science for a 4 nations meeting and interactions are good. Post meeting note - CSAs from DA and UKG departments also meet on a weekly basis.

9. The SAGE subgroup; Children's Task and Finish group have been very valuable for SG and it would be difficult to establish a Scottish version.

10. Of the subcommittees currently reporting into SAGE, some are "owned" by departments (e.g. SPI-M, SPI-B under DHSC), while others have been created

specifically for Covid-19 (e.g. schools, care homes, nosocomial, environmental). SAGE subgroup work will move into UKG departments.

11. SPI-M is stepping down, with modelling functions moving to JBC (DHSC). It was noted that currently independent academic groups submit models to SPI-M. There was some concern that this independence may be lost once the function resides in JBC, and that Scottish modelling may not be represented as completely.

> **Action 5.2 - RH and NR to speak to SPI-M/JBC regarding timing of SPI-M stepping down, and need for a network of modellers for ongoing Scotland and 4 nations modelling and independent scrutiny.**

12. NERVTAG has functioned within DHSC and it was noted it has been difficult for DAs to be engaged in NERVTAG work, raising the concern that when other SAGE functions are moved to DHSC, the interactions and relationships will be difficult to build.

13. It was noted that Scotland's influence on how the UK COVID-19 advisory system is evolving is limited.

14. It was suggested that the good relationship with CMO and JBC could be built upon. The CMOs from the four nations have worked well together throughout the epidemic, and the JBC is working to all four CMOs.

15. It has not been possible to include Scottish data on waste water monitoring in the JBC dashboard despite sending Scottish data to JBC since July.

Science advice needs in SG

16. It was discussed that there is still a need for emergency advice on COVID, on a daily and weekly basis.

17. It was discussed that this would be best as through UK advisory body/bodies (rather than Scotland specific).

18. Daniel Kleinberg (Deputy Director of Covid Public Health) is writing a summary of discussion on Science advice needs following a meeting 3 March with SG officials including DCMO Nicola Steedman.

Action 5.3 – secretariat to feedback to Daniel that [Name Redacted] from CSA team can give input into the paper relating to advice requirements broader than health.

Action 5.4 – secretariat to circulate a draft of Daniels paper to the 'chiefs' once it is ready.

Action 5.5 – secretariat to set up a 'chiefs' meeting within a month to progress the needs of Science advice in SG and evolving COVID advisory system in UK

Waste water monitoring

19. Due to lack of time [NR] gave a three minute overview of the waste water monitoring paper.

20. Waste water monitoring can now be used to detect SARS-CoV-2 in waste water from many different sites across the UK.

21. The technology could be adapted to detect daily levels of other markers, for example chemicals, other viruses, markers of inflammatory disease, or neurotransmitters (for stress levels). Other possible used could be indicators of over eating, hunger, cold as an indicator of socio-economic situations.

22. It was commented that this work by [NR] and SEPA was very useful and there is potential for this to develop into a powerful tool.